

The 23rd Tokyo Defense Forum (TDF)

- The 23rd Tokyo Defense Forum (TDF) was held over two days, on March 12 (Tue) and 13 (Wed), in Tokyo hosted by the Ministry of Defense.
- Mr. Suzuki, Director-General for International Affairs, Bureau of Defense Policy, Japan Ministry of Defense, chaired the forum. Participating in addition to 28 other countries in the Indo-Pacific region* were officials from the ASEAN Secretariat, the European Union (EU), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
- * Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, China, Fiji, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, ROK, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Kingdom, United States, Viet Nam



Minister of Defense Takeshi Iwaya addressing the representatives at the reception

- This forum discussed “Security Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region” and “Changing Security Challenges and the Way Ahead.”

- The outline of the remarks by Mr. Nishida, Vice-Minister of Defense for International Affairs, at the beginning of the forum is as follows.
 - Thirty years have passed since the Cold War ended in 1989. We believe that the best way for nations to effectively deal with the new challenges brought by the changes in the global security environment is to stand together against the challenges.
 - We hope that this forum serves as a platform to deepen our shared recognition of the challenges and discuss ways to tackle them.



Opening remarks by Mr. Nishida, Vice-Minister of Defense for International Affairs

- The following are the main points made during Session 1 “Security Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region.”
 - To maintain and strengthen a “free and open Indo-Pacific,” promoting free trade and maintaining the order based on the freedom of navigation and the “rule of law” among others are important while consideration should also be given to existing regional frameworks such as ASEAN.
 - Regarding challenges and efforts in maritime security, information was shared on the

situation in the broad sea area from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Initiatives to enhance maritime domain awareness are important in order to swiftly discover and deal with illegal fishing, piracy, disasters, etc. that occur in these broad expanses.

- In order to ensure the “rule of law” in the region, effective operation of mechanisms to avoid unforeseen encounters such as the “Guidelines for Air Military Encounters (GAME)” and strategic dialogues to narrow the gap between states on the interpretation of international law and practical defense cooperation, in addition to initiatives for sharing a common understanding of international law.
 - In dealing with disasters, defense authorities are required to enhance communication with local governments as well as NGOs, while training in advance for personnel to be dispatched to disasters is a must.
- The following are the main points made during Session 2 “Changing Security Challenges and the Way Ahead.”
- Regarding the situation on the Korean Peninsula, information was shared on the current state of North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile development, efforts against ship-to-ship transfers on the high seas by ships under the North Korean flag, and the outcome and challenges from the U.S.-North Korea and the Inter-Korean summit meetings. The participating countries also shared with the audience their initiatives towards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, resolution by peaceful means, among others.
 - Regarding development of multilateral cooperation, the progress in initiatives under multilateral frameworks in regions such as Asia, the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, Europe, and the like and cooperation between regional frameworks that transcend regions were introduced. The importance of dealing with nontraditional security issues that the Indo-Pacific region faces in common was also raised.
 - Regarding UN PKO activities, initiatives aimed at participation of female personnel and consideration for gender were introduced, while the challenges that come with these efforts arising from cultural differences and the missions were also discussed.
 - Although cyber, space, AI, and other new areas of security are changing the complexion of disputes, it is important to avoid the escalation of disputes between states by enhancing the resilience and self-defense capabilities of each country in these fields and enhancing the “rule of law,” and communication between states in these fields.



Group photo of the representatives