

Building resilience in a turbulent world

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Pressing challenges face the international community right now. Key among them is the situation in the Strait of Hormuz. As well as being a strategic chokepoint for global logistics, the strait is also an international public good. The free and safe navigation of vessels through it has underpinned the prosperity and growth of numerous countries including Japan and the UK.

But recent developments in the strait are straining the free and open international order based on the rule of law, which Japan has consistently supported. To ensure the resilience of supply chains for vital goods, including energy, it is essential to safeguard this route in accordance with international law. This view is shared by many, and Japan will continue to make persistent diplomatic efforts in close co-operation with others as I attend the G7 summit next week.

The international community is also faced with the task of determining how we should envision our future, drawing lessons from the turbulence of the present moment. The circumstances brought about by the strait's de facto closure have reminded us of the importance of each nation playing its part in the global order by enhancing its own agency and resilience.

In particular, the Indo-Pacific region, which accounts for approximately 50 per cent of global GDP, holds the key to the world's future peace and stability. The UK and Europe demonstrated their commitment to this region at an early stage while the US places priority on it in its national security strategy. Japan also strongly reiterates its belief that we must actively contribute to the stability of the Indo-Pacific and fulfil our own responsibilities there.

With this in mind, I announced the updated Free and Open Indo-Pacific framework (FOIP) in May. This upholds core principles such as the rule of law, economic prosperity and the realisation of peace and stability. But, in light of today's challenging international circumstances, it also strengthens initiatives to help each country in the region acquire the agency necessary to determine its own destiny and ensure the entire Indo-Pacific will be "more resilient and prosperous together".

In addition to bolstering co-operation on economic security, we will collaborate with our partners on advanced technology and innovation, promote rules-based free trade and investment, and counter economic coercion.

Recently, with a view to stabilising energy supplies, we launched the POWER Asia initiative. This aims to work with Asian countries to strengthen the resilience of supply chains for energy and critical materials. We are also promoting the "FOIP Digital Corridor

Concept”, which focuses on developing the infrastructure essential for the AI and data era, including undersea cables, open RAN, satellite communications and all-optical networks.

It is in geopolitical circumstances like the present moment that such initiatives, which seek to foster strategic co-operation with other nations, become all the more crucial. We recognise the need to work together to strengthen the resilience of nations not only within the Indo-Pacific but across the world.

That is precisely why Japan is looking to the international community as a whole. In the field of security, our accelerating co-operation with the UK and Italy on the Global Combat Air Programme is a case in point. Following the review of Japan’s policy guidelines on the transfer of defence equipment and technology earlier this year, it is expected that co-operation aimed at further enhancing interoperability between Japan, the UK and Europe will ensue. Japan is also providing approximately £14.5bn in support to Ukraine. We pay tribute to the UK and Europe’s leadership in this regard and will continue to work closely with our partners to deliver our support.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer and I will co-operate to take Japan and the UK’s relationship as “enhanced global strategic partners” to new heights. Specifically, we will collaborate on economic security including energy issues, advanced technology, such as research on “Beyond 5G/6G”, and security policy.

To tackle the new challenges of today, it is essential to acquire new capabilities. This also necessitates embracing change. Although it may face political pushback, as Japan’s “Iron Lady” I am strongly determined to bring about the necessary transformation. Throughout this tour of Europe, I intend to engage in concrete, frank discussions with my counterparts, jointly reaffirming the importance of making a step change in line with the times. Japan will continue to devote all its efforts to maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order.