

Joint Statement of the 14th Defense Trilateral Talks (DTT)

April 24, 2024

Republic of Korea (ROK) Deputy Minister for National Defense Policy Cho Chang-rae, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Ely Ratner, and Japan Director General for Defense Policy Kano Koji convened the 14th Defense Trilateral Talks virtually on April 24, 2024. The officials exchanged assessments of the security environment on the Korean Peninsula, in the Indo-Pacific, and beyond, and they consulted on concrete ways to deepen ROK-U.S.-Japan trilateral security cooperation.

The three defense officials affirmed that the United States, Japan, and the ROK, guided by the outcomes of the August 2023 Camp David Summit, have significantly strengthened their security cooperation over the past year, particularly through historic collaboration on a real-time DPRK missile warning data sharing mechanism and a multi-year trilateral exercise plan.

The three sides affirmed their enduring commitment to strengthening trilateral cooperation to deter the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear and missile threats and to promote peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the Indo-Pacific region. They condemned the DPRK's recent diversification of nuclear delivery systems, tests and launches of multiple ballistic missiles, the launch of what the DPRK purports to be a military reconnaissance satellite using ballistic missile technology, illicit ship-to-ship transfers, and arms shipments with Russia as clear violations of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs).

The officials urged the international community to advance its stated goal of ensuring the DPRK fully complies with its obligations under relevant UNSCRs, and affirmed they will redouble their efforts in support of effective UNSCR implementation following Russia's veto blocking the renewal of the mandate of the UN Panel of Experts that monitors implementation of sanctions on the DPRK. They urged the DPRK to cease all destabilizing activities immediately. They reaffirmed that a DPRK nuclear test, if conducted, would be met with a strong and resolute response from the international community. They also reiterated that the path to dialogue remains open toward peaceful and diplomatic resolution with the DPRK, and the three officials pledged to continue coordination toward the complete denuclearization of the DPRK in accordance with relevant UNSCRs.

The three sides acknowledged that their enhanced trilateral security cooperation contributes to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and across the Indo-Pacific region. They emphasized the importance of the rule of law and expressed strong opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion. They shared concerns about actions that are inconsistent with international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and stressed the importance of fully respecting freedom of navigation and overflight. Additionally, they recognized that there is no change in their basic positions on Taiwan, and emphasized the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as an indispensable element of security and prosperity in the international community.

The officials reaffirmed their commitment to stand with Ukraine against Russia's illegal, unprovoked, and brutal war of aggression, recognizing that Russia's actions violate the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The three representatives exchanged views on implementing the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, the ROK Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region, and Japan's new plan for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". They also reiterated the importance of continuing the momentum of the new era of trilateral security cooperation advanced by the Camp David Summit. They agreed to institutionalize trilateral security cooperation policy dialogues, including the Trilateral Ministerial Meeting (TMM), the Defense Trilateral Talks (DTT), and the Trilateral Chiefs of Defense (Tri-CHOD). They also welcomed progress on establishing an annual, named, multi-domain trilateral exercise.

The United States reaffirmed its ironclad commitment to the defense of the ROK and Japan, emphasizing that this commitment is backed by the full range of U.S. capabilities, including nuclear capabilities.

The officials pledged to continue working closely together to strengthen security cooperation among their three countries, and they agreed to hold the 15th Defense Trilateral Talks later this year in the ROK.