

Greetings *by the Parliamentary Secretary for Defense*

Thank you very much for your kind words of introduction. I am pleased to have this opportunity to say a word of welcome to you all gathered here at the third International Symposium on Security Affairs.

A brief survey of the international situation after the Cold War shows that the structure of military confrontation between the East and the West each backed by overpowering military strength has faded away, and the possibility of an outbreak of armed conflict on a worldwide scale has receded. However, various conflicts based on racial or religious antagonism that had been suppressed during the Cold War years have surfaced and, in some cases, intensified, giving rise to various forms of complex regional conflicts. What is more, transfer of technology relating to, and proliferation of, weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles are arousing serious international concern. The international situation thus contains opaque and uncertain elements.

The Asia-Pacific region is no exception. In the Korean Peninsula, a historic inter-Korean summit was held last year, but more than a million troops are pitted against each other on both sides of the demilitarized zone. In addition, the embers of dispute over the Taiwan Straits and the Spratly Islands are smoldering, and opaque and uncertain elements threatening the security of this region remain unsettled.

To build a stabler security environment in this region under such circumstances, it is important for Japan to take steps to contribute to international peace and build confidence among the countries concerned.

With this in mind, the National Defense Program Outline that shows how the defense capability of Japan should be in the 21st century defines contribution to building a stabler security environment in this region as one of the roles of its defense capability. In line with this policy, the Defense Agency and the Self-Defense Forces, in close cooperation with the United States, have been promoting international cooperation such as United Nations peacekeeping operations and security dialogue, and mutual visits of defense officials with a view to stabilizing the international community.

Under such circumstances, the National Institute for Defense Studies has carried out bilateral and multilateral exchanges of defense research, has deepened mutual understanding with other countries by freely exchanging candid views on security issues from the standpoint of researchers, and has played a role in broadening mutual visits of defense officials.

I believe that this international symposium on security hosted by the National Institute for Defense Studies with the participation of security experts from the United States, China, South Korea, Russia and the Philippines is of great significance as a step toward building peace and safety in East Asia.

During the next two days, we will hear scholarly reports and exchange views, and I am confident that we will hear creative ideas about the security of the East Asian region in the course of exchange of unreserved views among the participating researchers. And I hope that you will provide us with thought-provoking ideas about the security of this region, ideas that will deepen our perception about the security of this region in the 21st century, ideas that will enrich the debate over world security, including that of Japan.

Lastly, I want to thank you very much for the trouble you have taken to participate in this symposium, and I wish this symposium every success from the bottom of my heart.

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Parliamentary Secretary for Defense