

The Trilateral Commission Joint Statement by the Regional Chairs

On the Occasion of the Global Meeting of the Trilateral Commission

May 16, 2026

The Trilateral Commission gathers in Tokyo at a moment of profound change. The international system is being tested by war, strategic rivalry, economic fragmentation, technological disruption, and declining trust in institutions. Yet this is also a moment of possibility. Artificial intelligence, scientific discovery, new forms of finance, and the transformation of energy systems can expand human welfare on a scale once unimaginable. Whether this age becomes one of abundance or disorder will depend on the choices we make now.

For more than half a century, the Trilateral Commission has brought together leaders from Asia Pacific, North America, and Europe to strengthen cooperation across regions, sectors, and perspectives. Founded in 1973, the Commission has rested on a simple conviction: interdependence must be made a source of cooperation, rather than conflict. The world that gave birth to the Commission has changed profoundly; the responsibility that animated its founding has not.

We meet under the theme of Global Stewardship. By this, we mean the shared responsibility to promote the rule of law, to maintain human judgment over the development and use of technology, to enable markets to drive broad prosperity, and to ensure that institutions retain public trust.

Today's challenges are increasingly interconnected. The Russian aggression against Ukraine continues to test sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Middle East remains a source of grave humanitarian, geopolitical, and energy-security concern. In Asia, stability depends on credible deterrence, crisis management, sustained dialogue, and resilient societies. Across our regions, disinformation, polarization, and distrust threaten social cohesion and legitimate governance.

Cooperation among Asia-Pacific, North America, and Europe is indispensable, and it must remain open, outward-looking, and connected to the wider world. The Trilateral regions have special responsibilities because of their economic weight, technological capacity, political experience, and global influence. Those responsibilities can only be fulfilled through dialogue with partners beyond our three regions, including major powers, emerging economies, and voices from the Global South.

The defining question of this Tokyo Plenary is how humanity will govern power in an age of accelerating technological change. Artificial intelligence is central to this question. AI can accelerate discovery, productivity, education, and economic transformation. It can also undermine information integrity, concentrate power, intensify inequality, accelerate conflict, and weaken human accountability. AI must remain under human will, human judgment, and human responsibility.

This principle is especially important in the military and security domain. AI is already shaping intelligence, cyber defense, autonomous systems, critical infrastructure, targeting support, decision support, and command-and-control. Its speed and scale can compress decision time, obscure accountability, and increase the risk of inadvertent escalation. Decisions involving the use of force, escalation, or nuclear command-and-control must remain subject to meaningful human control and accountable command.



Tokyo gives this discussion particular moral resonance. Eighty years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, members of the Trilateral Commission had the opportunity to hear testimony from Nihon Hidankyo, the organization awarded the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize. The atomic bombing survivors remind the world that certain powers, once unleashed without restraint, leave consequences that no theory can contain. With nuclear weapons, the world built norms and channels of restraint after catastrophe. With AI, we must build them before a catastrophe. At a time when nuclear risks are again rising, we reaffirm that nuclear weapons must never be used again.

In this spirit, the Trilateral Commission will undertake a study on AI, human control, and strategic stability. This effort will examine practical approaches to the responsible use of AI in security and defense, with particular attention to nuclear command-and-control, autonomous systems, human accountability, and the risks of inadvertent escalation. Preliminary findings will be shared and discussed at the three regional meetings in 2026.

We leave Tokyo with a renewed commitment to respect for international law, human dignity, responsible governance, open exchange, broad prosperity, and peaceful cooperation. Asia Pacific, North America, and Europe must work with partners across the world to help shape a future in which power is accountable, technology is humane, prosperity is shared, and peace remains possible.

Tak Niinami
Asia-Pacific Chair

Meghan O’Sullivan
North American Chair

Axel Alfred Weber
European Chair