

Japan U.S. Friendship Commission (JUSFC) Thomas S. Foley Trilateral Legislative Exchange

US-ROK-Japan Legislative Exchange

(History) In 1989 when US-Japan trade friction reached its peak, the need to exchange views between US and Japanese politicians from both ruling parties and opposition parties was acknowledged, in addition to inter-governmental negotiations. Thus, the US-Japan Legislative Exchange was then founded by the Hon. Iwao Matsuda and the Hon. Yoshinori Ohno, both from the LDP. Since 2004, as both Diet members noted the importance of participation by the Republic of Korea in this exchange, as a key ally of both nations in East Asia, members of the ROK parliament have been attending it.

They currently hold two sessions per fiscal year, one in Washington D.C. at the beginning of May and the other in Tokyo or Seoul in the January-March period. Each time, an average of five or six members join the session. Recent topics on the agenda have been national security and foreign policy, against the background of the Ukraine crisis and China's active foreign policy in East Asia; trade and economic policy affecting global economic health; and issues relating to North Korea.

The Japanese co-chairs of the representatives are the Hon. Kuniko Inoguchi for the ruling parties and the Hon. Masaharu Nakagawa for the opposition parties.

(Secretariat – Japan: Japan Economic Foundation; US: Mansfield Foundation; ROK: Secretariat of the National Congress)

Brief report on the latest US-ROK-Japan Legislative Exchange in May 2023

From May 1-3, three Japanese Diet members – Kuniko Inoguchi (House of Councilors, LDP), Masaharu Nakagawa (House of Representatives, DPJ) and Mitsunari Okamoto (House of Representatives, Komeito Party) – and three ROK parliament members – Hyung Du Choi (People Power Party), Hae Sik Lee (Democratic Party of Korea) and Sunwoo Kang (Democratic Party of Korea) – visited Washington D.C. They held talks with Mark Takano (House of Representatives,

Democrat) on national security, foreign policy, and economic and trade policy issues. They also discussed the same issues with Bill Hagerty (Senate, Republican), Chris Van Hollen (Senate, Democrat) and former Congressmen Tom Petri (Republican) and Glenn Nye (Democrat). They had a brief discussion with US think tanks such as the CSIS and the Brookings Institution about North Korea, the US and Japanese foreign and security policy, and the prospect of the reconstruction of a rules-based global or regional trade and investment regime.

It is notable that along with the spirit of this group's Joint Statement (shown below), concluded and announced on Sept. 3 in 2022, the importance of exchanges of views among the three countries' legislators was reconfirmed against the background of rising geopolitical risks and concerns about a possible Taiwan crisis. The members are starting to share the perception that this group's discussions could pave a way toward to the Trilateral Summit meetings that are occasionally organized, and thus the merits of these exchanges are highly regarded.

On national security, they also shared the perception that decoupling China would not be realistic, but reducing the risks posed by China should be the way to proceed. And there was a proposal announced by the members that reform of the United Nations must be achieved to prevent nuclear proliferation and realize rules-based national security.

Joint Statement

"The Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission-Thomas S. Foley Legislative Exchange represented by legislators from the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan met on August 10, 2022, and released the following joint statement after their meeting:

As democratically elected representatives from three like-minded Asia-Pacific nations, we reiterate our strong friendship anchored by our continuous legislative exchanges as well as our effective diplomatic, economic, and strategic cooperation.

In the midst of multiple challenges caused by incidents like the global pandemic and

ensuing economic disruptions, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and other geopolitical concerns, we urge our respective political leaders to hold a trilateral summit to chart a way forward in pursuit of solutions, stability, and progress. "