

June 2, 2018

Australia—Japan—United States Defense Ministers Meeting Joint Press Statement

Australian Minister for Defence Marise Payne, Japanese Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera, and U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis convened a trilateral defense ministerial meeting in Singapore on June 2 on the margins of the International Institute for Strategic Studies 17th Asia Security Summit (2018 Shangri-La Dialogue), and held discussions on the Indo-Pacific region, North Korea, and trilateral defense cooperation. This was the seventh meeting among the three nations' top defense officials.

The ministers affirmed the importance of the Indo-Pacific region, and the key role Australia, Japan, and the United States play in upholding a free, prosperous, inclusive, and open international order. The ministers articulated the shared principles of respect for sovereignty, promotion of free and fair trade and investment, and adherence to international rules and norms. The ministers reaffirmed their strong support for ASEAN and its central role in the regional architecture.

The ministers remain concerned regarding the ongoing situation in the South China Sea. The ministers underscored their shared respect for international law as well as their shared commitment to upholding freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea, including in the South China Sea. They emphasized the importance of the peaceful resolution of conflict in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and expressed strong opposition to the use of force or coercion as well as unilateral action to alter the status quo, and to the use of disputed features for military purposes in the South China Sea. The ministers reiterated the importance of the conclusion of an effective and meaningful Code of Conduct between ASEAN and China.

The ministers agreed to remain united to support the ongoing diplomatic efforts to achieve complete and permanent dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and ballistic missile programs. They also agreed to continue enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. The ministers welcomed sustained international cooperation to deter, disrupt, and ultimately eliminate illicit activities, such as illegal ship-to-ship transfers.

The ministers recognized the importance of further increasing the three countries' cooperation in the region, with a view to maximizing the opportunities for defense engagement. They affirmed their determination to draft a strategic action agenda that would provide a long-term vision for trilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

The ministers acknowledged the close defense relationship of the three countries, and agreed to increase synergies of both bilateral and trilateral cooperation and coordination on regional efforts such as maritime capacity building, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and peacekeeping support.