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Opinion: Our four nations are committed to a free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region



Opinion by Joe Biden, Narendra Modi, Scott Morrison and Yoshihide Suga

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Joe Biden is president of the United States. Narendra Modi is prime minister of India. Scott Morrison is prime minister of Australia. Yoshihide Suga is prime minister of Japan.

In December 2004, the continental shelf off the coast of Indonesia shifted two meters, creating one of the largest tidal waves in modern history and a nearly unprecedented humanitarian crisis around the Indian Ocean. With millions displaced and hundreds of thousands killed, the Indo-Pacific region sounded a clarion call for help. Together, our four countries answered it.

Australia, India, Japan and the United States — a group of democratic nations dedicated to delivering results through practical cooperation — coordinated rapid humanitarian assistance and

disaster relief to people in need. Our cooperation, known as “the Quad,” was born in crisis. It became a diplomatic dialogue in 2007 and was reborn in 2017.

Now, in this new age of interconnection and opportunity throughout the Indo-Pacific, we are again summoned to act together in support of a region in need.

Since the tsunami, climate change has grown more perilous, new technologies have revolutionized our daily lives, geopolitics have become ever more complex, and a pandemic has devastated the world. Against this backdrop, we are recommitting to a shared vision for an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, resilient and inclusive. We are striving to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is accessible and dynamic, governed by international law and bedrock principles such as freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes, and that all countries are able to make their own political choices, free from coercion. In recent years, that vision has increasingly been tested. Those trials have only strengthened our resolve to reckon with the most urgent of global challenges together.

Our governments have worked closely for years, and Friday, for the first time in “Quad” history, we convened as leaders to advance meaningful cooperation at the highest level. To strengthen our quest for a region that is open and free, we have agreed to partner to address the challenges presented by new technologies and collaborate to set the norms and standards that govern the innovations of the future. It is clear that climate change is both a strategic priority and an urgent global challenge, including for the Indo-Pacific region. That’s why we will work together and with others to strengthen the Paris agreement, and enhance the climate actions of all nations. And with an unwavering commitment to the health and safety of our people, we are determined to end the covid-19 pandemic because no country will be safe so long as the pandemic continues.

The pandemic is among the greatest risks to health and economic stability in recent history, and we must work in partnership to stop it in its tracks. Now, we are launching an ambitious effort to help end covid-19. Together, we pledge to expand and accelerate production in India of safe, accessible and effective vaccines. We will partner at each stage to ensure that vaccines are administered throughout the Indo-Pacific region into 2022. We will combine our scientific ingenuity, financing, formidable productive capacity and long history of global-health partnership to surge the supply of life-saving vaccines, in close collaboration with multilateral organizations including the World Health Organization and Covax Facility. Our vaccine initiative will be guided by a Quad Vaccine Experts Working Group that brings together the sharpest scientific leaders from Australia, India, Japan and the United States to meet the region’s pressing needs. And though the pandemic prevents us from meeting in person, we will do so before the end of 2021. The promises we make today must translate into a healthier and more prosperous Indo-Pacific tomorrow.

We are proud to announce these bold steps — and eager to begin the work our countries must undertake to achieve them. Ending and recovering from the pandemic, standing up to climate change, and advancing our shared regional vision will not be easy. We know we cannot and will not succeed without coordination and cooperation. We will renew and strengthen our partnerships in Southeast Asia, starting with the Association for Southeast Asian Nations, work with the Pacific Islands, and engage the Indian Ocean region to meet this moment. The Quad is a flexible group of like-minded partners dedicated to advancing a common vision and to ensuring peace and prosperity. We welcome and will seek opportunities to work with all of those who share in those goals.

Over the course of these past months, each of us has grieved the suffering that our people and the world have endured. But in this dark hour, our partnership offers a spark of hope to light the path ahead. Our foundations of democracy and a commitment to engagement unite us. We know we can provide for the safety and prosperity of our people at home by confronting global crises together, with purpose and resolve. We summon from tragedy the strength and resilience to unify and overcome. And we recommit ourselves, once again, to an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, secure and prosperous.