

Remarks by H.E. Ambassador MIZUUCHI Ryuta on the Occasion of the Self Defense Forces Day Reception on 29th June, 2023

It is a pleasure to speak in front of you today at the reception marking the 69th anniversary of the founding of the Japan Self Defense Forces, under such a beautiful sky. I thank you all for working together with us and bringing with you this nice weather to us to celebrate this auspicious event.

Allow me to start with sharing a short history of the Japan Self-Defense Forces. After World War II, there was an outbreak of the Korean War. This led to the formation of JDF's predecessor, the Japan Police Reserve Corps. On this basis, the Japan Self-Defense Forces was established in 1954, consisting of land, sea, and air defense forces.

As its name suggests, the SDF is intended for defense of Japan itself. It is stipulated in Japan's constitution that "threat or use of force" is not allowed to resolve international disputes.

1991 marked the first dispatch of SDF overseas. This followed the first Gulf War and the efforts of the international community to restore peace. Japan's contribution to peace in the form of SDF overseas deployment was augmented following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Thus, SDF has so far made significant contributions to the international peace and security, through participation in UN peacekeeping, for example, in Cambodia, Mozambique, Golan Heights, South Sudan, as well as in the framework of the so-called coalition of the willing to the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, Iraq, the Gulf of Aden off Somalia, etc..

And on December 16, last year, we upgraded our National Security Strategy, which outlines Japan's basic principles of foreign and security policy, in response to the increasingly serious security environment in East Asia, for example:

First, Russia is not just about the war of aggression against Ukraine, which cannot be allowed by any means. It has also been occupying our Northern Territories, without legal ground, for 68 years.

Second, North Korea, with its as many as 69 test launches of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and other rockets or flying objects in the last year alone.

Third, Taiwan Straits and/or the East/South China Sea, which have not been known to so many people in Europe in the past. Nowadays, however, almost everyone is aware of the situation, and the degree of awareness is quite high. I thank everyone gathered here for that, because keeping a high awareness serves to prevent challenges to change the status quo by force.

Against this backdrop, Japan is stepping up its diplomatic efforts under the new National Security Strategy, for example, by strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance and forging the Quad – a partnership among Japan, U.S., Australia and India. Japan is strongly engaging in upholding the free and open international order, as well as bolstering cooperation with our partners sharing common values, and reaching out to the Global South on such global issues as climate change, energy transformation, and debt problems of developing countries.

Under this new security strategy, Japan's own defense, including the capabilities of the Self-Defense Forces will be fundamentally enhanced. Defense related expenditures will be raised to 2% of GDP by FY2027. Enhancing the missile defense capabilities, including the counter-strike capabilities against the aggressor's territory will be another agenda, albeit only within the strict limitation of self-defense.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me elaborate a little more on the Hiroshima G7 Summit. Most remarkably, G7 leaders affirmed that unilateral changes to the status quo by force cannot be tolerated anywhere in the world. They demonstrated their resolve to restore free and open international order based on the rule of law, building on the cooperation and coordination with our value partners. In the global common agenda, we have had representatives of the Global South. India (G20 Presidency), Indonesia (ASEAN Presidency), AU, Pacific Islands Forum, and other representatives were gathered in Hiroshima as partners.

You have seen the impressive appearance of President Zelensky in Hiroshima. That delivered a strong message to the world that the global community are steadfast in its solidarity and support to the government and the people of Ukraine. This must have been an encouragement for President Zelensky and Ukrainians to regain their country's full sovereignty and territorial integrity, with the international law and order restored.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I would like to express my thanks once again for joining us at today's reception. I further hope that this will offer an opportunity for all diplomats and military officers stationed in Austria to deepen mutual understanding and enhance cooperation, even at times in which we are facing serious security challenges.

Let me now propose a toast, hoping all nations will work together for the sake of peace and security in Europe and Asia, which are mutually indivisible, as well as for global peace and security. Please enjoy Japanese food and drinks, including Japanese Sake, Whisky and Shochu.

Kanpai.