

Joint Statement for the Eighth Defense Trilateral Talks

Defense officials from the Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan, and the United States met in Seoul on Dec. 16 for the Eighth Defense Trilateral Talks (DTT), where they engaged in joint evaluations on the North Korean nuclear and missile threat and conducted discussions on various measures to increase trilateral defense cooperation. ROK Deputy Minister for Policy Yoo Jeh-Seung, Japan Director General for Defense Policy Satoshi Maeda, and Kelly Magsamen, performing the duties of the U.S. assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs, led their respective interagency delegations.

The representatives from the three countries strongly condemned the provocative actions undertaken by North Korea this year, including multiple ballistic missile launches and two nuclear tests. The three sides committed to strengthen mutual and international coordination to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2321 and other relevant UNSCRs faithfully. The officials called on North Korea to abide by its international obligations and commitments and to refrain from engaging in further provocative actions that only escalate tensions on the Korean peninsula and in the region. Additionally, the representatives from the three countries shared the understanding that it was necessary to respond urgently to the North Korean nuclear and missile threat and closely coordinate efforts in this regard.

The representatives from the three countries positively evaluated the trilateral cooperation that occurred on various levels before and after North Korean provocative incidents this year. In particular, the trilateral video-teleconferences (VTCs) held immediately after the fourth and fifth North Korean nuclear tests were very useful in that they enabled the three sides to share relevant information and discuss coordination measures in a timely manner. The representatives decided to maintain even closer cooperation in the future. The representatives also assessed that the missile warning exercises conducted in June and November this year contributed greatly in enhancing trilateral capabilities and procedures to detect and track North Korean missiles, and they committed to continue such exercises in the future.

The representatives affirmed that trilateral security cooperation contributes not only to the safety of their respective nations, but also to regional security. The representatives from the three countries decided to vitalize senior-level policy talks and military exchange opportunities, and to continue mutual observation of unilateral or combined military exercises. The representatives decided to increase these forms of cooperation among the three defense authorities to help deter and be prepared to respond to North Korean threats as appropriate. The representatives also discussed regional security issues, including the importance of maritime security. They reaffirmed that freedom of navigation and overflight must be ensured, and that conflicts should be resolved in a peaceful manner.

The representatives from the three countries agreed to hold the ninth DTT in 2017 in Japan on a date to be mutually determined.