

Comment by the Information and Press Department on the third round of 2+2 foreign and defence ministerial talks

Category: Press Release (Newsletter) Monday, 30 July 2018 13:11 Written by Vladimir I Poluektov Hits: 377

On July 30–August 1, Foreign Minister Taro Kono and Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera of Japan will visit the Russian Federation to attend another round of the 2+2 foreign and defence ministerial consultations scheduled for July 31 of this year. This dialogue mechanism was launched in 2013 and resumed in 2017 under an agreement reached during President Vladimir Putin's official visit to Japan in December 2016. Both previous rounds were held in Tokyo in November 2013 and March 2017. The meeting will take place in Moscow for the first time.

Along with that, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu will meet with their Japanese counterparts separately.

The 2+2 format is a platform for substantial exchanges of views on current global and regional problems, including their military-political aspects. We intend to discuss in detail security confidence building and give our partners our assessments related to the US deploying in the APR elements of its global missile defence system. We will also focus on non-proliferation and disarmament, countering new challenges and threats, and the situation in the Middle East and the Asia Pacific Region.

On July 31, the foreign ministers will consider the timetable for further political dialogue, prospects for trade, economic and other practical cooperation, the implementation of the Russian-Japanese cross-year projects, and international interaction.

Russian-Japanese relations are in the phase of active development. The leaders' contacts have become the main driving force for intensifying the political dialogue and promoting bilateral cooperation in practical areas and internationally.

The top-level dialogue started on May 24-26, when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe paid an official visit to St Petersburg to attend the St Petersburg International Economic Forum and to Moscow for talks with the Russian leader. Following the summit, four interagency and seven commercial documents were signed including on cooperation in digital economy and higher productivity. Shinzo Abe confirmed his intention to come to the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September of this year.

Vladimir Putin and Shinzo Abe attended a ceremony at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow on May 26 to launch the Year of Russia in Japan and the Year of Japan in Russia. This is the first project on so grand a scale in the history of Russian-Japanese relations. It includes more than 130 events in various areas on the Russian side alone, such as the 13th Festival of Russian Culture in Japan launched in June of this year. This initiative will promote a positive image of Russia and Japan in both countries' public consciousness and give an impetus to the entire range of interstate ties in politics, the economy, science, technology, mass communications and culture.

The sides have stepped up political dialogue, with the Russian and Japanese foreign ministers meeting twice, including during Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's visit to Japan in March of this year.

In April of this year, Moscow hosted the 14th round of Russian-Japanese strategic dialogue at the level of first deputy foreign ministers, and in May, talks on bilateral relations between deputy foreign ministers. In July, Tokyo hosted strategic stability consultations between deputy foreign ministers.

We are satisfied with the invigorated Russian-Japanese security interaction. Apart from the 2+2 consultations, there are regular contacts between both countries' security councils and exchanges between the defence ministries.

A key task in the context of bilateral interaction is strengthening trade and economic ties. Cooperation is based on Prime Minister Abe's Plan of Cooperation in eight sectors and the Russian list of priority investment projects. There is a ramified system of dialogue mechanisms: the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Issues, the High-Level Working Group on Specifying the Plan of Cooperation, and the Consultative Energy Council. Experts in numerous formats have been discussing practical aspects of bilateral relations.

We have witnessed positive dynamics in bilateral trade, which grew by 13.9 per cent in 2017 to \$18.3 billion.

We think it important to continue the intensive work aimed at building up Russian-Japanese trade and investment cooperation.

We note the active development of inter-parliamentary exchanges. A delegation of Japanese MPs and business people led by General Secretary of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party Toshihiro Nikai visited Moscow and St Petersburg on April 26-28 of this year at the invitation of the United Russia Party. United Russia and the LDP signed a cooperation agreement, an unprecedented document in the history of bilateral relations. The Japanese representatives also attended the fourth Russia-Japan: Points of Convergence Forum.

On June 22-24, Yakutsk hosted the third meeting of the Federation Council's Consultative Council to Facilitate Russian-Japanese Inter-Parliamentary and Inter-Regional Cooperation and the Japan-Russia Discussion Club of the Diet's House of Councillors.

On July 20-22, Heda, Japan, hosted a Russian-Japanese inter-parliamentary roundtable that involved a Federation Council delegation led by Committee on International Affairs chair Konstantin Kosachev.

On July 23-24, President of the House of Councillors Chuichi Date paid a working visit to Russia, where he met with Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko and State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin. For the first time in the history of bilateral relations, he addressed a plenary meeting of the Federation Council.

The two foreign ministers will discuss how to organise joint business activities (JBA) on the South Kuril Islands in keeping with the understandings reached by the national leaders. In June of this year, there was a regular meeting of the Russian-Japanese working group on commercial aspects of JBA and a meeting of co-chairs of the working group on free movement between the Sakhalin Region and Hokkaido Prefecture. We think it important that joint projects bring tangible benefits to the population of the South Kuril Islands and to Hokkaido residents, and facilitate the islands' socioeconomic development.

To implement top-level agreements reached in Moscow in May of this year, a direct chartered flight was organised from Hokkaido to the South Kuril Islands on July 22-23 to bring a group of former Japanese residents to their relatives' graves, a move based on the Soviet-Japanese agreement of July 2, 1986, on reciprocal visa-free visits to graves on the territory of the USSR and Japan. On July 17-19 of this year, entrance/exit procedures were carried out for another such group directly on a travel itinerary without a call at Yuzhno-Kurilsk.