

Welcome Address

by the Senior Vice Minister for the Defense Agency

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Norihiko Akagi. As Senior Vice Minister for the Japan Defense Agency, I am pleased to have this opportunity to welcome His Excellency Fidel Valdez Ramos, former president of the Republic of the Philippines, panelists from around the world, and all of the guests gathered here at the fiscal year 2002 International Symposium on Security Affairs, which is being held in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the National Institute for Defense Studies.

A look at the international security situation in recent years suggests that the possibility of armed conflicts on a global scale has decreased. However, we are frequently faced with complicated and disparate regional conflicts. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction also poses another significant threat to us. This type of threat originates not only from states, but also from non-state actors such as international terrorists. On the other hand, keeping pace with the deepening of interdependency among the nations of the world, an international framework of cooperation against the new threats mentioned above is emerging. An example of this is the fight the international community has been waging against terrorism since the 9.11 incident.

Japan has joined this framework because it recognizes that international terrorism is a threat for people all over the world and is also a threat to its national security. On this basis, the Japanese government has sent vessels and aircraft of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to support activities of the U.S.-led coalition under the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law.

In parallel with this activity, Japan has been an active partner in U.N. peace-keeping operations under the International Peace Cooperation Law of 1992. Since the enactment of the law, Japan has steadily worked for international peace and stability. Rising to internal and external expectations, Japan reviewed the Cooperation Law of 1992 and lifted the freeze on the so-called PKF (Peace Keeping Force) mission of the SDF in December 2000. In March 2003, Japan

dispatched engineering units to East Timor, the largest number of personnel dispatched in the SDF's history.

I believe it is timely and significant for Japan's security policy in the 21st century that the National Institute for Defense Studies is holding this symposium on "Nontraditional Roles of the Military and Security in East Asia." I sincerely hope President Ramos and the panelists exchange views and make frank discussions on these issues of today and tomorrow. As a man who is responsible for national security, I am looking forward to discovering new ideas through these discussions.

I also expect that the symposium will provide an opportunity for further discussions on this issue, and clues that will enable deeper understanding of the security issues facing East Asia in the 21st century.

Finally, I would like to again express my sincere gratitude to all the panelists and the audience, and I wish you all a successful symposium.

Norihiko Akagi
Senior Vice Minister, Defense Agency