

Joint Statement
Australia-US-Japan Defence Ministers' Meeting

1. Australian Minister for Defence Marise Payne, Japanese Minister of Defense Tomomi Inada, and U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis held trilateral defence ministerial talks in Singapore on Saturday June 3, 2017, on the margins of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue. This was the sixth meeting of its kind among the three nations' top defence officials.
2. Minister Payne and Minister Inada congratulated Secretary Mattis on assuming the office of Secretary of Defense under the new Trump Administration. They reaffirmed that their respective alliances with the United States are strong and essential to peace and security in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. They underscored their enduring support for United States engagement in the region, which continues to underpin peace, freedom, and prosperity. The three ministers affirmed their shared intent to promote trilateral and multilateral security and defence cooperation with each other, regional allies, and partners.
3. Secretary Mattis and Minister Payne reiterated their support for Japan playing a greater role in regional and global security. In the Indo-Asia-Pacific, the U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S.-Australia alliance make essential contributions to continuing security and strategic stability. Moreover, Secretary Mattis welcomed the further deepening of bilateral defence cooperation between Australia and Japan.
4. The ministers exchanged views on the increasing challenges to regional security. They reaffirmed the importance of further increasing cooperation among countries with shared interests in the peace and stability of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, including India, the Republic of Korea, and other key regional partners.
5. The ministers reiterated their condemnation in the strongest terms of North Korea's nuclear, ballistic missile, and other weapons of mass destruction programs and called on it to take concrete action toward denuclearization. They strongly urged North Korea to cease its destabilising and provocative actions immediately, and to comply fully with its international obligations and commitments, including those under relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. The ministers reaffirmed their intention to continue to work with the Republic of Korea and other partners, including China, to realise robust measures against North Korea to deter its reckless and provocative actions and so that North Korea instead engages responsibly with its neighbours and the international community.
6. The ministers reaffirmed the importance of constructive and mutually beneficial relationships with China through dialogue, cooperation, and engagement. They also 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 expressed strong opposition to the use of coercion to unilaterally alter the status quo in the South China Sea, and their opposition to the use of disputed features for military purposes. The ministers urged all South China Sea claimants to exercise self-restraint, take steps to ease tensions, halt land reclamation activities, demilitarise disputed features, and refrain from provocative actions that could escalate tensions. They highlighted the importance of the peaceful resolution of disputes through diplomacy and applicable dispute

settlement mechanisms, noting in particular the Arbitral Tribunal's Award of July 2016. They called on the governments to clarify territorial claims and accompanying maritime claims in accordance with international law, particularly, for maritime claims, as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention. In this regard, they noted the award of July 2016 could be a useful basis for further efforts to peacefully resolve disputes in the South China Sea. They also noted the announcement that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Chinese officials had finalised a draft framework for a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea. The ministers continued to encourage dialogues based on international law towards early finalization of an effective and legally binding COC, and call for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in its entirety.

7. The ministers reiterated their strong opposition to the use of any unilateral or coercive actions that seek to alter the status quo or increase tensions in the East China Sea. They also expressed their intention to remain in close contact on the security situation in that area.

8. With regard to the continued enhancement of the strategic trilateral relationship among Australia, Japan and the United States, the ministers welcomed the effective implementation of the Trilateral Information Sharing Arrangement signed in October 2016, which enhances information sharing on defence exercises and operations among the three nations in support of peace and stability.

9. On practical defence cooperation, the ministers welcomed the trilateral ground exercise SOUTHERN JACKAROO in May 2017, air exercise COPE NORTH GUAM in February 2017, and the ongoing participation of Japan Self-Defense Forces elements in the United States-Australia joint exercise TALISMAN SABRE, the next iteration of which is scheduled for July 2017.

10. The ministers reiterated their commitment to continue close coordination and cooperation in the fields of regional humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) and maritime security, including with other regional countries. They welcomed the successful trilateral engineering exercise HARI'I HAMUTUK, which was last held in Timor-Leste in November 2016, and the successful trilateral engagement in exercise BALIKATAN, which was last held in the Philippines in May 2017.

11. Reaffirming the importance of ASEAN-led regional security architecture to security and stability in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, the ministers welcomed continued progress in fostering practical defence cooperation within the ASEAN Defence ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) framework and looked forward to the fourth ADMM-Plus in October 2017.

12. The ministers reaffirmed their strategic goals and commitment to trilateral defence cooperation to further peace and security in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, and directed their respective officials to continue to identify and pursue new opportunities for practical engagement, cooperation and increased interoperability, including in training, deeper and more sophisticated exercises, operations and capacity building.

13. Noting the benefits that improved bilateral defence cooperation would have for the trilateral relationship, the ministers welcomed the entry into force of the new Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) between the United States and Japan, and the progress in internal procedures necessary for the entry into force of the new ACSA between Australia and Japan, both of which reflect the enactment of Japan's peace and security legislation. Secretary Mattis also welcomed progress on negotiations toward an agreement between Australia and Japan to improve administrative, policy, and legal procedures reciprocally to facilitate joint operations and exercises.