

Japan-UK Defense Ministers Meeting

On March 16, 2023, commencing at 1800 for approximately 20 minutes, Minister HAMADA held a Defense Ministerial Meeting with Secretary of State for Defence of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Ben Wallace.

- 1 Minister Hamada reflected on and welcomed the recent key progress on defense cooperation, such as the announcement by Japan, the UK and Italy last December on the joint development of the next generation fighter aircraft, as well as the signing of the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement this January. Minister Hamada also noted that these achievements exemplify how the relationship between Japan and the UK has become closer and stronger than ever, and delivered his resolve to work with Secretary Wallace to even enhance the defense and security relationship, which has been elevated to the new level. Secretary Wallace echoed the assessment that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific is inextricably linked, and affirmed to further strengthen cooperation between the UK and Japan.
- 2 Minister Hamada expressed his strong resolve, under its new strategies including the new National Security Strategy and National Defence Strategy formulated last December, to fundamentally reinforce its defense capabilities, including counterstrike, at an early stage through a substantial increase of its defense budget. Secretary Wallace expressed his strong support for such efforts of Japan.
- 3 Minister Hamada welcomed that the recently announced Integrated Review Refresh 2023 indicated that the UK's approach to increase engagement to the Indo-Pacific will be put as a permanent pillar of the UK's international policy. Minister Hamada also referred to the importance of accelerated AUKUS efforts to enhance security and defence cooperation among the UK, the U.S. and Australia for the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific, and expressed his support to such AUKUS efforts, including the recent announcement about Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines.
- 4 The Ministers also discussed defense cooperation and exchanges, and welcomed continuous engagement between Japan Self Defense Forces and British Armed Forces through joint exercises and mutual asset visits. The Ministers concurred to explore further items of cooperation ahead to improve interoperability, by utilizing the Japan- UK Reciprocal Access Agreement after its entry into force.
- 4 The Ministers concurred to continue to work closely together towards deepening Japan-UK bilateral relationship and to uphold and reinforce a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific".