

QUAD LEADERS DRAW UP TECH PLAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: QUAD and India

Future calling:The four countries said they would promote a diverse, resilient and secure telecommunications ecosystem.**HECTOR RETAMAL**

Friday's Quad summit of the leaders of India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. in Washington saw the four countries for the first time outline joint principles on technology, underlining their ambition to work more closely together in developing common standards in particularly critical technologies of the future.

While China did not find explicit mention in any of the Quad statements, its presence still loomed large in many of the outcomes, including in the first Quad "Principles on Technology Design, Development, Governance, and Use" document which said the four countries would ensure that technology "should be shaped by our shared democratic values and respect for universal human rights".

Not to be misused

The joint principles said technology should be "developed through a multi-stakeholder approach that is adaptive and dynamic and aligns with universal values, including respect for freedom of expression and privacy" and "should not be misused or abused for malicious activities such as authoritarian surveillance and oppression, for terrorist purposes, or to disseminate disinformation".

The technology document followed the Quad setting up a new critical and emerging technologies working group in March, focusing on technical standards, 5G diversification and deployment and technology supply chains.

At Friday's summit, it was agreed that the four countries will also establish contact groups on Advanced Communications and Artificial Intelligence "focusing on standards-development activities as well as foundational pre-standardisation research".

Another key planned initiative is to launch a semiconductor supply chain initiative "to map capacity, identify vulnerabilities and bolster supply-chain security for semiconductors and their vital components".

5G deployment

On 5G deployment and diversification, the four countries said they would promote "a diverse, resilient and secure telecommunications ecosystem" and launch an industry dialogue aimed at jointly facilitating "enabling environments for 5G diversification, including with efforts related to testing and test facilities".

The Quad initiatives further underline India's sharp move away from Chinese telecom firms, which played a major role in the roll-out of 3G and 4G and came to see India as among their biggest overseas markets.

In May, India indicated it would not include Chinese telecom firms in 5G trials, with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) giving permission to several Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) to conduct 5G trials but leaving out Huawei and ZTE, which had hoped to

participate.

China at the time expressed “concern and regret that Chinese telecommunications companies have not been permitted to conduct 5G trials with Indian Telecom Service Providers in India”.

India last year put in place stricter curbs to scrutinise investments from China, particularly the acquisition of stakes in the tech sector which saw a surge from 2014 onwards, led by Alibaba and Tencent.

Some of the curbs were announced in April 2020, prior to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) crisis that erupted in May. Following the border crisis, which remains unresolved, Delhi has made clear that trade and investment cannot carry on as normal.

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