

The 23rd Tokyo Defense Forum (TDF)
Tokyo, March 12 and 13, 2019

Summary by the Chair

I. Introduction

1. The 23rd Tokyo Defense Forum (Forum for Defense Authorities in the Asia-Pacific Region) was held in Tokyo, on March 12 and 13, 2019, with the participation of 28 countries (Australia, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, Canada, People's Republic of China, Republic of Fiji, French Republic, India, Republic of Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, New Zealand, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Republic of Singapore, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Kingdom of Thailand, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam), and three organizations (the ASEAN Secretariat, the European Union (EU) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)).

2. The Forum was chaired by Mr. Hideo Suzuki, Director-General for International Affairs, Japan Ministry of Defense.

3. The Forum had two sessions: "Security Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region" and "Changing Security Challenges and the Way Ahead." Participants discussed four topics in each session.

4. Mr. Yasunori Nishida, Vice-Minister of Defense for International Affairs, made opening remarks and welcomed the participants. He pointed out 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. He hoped that the forum would serve as a platform to deepen our shared recognition of the challenges and discuss ways to tackle them.

II. Session I: Security Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region

5. Japan, India, Indonesia and the United States made presentations about “Challenges in and Efforts for the ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific.’” Participants shared the idea that promoting free trade and maintaining the order based on the freedom of navigation and the rule of law among others are important to maintain and strengthen the “free and open Indo-Pacific,” while consideration should also be given to existing regional frameworks such as ASEAN. A participant pointed out that we should be careful about generalizing the concept of the “free and open Indo-Pacific.” There was also a view that the FOIP is important for smaller countries for economic emancipation.

6. Fiji, France, the Philippines and Sri Lanka put forth their views about “Challenges and Efforts in Maritime Security.” Information was shared on the situation in the broad waters from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Some participants pointed out that 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 addressing these challenges in maritime security, a participant introduced the whole-of-government approach, employing all relevant agencies of the state and the whole-of-nation approach, allowing communities and the private sector to directly participate in existing mechanisms. International cooperation was highlighted as a key mechanism in addressing the transnational nature of challenges in maritime security. Collaboration and partnership in bilateral, sub-regional and regional levels are resorted to by states to strengthen cooperation in addressing maritime issues of common interest.

7. Japan, Singapore and the United Kingdom introduced their idea about “Defense Cooperation towards Ensuring the Rule of Law.” Pointed out was the importance of effective operation of mechanisms to avoid unforeseen encounters such as the “Guidelines for Air Military Encounters (GAME),” 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 order to ensure the rule of law in the region.

8. Bangladesh, ICRC and Russia expressed their concept of “Roles and Efforts of Defense Authorities in Disaster Management.” Participants stressed that defense authorities are required to enhance communication with local governments as well as NGOs in dealing with disasters and that training in advance for personnel to be dispatched to disasters is a prerequisite. There was a suggestion from a participant to conduct more exercises on HA/DR operations between countries to improve coordination proficiency. It was recommended that for disaster management operations to be more effective, assessing the gaps and corresponding solutions be conducted in the pre-planning and determination stage even before disasters occur. The importance of interagency cooperation was also emphasized.

III. Session II: Changing Security Challenges and the Way Ahead

9. Japan, Australia and Republic of Korea delivered presentations on “Situation of the Korean Peninsula.” Information was shared on the current state of North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile development, international efforts against ship-to-ship transfers on the high seas by North Korean flagged ships, 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.

10. EU, Papua New Guinea and Thailand made speeches about “Development and Potential of Multilateral Security Framework and Regional Framework.” Regarding development of multilateral cooperation, introduced were 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. The importance of dealing with nontraditional security issues that countries in the Indo-Pacific region face in common was also raised. Some participants raised their expectations to include Middle Eastern and African countries in the TDF, as they also belong to the Indo-Pacific region.

11. Canada and Vietnam revealed their views about “Challenges in and Efforts of UN PKO.” Initiatives aimed at participation of more 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. There was a discussion on how we should promote participation of female personnel and gender equality in the PKO missions. Some participants raised concerns on difficult situations that might arise by engaging more female personnel into PKO mission, while some other participants shared past experience when women peacekeepers were employed in missions which reaped significant fruits because of the unique skill of women and their facility to build close relationship with victims on the ground who are mostly women and children. It was recommended that the UN may revisit the assignments of peacekeeping missions and deploy women peacekeepers to peace support missions instead, considering the safety risks.

12. China and New Zealand made remarks about “Initiatives by Defense Authorities in the New Security Domains such as Cyber, Space and AI.” Importance was stressed of avoiding the escalation of disputes between states by enhancing the resilience and self-defense capabilities of each country and enhancing the “rule of law,” and communication between states in these fields. A participant pointed out the challenges of cyber attribution, while another participant proposed establishment of the multilateral architecture managing challenges in new security domain. Necessity of terminology definition and application of existing international law on new security domain was also raised.

IV. Conclusion

13. During the sessions, participants shared the views that the issues the 23rd TDF took up are important for defense authorities in the region. Some participants mentioned that the Forum contributes to the promotion of regional defense dialogue and cooperation.

14. In concluding the Forum, the Chair expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to all participants for their support and valuable contributions to the Forum.