

(Provisional Translation)

M a r c h 21 , 2024
Japan Ministry of Defense

The 2nd Japan Pacific Islands Defense Dialogue

On March 19th and 20th, the Ministry of Defense hosted Pacific Island Countries and partner countries in Tokyo for the 2nd Japan Pacific Islands Defense Dialogue (JPIDD), which was the first in-person meeting.

The dialogue was attended by His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince of Tonga Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, His Excellency Pio Tikoduadua, Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration of Fiji, His Excellency Pio Tikoduadua, Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration of Fiji, His Excellency Dr. Billy Joseph, Minister of Defence of Papua New Guinea, each representing one of the three countries in the Pacific that hold military forces. From the 11 Pacific Island Countries without military forces, were represented by undersecretary level of law enforcement agencies and others, and from partner countries, were represented by director general level from defense authorities and others. In total, 22 countries attended including Japan. Some countries (Niue, Tuvalu and Chile) joined the dialogue online.

(* Invited Countries

- Pacific Island Countries with military (3 countries): Fiji, PNG, Tonga
- Pacific Island Countries without military (11 countries): Cook Islands, FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu
- Partner Countries: Australia, Canada, Chile, France, New Zealand, UK, US

In the dialogue, various opinions were exchanged on common security issues and actions of each country, and deepened mutual understandings. Moreover, constructive discussions were conducted actively on future cooperation and collaboration in the Pacific Islands Region. In his keynote speech on 20th March, Defense Minister Kihara announced the “Cooperation Concept for United Security Efforts in the Pacific Islands Region,” as Japan’s view to enhance defense and security cooperation in the Pacific Islands Region. The concept received a warm welcome from participating countries, and they showed their expectations towards Japan, Pacific Island Countries and partner countries to take on an important role for peace and stability in the region through close collaboration.

1. Summary of Day 1 (Tuesday, March 19th)

i. Opening Remarks

Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense Miyake outlined that, through activities such as port calls of vessels and stopovers of aircraft of the JSDF, and capacity building, Japan has contributed to the peace and stability of the Pacific Islands Region, as well as its resilient and sustainable development.

ii. Session 1: “The Current Situation in the Indo-Pacific”

Japan stressed how existing international order based on the rule of law is being challenged in the Indo-Pacific region. Against this backdrop, it is crucial for all to protect a free, open, and, stable sea under an international order based on the rule of law, to ensure peace, stability, and prosperity for all countries in the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, Japan indicated the importance of active support for strengthening dialogue and communication as well as improving security capabilities in order to deter unilateral attempts against the status quo by force or coercion, and to promote the peaceful resolution on different interests or opinions.

Participating countries voiced their views on the security environment, deepening their collective understanding of shared security issues. Participating countries agreed that it is necessary to cooperate on these issues, and to maintain an international order based on the rule of law.

iii. Session 2: “Emerging Security Challenges – Space, Cyber and Influence Operations”

Japan reflected that security domains are expanding to include outer space and cyber, along with influence operations including disinformation and utilization of emerging technologies such as AI. Technology has been influencing stability globally in various ways and participating countries stressed the need to coordinate and work together in order for Pacific Island Countries to ensure they will not be vulnerable.

Participating countries expressed their views that these emerging security challenges are crucial for the Pacific Island Countries and exchanged opinions on the need for partner countries to implement cooperation in the Pacific Island Countries in an effective and coordinated way.

iv. Special Session: “Maritime Security – Operational Hurdles”

Japan pointed out that maritime domain awareness and maritime law enforcement capabilities are important in order to respond and deter various maritime security challenges such as IUU fishing, piracy, and transnational organized crime including smuggling and human trafficking.

In particular, the Japan Coast Guard explained the role and importance of maritime law enforcement agency and JCG’s cooperation initiatives in the Pacific Islands Region, where many countries do not have militaries. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation also explained their initiatives in the Pacific Island Countries.

Participating countries shared specific examples of serious maritime security issues in the region, and pointed out the importance of securing free, open, and stable sea under the international order based on the rule of law and the need for collaboration among relevant countries and organizations. Active discussions followed.

2. Summary of Day 2 (Wednesday, March 20th)

i. Keynote Speech by Defense Minister Kihara

Defense Minister Kihara proposed three principles and two avenues of coordination encapsulated as the “Cooperation Concept for United Security Efforts in the Pacific Islands Region” (hereafter, “5 Point Cooperation Concept”) (*) to promote cooperation and collaboration in the fields of defense and security in the Pacific Islands Region.

(*) 5 Point Cooperation Concept

Three proposed principles;

- ① Respecting Centrality, Unity, and Ownership of Pacific Island Countries
- ② Strengthening Equal, Mutually Beneficial and Supportive Relationships
- ③ Supporting Collaboration between the Pacific Island Countries, Japan, and ASEAN

Two proposed coordination points;

- ① Strengthening Coordination between JPIDD and SPDMM
- ② Strengthening Coordination between JPIDD and PALM

《Full Text》

ii. Session 3: “Climate Change and HA/DR – Sharing Best Practices”

Japan pointed out that climate change poses an existential threat to us all and natural disasters are intensifying and occurring more frequently as a result. Japan explained JMOD/JSDF’s efforts such as the formulation of a “Ministry of Defense Response Strategy on Climate Change,” coordinated response to natural disasters by relevant ministries and municipal governments. Japan also noted its reinforcement of efforts on “Women, Peace, and Security,” or WPS and capacity building for international disaster relief activities in the Pacific Island Countries.

Participating countries expressed a strong sense of crisis regarding the impacts of climate change and highly valued cooperation with partner countries including Japan. There were also active discussions on the need for continued cooperation, to enhance each other's disaster response capabilities, and practical cooperation in HA / DR, as well as on other measures to achieve this.

iii. Session 4: “Future for the Pacific Islands Region - Bridging the Blue Continent”

Japan announced that it strongly supports the “2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent” endorsed by the PIF and will promote cooperation and collaboration in defense and security with the Pacific Islands Region under the “5 Point Cooperation Concept” upon the foundation of KIZUNA which has been cultivated over the years.

Pacific Island Countries and partner countries warmly welcomed the concept and recognized the importance of closer cooperation among relevant countries and organizations through JPIDD and other opportunities in the region.

iv. Closing Remarks

Lastly, Minister Kihara expressed his appreciation for the active discussions, and expressed his hope that further tangible cooperation and collaboration will be promoted based on this dialogue. He also reiterated Japan’s determination, together with the Pacific Island Countries, to protect a free, open, and stable ocean under an international order based on the rule of law.