

Australia- Japan Joint Ministerial Statement in Response to the COVID-19 pandemic
18 May 2020

1. The Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, and the Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Mr. Kajiyama Hiroshi held a ministerial videoconference on 18 May 2020 amidst the serious global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Ministers affirmed the enduring commitment of both sides to work together in support of an open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific economic order, and determined to continue enhancing bilateral economic cooperation discussed during the second Ministerial Economic Dialogue held in Melbourne on 10 January 2020. This included cooperation on regional economic architecture, efforts to reform the rules-based multilateral trading system, infrastructure, digital economy and emerging technology policies, and energy and natural resources issues.
3. Noting their shared concern that protectionism is exacerbated by the challenges posed by COVID-19, Ministers reaffirmed that they will continue to work towards delivering a free, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment, to keep markets open, and to uphold the rules-based multilateral system.
4. Ministers expressed their appreciation for continued and smooth trade and investment between Australia and Japan, despite the economic impact caused by COVID-19. As part of their collective response to COVID-19, they recognized the importance of the flow of essential goods such as medicines, medical supplies and services, agriculture and food products, and energy and natural resources. They committed to refrain from imposing unnecessary export prohibitions or restrictions and to uphold supply chain connectivity. They agreed that the emergency measures designed to tackle COVID-19, if deemed necessary, must be targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary, and that they do not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global and regional supply chains, and are consistent with WTO rules.
5. COVID-19 has highlighted that supply chains that are less vulnerable to shocks are crucial to economic growth and regional economic integration. In this regard, Ministers recognized the importance of working together to make global and regional supply chains more resilient.

6. Sharing the view that the current economic crisis will accelerate the need to harness the benefits of the digital economy, Ministers stressed the importance of facilitating data free flow with trust under the Osaka Track, and reaffirmed their commitment to lead the international rule-making under the Joint Statement Initiative on electronic commerce at the WTO.

7. Ministers reaffirmed that the two countries will explore cooperation bilaterally, with Indo-Pacific and like-minded partners, and through multilateral fora such as APEC, G20 and ASEAN centered groupings. They recognized the importance of ensuring sustainable economic growth and regional economic integration. They acknowledged the contribution of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JA-EPA) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and reaffirmed their commitment to work to resolve India's outstanding issues and sign the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2020.