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Minister of Defense

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While economic and cultural ties between Japan and its neighbors are deepening, the security environment surrounding our country is becoming increasingly harsh.

In North Korea, a new regime centered on Kim Jong-un was put in place in a short period of time, and the country pressed ahead with the launch of a missile, which it calls “Satellite”, in April this year. As well as continuing to boost its defense expenditure and broadly and rapidly modernizing its military forces, China is expanding and intensifying its activities in waters near Japan. Russia is stepping up the activities of its naval vessels and aircraft in its Far Eastern region.

Taking a broad overview of the international community as a whole, frequent regional conflicts and terrorism, as well as other asymmetric threats, inspire a great deal of fear among the public. Furthermore, the transfer and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and the ballistic missiles that are their means of delivery, is becoming a major problem.

Under such security environment, we will attach particular importance to the following in implementing national defense and security policies.

Firstly, as well as making steady progress in developing the country's defense capability based on the National Defense Program Guidelines and the Mid-Term Defense Program, despite the harsh fiscal situation, and moving forward with the development of the Dynamic Defense Force, we will strive to ensure that the defense of Japan is rock solid in all aspects, including the security of the seas that are essential to our country's prosperity.

Next, the Japan-U.S. Alliance is a key pillar of our nation's security policy. With the security environment around Japan changing, the U.S. is also altering its defense strategy, developing a policy of placing greater emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region. Amid such major developments, by undertaking close cooperation with the U.S., as well as deepening and widening the Japan-U.S. Alliance, Japan will play a part in ensuring the peace and stability not only of Japan and the U.S., but also of the region as a whole.

Moreover, with regard to the realignment of the U.S. Forces in Japan including the issue of the relocation of MCAS Futenma, it is vital to swiftly alleviate the burden on local people, including those in Okinawa, while maintaining the deterrence and capabilities of the U.S. Forces. The adjustment of the plan for the realignment of the U.S. Forces in Japan was decided upon in the "2+2" Joint Statement issued in April this year; in addition, initiatives are underway aimed at responding to the new strategic environment in the region, including the establishment of dynamic defense cooperation that will revitalize joint endeavors by Japan and the U.S., such as joint training, joint surveillance activities, and the joint use of facilities. While striving to ensure that the outcomes of endeavors undertaken to date bear further fruit, we will seek to identify and translate into reality the ideal shape of Japan-U.S. defense cooperation from a strategic perspective.

The Ministry of Defense and the SDF also play a significant role in cooperation aimed at the peace and stability of the international community. As well as encouraging bilateral defense cooperation and exchange, starting with Australia and South Korea, which are our key partners in the Asia-Pacific region, we will strive to promote relationships of mutual understanding and trust with China and Russia, which are our neighbors, and strengthen collaboration with various other relevant countries. Moreover, as well as holding multinational conferences, such as the Tokyo Defense Forum, we will build cooperative multilateral relationships through our participation in overseas security conferences.

At present, the Ministry of Defense and the SDF have personnel deployed on peacekeeping operations in the Golan Heights, Haiti, Timor-Leste and South Sudan, as well as undertaking anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. We will continue to undertake these overseas activities by the SDF, taking appropriate measures, while seeking to ensure the safety of our units.

Furthermore, with regard to our crisis management arrangements, we will strive to develop a system that facilitates a swift, accurate response, as well as strengthening intelligence functions, in order to ensure the safety of the country and the reassurance of the nation in regard to various internal and external risks, such as major earthquakes and missile launches by North Korea.

In recent years, expectations of and support for the Ministry of Defense and the SDF have been increasing. In an opinion poll conducted by the Cabinet Office in FY2011, a record rate of respondents (91.7%) stated that they had a positive impression of the SDF.

The trust and support of each and every member of the populace is essential to the defense of the nation. I sincerely hope that this white paper, "Defense of Japan 2012," will be read by as many people as possible, and that it will be of some assistance in providing the reader with a more profound understanding of the defense of our country.