Japan, China, and South Korea agree to promote peace, cooperation

AFP- Japan, South Korea and China agreed Saturday that peace on the Korean peninsula was a shared responsibility, Seoul's foreign minister said, in a meeting of the three countries' top diplomats in which they pledged to promote cooperation.

The talks in Tokyo followed a rare summit in May in Seoul where the three neighbours – riven by historical and territorial disputes – agreed to deepen trade ties and restated their goal of a denuclearised Korean peninsula.

But they come as US tariffs loom over the region, and as concerns mount over North Korea's weapons tests and its deployment of troops to support Russia's war against Ukraine.

"We reaffirmed that maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula is a shared interest and responsibility of the three countries," South Korea's Cho Tae-yul told reporters after the trilateral meeting.

Seoul and Tokyo typically take a stronger line against North Korea than China, which remains one of Pyongyang's most important allies and economic benefactors.

Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya said he, Cho, and China's Wang Yi "had a frank exchange of views on trilateral cooperation and regional international affairs… and confirmed that we will promote future-orientated cooperation".

"The international situation has become increasingly severe, and it is no exaggeration to say that we are at a turning point in history," Iwaya said at the start of Saturday's meeting.

This makes it “more important than ever to make efforts to overcome division and confrontation”, he added.

Wang noted this year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, saying “only by sincerely reflecting on history can we better build the future”.

At two-way talks between Iwaya and Wang on Saturday, the Japanese minister said he had “frankly conveyed our country’s thoughts and concerns” on disputed islands, detained Japanese nationals and the situation in Taiwan and the South China Sea, among other contentious issues.

– World ‘full of uncertainty’ –

Ukraine was also on the agenda, with Iwaya warning “any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force will not be tolerated anywhere in the world”.

Climate change and ageing populations were among the broad topics officials had said would be discussed, as well as working together on disaster relief and science and technology.

Iwaya said the trio had “agreed to accelerate coordination for the next summit” between the countries’ leaders.

China and to a lesser extent South Korea and Japan have been hit by tariffs put in place by US President Donald Trump in recent weeks.

On Saturday afternoon, Japan and China held their first so-called “high-level economic dialogue” in six years.

“The global economy is facing serious changes. Unilateralism and protectionism are spreading”, Wang told reporters, according to Japan’s public broadcaster NHK.

“China and Japan, as major economies, should pursue development and cooperation together with innovative thinking

and bring stability to a world full of uncertainty," Wang said.

Patricia M. Kim, a foreign policy fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, said that while "trilateral dialogues have been ongoing for over a decade", this round "carries heightened significance" due to the new US position.

Beijing "has been working actively to improve relations with other major and middle powers amid growing frictions with the United States", she said.

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