

(Press Release)

April 19, 2021  
Japan Ministry of Defense

### Japan-New Zealand Defense Ministers' Video Teleconference

On April 19, 2021, Minister KISHI held a video teleconference with Hon Peeni Henare, Minister of Defence, New Zealand.

1 The two ministers exchanged views on regional security issues and reaffirmed their continued close cooperation. Regarding the East China Sea, they expressed their strong concern about any unilateral attempts that escalate tension. The two ministers raised serious concerns about the situation in the South China Sea. They reiterated the importance of settling disputes by peaceful means in accordance with international law, in particular the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).” Minister Kishi expressed the serious concerns over China’s Coast Guard Law. Both ministers concurred in sending a clear message that a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law is important.

2 The ministers referred to the launching of two ballistic missiles by North Korea on March 25, and strongly condemned the launches as a threat to the peace and stability of the region that violates UNSC resolutions, and shared the view that the repeated launches of ballistic missiles by North Korea pose a serious challenge to the international community as a whole. Minister Kishi expressed that he highly valued New Zealand’s deployment of its assets to monitoring and surveillance activities against illicit maritime activities including North Korea’s illegal “ship-to-ship transfers”. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to closely coordinating on efforts to urge North Korea to abandon all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

3 In addition, the ministers welcomed tangible development of Japan-New Zealand defense cooperation, which was exemplified, for instance, in the exchange program between JMSDF and New Zealand Air Force (NZAF) in November 2020, where NZAF patrol aircraft crew visited JMSDF Kanoya Air Base to interact with JMSDF patrol aircraft crew. Furthermore, the ministers confirmed that the two countries would develop coordination towards a Japan-New Zealand bilateral exercise.

4 The ministers consented to cooperate against the risks imposed by infectious diseases that could affect peace and security and promote Japan-New Zealand efforts as below:

- sharing lessons learned in humanitarian aid and disaster response (HA/DR) operations during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- finding new opportunities for cooperation in third countries in order to make them more resilient to the pandemic,
- exchanging views on reinforcing the rules-based international order, including working together to counter disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5 Furthermore, the two ministers welcomed the intention to increase cooperation between Japan-New Zealand on issues of importance for the Pacific, such as climate change, COVID-19 responses, and Women Peace and Security, and affirmed to further enhance this

cooperation.

6 The two ministers affirmed they would continue to vigorously promote bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges to maintain and promote the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific, while maintaining close communication between respective defense authorities.