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Digest

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FM Iwaya visits South Africa for G20

Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Takeshi Iwaya visited South Africa between 20-22 February to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Johannesburg. In remarks [made](#) during a press conference on the eve of his departure, Iwaya outlined Japan's priorities at the meeting, which he noted would include exchanging views on the situation in Ukraine and Gaza, disaster management and debt relief of ultra-low-income countries. He articulated Japan's stance of working closely with leading Global South partners in order to understand their opinions on global affairs. Finally, he noted that his visit would also be to ensure that the upcoming ninth edition of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), scheduled to be held in Yokohama in August, would successfully reflect African countries' developmental priorities.

At the meeting itself, Iwaya made several interventions in the course of several sessions. He [called](#) for enhanced cooperation with Global South countries in light of China and Russia's increasing footprints, while emphasising the need for equitable and just peace agreements to conclude the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. He [committed](#) Japan to greater cooperation and coordination towards the maintenance of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, greater support for Ukraine, cooperation in ensuring long-term stability and peace in West Asia, the mutual indivisibility of security in the Asian and European theatres, and greater emphasis on South Africa's priority agenda of disaster risk management and debt-related issues. He also [spoke](#) about the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the modern world, outlining Japan's intention to 'facilitate innovation, maximize opportunities, promote human-centric AI and achieve safe, secure, and trustworthy AI.' Supporting the African Union's inclusion into the G20 in

2023, he called on developed countries and other G20 members to work with African partners to ameliorate the continent's pressing needs. Finally, he called for an open discussion on reforming the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and expressed hope that the TICAD9 would eventuate in 'co-created solutions' that can be linked to G20 efforts.

Japan announces new round of OSA, deeper security dialogue

Japan announced its latest round of Official Security Assistance (OSA)-driven projects on 24 February. Japanese Ambassador to Mongolia Masaru Igawahara and Mongolian Defence Minister Sandag Byambatsogt [signed](#) an agreement in Ulaan Bataar whereby Japan would provide Mongolia's air force with an air traffic control radar system. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) stated that the \$8.7 million radar system would improve situational awareness and the air traffic control capabilities of the Mongolian Air Force, while contributing to 'ensuring security and safe use of the airspace based on the rule of law'. However, MOFA officials revealed that the radar system would take 'a few years' to come online.

Meanwhile, Minister of Defence Gen Nakatani, on a visit to Manila, [announced](#) the same day that Japan and the Philippines would initiate military-to-military talks which would include a high-level framework to promote defence equipment and technology cooperation. Stressing the two countries' common interest in 'resisting any unilateral attempt to reshape the global order without the consent of the participants of this global order and the attempt to reshape international law by force', the two sides agreed to deepen mutual security relations, while also agreeing to deepen multilateral cooperation with the United States of America and Australia. Nakatani declared that Japan would despatch Self-

Defence Forces officials as well as industry representatives to Manila in order to facilitate defence equipment dialogue, and announced Japan's willingness to negotiate a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) to improve exchange of intelligence outputs.

Japan revises strategic energy policy

The Japanese Cabinet [approved](#) the amendment of Japan's strategic energy policy after three years on 18 February, ending a nearly decade-long anti-nuclear-power stance put in place after the nuclear plant meltdown at Fukushima in 2011. The 2025 edition of the Strategic Energy Plan now states that nuclear power will be 'utilised to the maximum extent possible' in tandem with renewable energy sources in order to reduce Japan's burgeoning fossil fuel import bill and to enable it to meet its Paris Agreement-mandated deadline of 2050 to achieve total carbon neutrality. On the other hand, wording that mandated Japan 'reduce the dependence on nuclear power as much as possible', first inserted in the wake of the 2011 nuclear disaster at Fukushima, has been removed.

The new plan sets a target for Japan to achieve an optimum mix of energy sources by fiscal 2040 which is to keep it on track to achieve net-zero by 2050. The new mix comprises 40-50% renewable energy sources, 20% nuclear power and 30-40% thermal power. Since this requires ramping up of renewable and nuclear power facilities, the government has called for strengthened investment in and support for the adoption of next-generation perovskite solar cells, offshore wind power, geothermal power and safer, more advanced nuclear power stations to be constructed after stringent regulatory approval. Conversely, thermal power, which provided 68.6% of Japan's total energy needs in fiscal 2023, is expected to be wound down in the coming years, the freed-up

resources and investment being shifted to hydrogen, ammonia and other fuels.

Simultaneous with the Strategic Energy Plan, the Cabinet also approved a plan to combat global warming, which includes an ambitious objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% in fiscal 2035 and 73% in fiscal 2040 from their 2013 levels, and a 2040 vision for green transformation, which lays out the groundwork for decarbonisation in industrial settings. Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry Yoji Muto stated in a press conference after the Cabinet decision that Japan 'will aim to simultaneously achieve a stable energy supply, economic growth and decarbonization'.

Taliban delegation visits Japan

A delegation of six senior members of the Taliban setup in Afghanistan [visited](#) Tokyo for a week-long interaction with Japanese officials on 16 February. The members, who represent sections of the Taliban entity in charge of diplomacy, health, education, cultural heritage and other policies, were reported by the *Asahi Shimbun* as holding ranks equivalent to vice-minister (or deputy minister) in the setup. The individuals were invited by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Nippon Foundation, both private think-tanks.

On 18 February, the delegation [interacted](#) with senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Middle East and Africa Division Chief Toshihide Ando, who is the designated Special Representative for Afghanistan. According to a report by Japan's national broadcaster NHK, the discussions primarily centred on the need for the Taliban to respect human rights, especially the human rights of women to education and employment. Japanese officials are also reported to have conveyed to the visitors that Japan remains open to talks in light of the importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan to the region as a whole.