

JAPAN

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Ishiba announces intention to step down as PM

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on 7 September [announced](#) at a press conference that he would step down as President of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), indicating his de facto resignation from the post of Prime Minister. His decision was widely regarded as a reaction to sections of his own party demanding he take responsibility for the LDP's electoral loss in the House of Councillors election in July, which saw the ruling coalition drop into a minority in the face of unprecedented election gains by far-right parties.

The party will now proceed to hold an internal election for the presidency of the LDP on 4 October, which will determine who the next prime ministerial candidate will be. Once the new party leader is confirmed, an extraordinary session of both houses of the Diet is expected to be called on 15 October for a confirmation vote, allowing Ishiba to formally pass on the reins to his successor.

In his statement, Ishiba took responsibility for the electoral losses and the infighting within the LDP, stating he had taken the decision to step down as a way of avoiding a 'decisive split' in the party. He expressed 'deep regret' for not being able to meet public expectations while pointing out his administration's successes in boosting domestic wage growth. He also cited diplomatic successes such as the trade deal agreed upon with the United States of America, which he called 'a milestone'.

Ishiba's decision to resign caused several experts to predict sustained and significant crisis for the LDP and Japan, as his most likely successor, Sanae Takaichi, would be far to the right of Ishiba in terms of her political stances, potentially simultaneously alienating the centre-left Komeito (with which the LDP is in alliance) as well as powerful business and labour lobbies while making her more appealing to the far-right parties as a coalition partner.

Japan-US-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting

The chief diplomats of Japan, the United States of America and the Republic of Korea [convened](#) in New York on 22 September (local time) for a trilateral meeting. A joint statement was released after the meeting.

The three sides continued to emphasise the importance of trilateral cooperation in resolving regional and global issues as well as maintaining the deterrence capabilities of the US alliance with both East Asian countries. They discussed cooperation vis-à-vis the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in particular, welcoming 'action-oriented discussions' on that issue. Expressing 'serious concerns' over the DPRK's ballistic missile and nuclear programmes, they reiterated their commitment to 'denuclearise' the Korean Peninsula in accordance with United Nations Security Council regulations. Issues such as Russia-DPRK collaboration as well as 'malicious cyber activities' traceable to the DPRK were also identified as areas of further

cooperation. Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya thanked both countries for their support for the abductions issue.

Beyond the DPRK, discussions touched on economic security, including supply chain resilience, access to critical minerals and promotion of critical and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. The three sides also discussed ‘attempts to change the status quo by coercion or force’, a statement many news outlets [read](#) as a veiled reference to Taiwan and the South China Sea.

The insistence on peaceful ‘denuclearisation’ of the Korean peninsula is notable as it goes against signals sent by the DPRK leadership that they would consider talks with the US should the denuclearisation demand be dropped. It also marked a volte-face from President Donald Trump’s reference to the DPRK as a ‘nuclear power’ that had indicated at the time a potential loosening of the US’ stance of adherence to the relevant UNSC resolutions.

PM Ishiba speaks at UNGA

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba [addressed](#) global diplomats at the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 22 September (local time). Using the 80th anniversary of the end of World War 2 as a backdrop, Ishiba [called on](#) countries such as Russia and Israel to restrain themselves from further aggression, while continuing to uphold Japan’s pacifist stance.

Lauding Japan’s record of making ‘efforts to achieve eternal peace’ since 1945, Ishiba committed Japan to continually face up to its own history. He thanked the countries of Asia for their ‘spirit of tolerance’ in allowing Japan to be rehabilitated into the international community after the war, and expressed the hope that Japan would continue to be viewed as ‘a country desired by the world’.

Moving to current conflicts around the world, Ishiba criticised Israel’s war in Gaza ‘in the strongest possible terms’. He called on Israel to exercise restraint in its activities and not obstruct movement towards the ‘two-state solution’, failing which Japan would be forced to adopt ‘a new response’ to the Palestine question, namely, Japan’s recognition of the Palestinian state. This latter step, Ishiba pointed out in his address, was ‘not a matter of if, but when’.

Ishiba in his address also repeated Japan’s long-time emphasis on the need for organisational reform of the United Nations. He pointed to the United Nations Security Council as a non-functional body, and attributed as the greatest result of its paralysis the ongoing ‘invasion’ of Ukraine by one of its permanent members. Deploing the ‘rampant misuse’ of the veto system within the Security Council by the permanent members, he called on the expansion of the number of permanent and non-permanent members within the body.