

DM Koizumi's Speech at the 23rd Shangri-La Dialogue (2026)

5th Plenary Session:

Managing Regional Tensions Amid Global Competition

31st May 2026

It is a great honor to speak in front of you today at the Shangri-La Dialogue, an extremely important forum for considering the future of the Indo-Pacific. I extend my heartfelt respect and gratitude to the IISS who organized this event, and to Singapore, our gracious host.

I am also delighted to share this stage with Minister of Defense Khaled of Malaysia and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of the Netherlands, Ms. Dilan.

Distinguished guests,

The Indo-Pacific is the world's center of growth. We are blessed with the power of youth, with technology and with vitality. And above all, we are bound together by free and open seas.

Peace and stability in this region are not matters for this region alone. They are directly linked to the peace and prosperity of the whole world.

Today, ministers from nations that bridge the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic are all gathered here. This demonstrates the connectivity of the three oceans. I want to extend warmest welcome to the Netherlands' recent presence in this region.

But at the same time, the Indo-Pacific is facing a severe reality. Attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion. Economic coercion. Challenges to the established rules. Complex competition, including in cyber, space, and information domains. The weaponization of everything. The boundary between peacetime and contingency is becoming increasingly unclear.

We are living in a time where social media and AI can be misused, and people's decisions can be shaken by disinformation and information manipulation. So what is really at stake today? It is the freedom of each nation to make their own choices by their own will.

Today, we are seeing a situation in which the Strait of Hormuz is unfree and closed. A strait that is neither free nor open. Sea lanes that are neither free nor open. An order that is neither free nor open. Who benefits from such a situation? The importance of a free and open order can never be overemphasized.

Distinguished guests,

Each nation has the power to choose for itself. And on that foundation, we build, protect, and strengthen a free and open region.

Japan will work together with all of you to realize this goal. This determination is embodied in the upgraded FOIP newly set forth by the Takaichi administration.

No country should be forced or coerced to take a certain path. Every country must be able to choose its future by its own will. And this region must remain open to all countries that respect our shared rules and principles.

This is the Indo-Pacific that Japan envisions.

That said, the vision will not be realized just by wishing for it. It requires action. It requires sustained action.

In particular, the defense authorities play a crucial role in order to realize this vision. We need to make sure the efforts of each country will not end up being isolated. Operational cooperation. Joint training. Information-sharing. Defense equipment and technology cooperation. Defense industrial cooperation. Structural framework. We must consolidate all these efforts and turn them into effective deterrence and response capabilities.

We need three things to make this happen: trust, transparency, and talks.

Trust. International law is upheld. Sovereignty is respected. Unilateral change to the status quo by force or coercion cannot be tolerated. Without sharing this conviction, regional order does not make sense.

Transparency. Opaque military buildups and action without clear intentions will be the cause of distrust and miscalculation. Transparency is the baseline for reducing tensions and preventing crises.

And talks. All nations have different positions. All nations have different views. But that is precisely because we need to have talks. We engage in talks because we have differences. We continue to talk because there exists tensions between us.

Japan is always open to have talks with any country. At the ADMM-Plus held in Kuala Lumpur last year, hosted by Minister Khaled here. I had the opportunity to have a frank and fruitful discussion with my Chinese counterpart.

I am feeling sad that we were unable to have the opportunity to have a meeting this time.

But again, we keep the door open to talks. I remain committed to communicating with the countries concerned, including China for the peace and stability in the region and of the world.

Distinguished guests,

Japan will take concrete actions.

First, Japan will steadily build up its defense capabilities and make continuous updates with a high degree of transparency.

AI. Unmanned systems. Cyber. Space. New ways of warfare using these technologies are spreading across the world. It is only natural that every country is working to update its own defense capabilities in order to respond to these new challenges. Japan, too, will respond to these new developments swiftly yet steadily.

We will do so in order to defend our nation and contribute to peace and stability of a free and open region. And Japan will carry out this update with a high degree of transparency. What are we developing

these capabilities for? And based on what thinking? Japan will move forward while making a clear explanation to the international community.

The fundamental reinforcement of our defense capabilities, strengthening our defense production and technology base, and the revision of the three strategic documents expected to be done late this year are all part of this effort. Japan will not look away from reality. We will make the necessary preparations with a sense of responsibility.

Distinguished guests, some of you may have heard the term “new militarism.”, but nothing further from the truth.

Think about it. There is a country that has a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and strategic bombers. Japan has neither of such weapons. And yet Japan is labeled “new militarism.” Isn’t it strange?

Since the end of the Second World war, Japan has consistently respected international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and has made sincere efforts to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order. Japan’s path as a peace-loving nation has been valued by the region and by the international community. This fact will not be shaken by false claims. Because It is a fact.

And let me say this as well. Differences in perception and friction do arise between nations. What is needed at such times is not the repetition of unfounded claims in the other side’s absence. What is needed is direct and candid dialogue. And in fact, Japan’s door to dialogue is always open.

Second, Japan will further strengthen cooperation with all of you.

Strengthening the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Sophisticating training through the use of the Reciprocal Access Agreement with Australia, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom. Maritime domain awareness and cutting-edge technology cooperation in the Quad framework. Defense cooperation with ASEAN countries. Greater resilience of industrial base, including through PIPIR. And AUKUS. We will link all these efforts to turn points into lines, and from lines into planes.

Third, Japan is determined to play a new role in defense equipment cooperation across the region.

This April, Japan fundamentally revised its domestic framework concerning the transfer of defense equipment and technology. The OSA, launched in 2023, is also steadily producing results. The aim of these initiatives is to tangibly strengthen deterrence and response capabilities of the region. And both initiatives have been highly valued by countries across the region.

What matters now is to ensure the seamless provision of necessary equipment and capabilities to the region as a whole. What if necessary items run short and logistics is cut off in crisis? We cannot afford such a scenario as the whole region.

That is why Japan will be even more proactive in defense equipment cooperation, defense industrial cooperation, and maintenance and sustainment cooperation. Our aim is to ensure that each country has the capabilities it needs and to make them available when needed.

A great deal of cooperation is already underway. Cooperation with Australia on frigates. The provision of radar systems and patrol

vessels to the Philippines. Development in cooperation on destroyers and frigates. New Zealand expressed their interest in Japan's naval vessels. And a new cooperation framework with Indonesia.

These efforts are not exclusive or not directed at any particular country. These are the efforts to support each country to choose for itself, to defend itself, and to contribute to regional stability. Japan is hoping to be a reliable partner for that purpose. And Japan is hoping to serve as a connecting point that bring together the efforts of the region.

Distinguished guests,

Division weakens deterrence. Unity strengthens deterrence.

If gaps emerge among the United States, Europe, and allies and like-minded countries, forces which take it as an opportunity will surely come in. We must prevent such a situation. We must keep our cooperation going on. Now is the time to make our cooperation even stronger.

What we seek is not a region that can only endure crisis. We seek a region that can stand against coercion. We seek a region that is not misled by falsehoods. We seek a region that is not influenced by pressure.

A Free and Open Indo-Pacific is not something to be given by someone. It is something we must build and protect ourselves. And something we must pass on to the next generation.

Japan will walk towards this goal with all of you. Japan will act together with all of you.

Thank you very much for your attention.