

Special
Feature**To achieve a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”**

More than two years have passed since Prime Minister Abe advocated the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” at the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) held in August 2016. The importance of achieving a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region, stretching from the Asia-Pacific through the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Africa, has been widely shared across the international community. With the further emergence of various threats, including the severe security environment of the Indo-Pacific region, piracy, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, natural disasters, and illegal fishing, there is a growing need for the countries of the region to cooperate toward a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific.” Japan is promoting the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” in order to develop the Indo-Pacific region as “international public goods” that bring stability and prosperity for any country. This vision involves maintaining and strengthening a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law across the region through the elimination of those various threats, as well as through enhancing connectivity within the region by developing quality infrastructure in accordance with international standards.

More specifically, Japan is advancing efforts based on the following three pillars.

Three pillars of Japan's efforts toward a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”

- (1) The promotion and solidifying of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc.
- (2) The pursuit of economic prosperity through enhancing connectivities, including through quality infrastructure development in accordance with international standards
- (3) Commitment for peace and stability that includes assistance for capacity building on maritime law enforcement, cooperation in such fields as disaster risk reduction and non-proliferation

Together with the countries that share the vision of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” Japan is moving forward on concrete cooperation toward the realization of this goal. For example, when Prime Minister Abe visited the U.S. in September 2018, Prime Minister Abe and President Trump praised concrete cooperative projects in third countries, and reaffirmed the strong determination to further enhance cooperation in various fields in the Indo-Pacific region, with the aim of advancing their shared vision of maintaining and promoting a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific.” Taking the opportunity of the visit by U.S. Vice President Pence to Japan in November, the Governments of Japan and the U.S. issued the Japan-U.S. Joint Statement on Advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Through Energy, Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity Cooperation. In October, Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Modi of India, who was visiting Japan, reiterated their unwavering commitment to working together toward a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” based on the shared vision between Japan and India, and shared their will to expand concrete cooperation with the U.S. and other partners. During the Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting also held in October, concrete cooperative projects were specified in the Tokyo Strategy 2018 for Mekong-Japan Cooperation. Furthermore, during Prime Minister Abe's visit to Australia in November, he affirmed with Prime Minister Morrison that the two countries share the vision of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” and concurred that the two countries will cooperate in order to realize the stability and prosperity of the region.

In addition, the Government of Japan took the opportunity of multilateral meetings such as ASEAN, APEC, TICAD, and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to explain in detail Japan's vision and initiatives toward a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” to the participating countries. Going forward, Japan will build a multi-layered cooperative relationship while coordinating closely with partners, in order to further implement initiatives toward a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific.”



Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting (September 26, New York, U.S.; Photo: Cabinet Public Relations Office)