

40<sup>th</sup> year of Japan-ASEAN friendship and cooperation kick-off reception

H.E Ambassador Emaleen Abdul Rahman Teo, Chairman of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN,  
Distinguished Permanent Representatives of ASEAN Member States,  
H.E. Mr. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN,  
Distinguished guests, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me convey our Prime Minister Abe's deep regret that he couldn't share time with you today here. He was obliged to go back to Japan to handle hostage crisis situation in Algeria, where security of some Japanese citizens are still uncertain.

Here are some essences of the remarks which Prime Minister Abe would have liked to deliver to you.

I chose three ASEAN countries including Indonesia as the first destinations of my visit overseas after I took office as Prime Minister recently.

I did so, on the basis of my basic foreign policy of strengthening ties with Japan's neighbors at an early stage.

For the last 40 years, Japan has always attached importance to stability and prosperity in Southeast Asia. I am very delighted to note that Japan's participation in this region in infrastructure improvements, human resource development, contribution to peace in Cambodia, and activities of many private businesses helped support ASEAN's stability and prosperity as we see now.

People's exchange is taking deeper root as well. Under JENESYS, a youth exchange scheme I, Mr. Abe, personally initiated in 2007, more than 14,000 youths of ASEAN countries and Japan visited one another.

I heard some who participated in the program are with us this evening in the hall.

I am happy to announce here that I, Mr. Abe, decided to launch a new

youth exchange program named JENESYS 2.0, for additional 30,000 young ones in Asia Oceania region including ASEAN to promote exchange and mutual understanding among youths who are the driving force for our future.

On the important occasion of a major milestone of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is my hope and expectation that Japan and ASEAN continue to advance together, while supporting one another like family, for the peace and prosperity.

Japan is committed to assisting you in every aspect of your community-building efforts.

Based on this idea, Japan will host Japan-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in Tokyo this year and looks forward to actively discussing with ASEAN leaders how we can strengthen our relations.

We, Japanese, will never forget various aid and support ASEAN provided right after the Great East Japan Earthquake. There is an exhibition in this room which demonstrates how vigorous the recovery is proceeding in the disaster-affected areas including Fukushima and Miyagi.

Ladies and gentlemen,

ASEAN Community is extremely important for peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific. At the wheel in the driver's seat is none other than ASEAN.

As a way of celebrating this kick-off event, let me conclude by making a commitment as Prime Minister of Japan that Japan will continue to remain a strong partner as you stand, united, against difficult challenges and bring forth glorious future.

This is a remark of Prime Minister Abe which he wished to deliver to you today.

Just let me say one thing. Tragic incident that took place, that is still taking place in Algeria reminds me of the importance of "Project ASEAN", where

diversity is generating power and future, not hatred and violence.

Thank you so much for your attention.