

Newsletter from the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN
No. 4: Tackling New Challenges Together with ASEAN

31 March 2023



ASEAN Youth Economic Forum (17 March 2023)

In this first quarter of 2023, the kick-off of the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation concluded and a series of ASEAN-related meetings are in full swing these coming months.

A recap of this month, I attended the East Asia Summit Ambassadors' Meeting (EAMJ) and ASEAN-related Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) for the first time at the ASEAN Secretariat. In addition, I addressed young people from ASEAN countries at the ASEAN Youth Economic Forum, and had a discussion with the youths. I also took the opportunity to exchange views with some institutes related to ASEAN regarding several key areas. At the end of March, I managed to return for a bit to Japan to attend the ASEAN-Japan Forum, and met with ASEAN-Japan exchange officials in Kyoto and Osaka.

A major takeaway from the series of meetings, events and visits I took part is the importance of working hand-in-hand, Japan and ASEAN, to tackle unprecedented challenges in a variety of fields. In this edition of the Ambassador's Newsletter, I

would like to report to you on these meetings and events.



EAMJ (1 March 2023, provided by the ASEAN Secretariat).

● East Asia Summit Ambassador's Meeting (EAMJ)

[The East Asia Summit Ambassadors' Meeting \(EAMJ\)](#) took place on 1 March, at the International Conference Hall in the ASEAN Secretariat. The East Asia Summit currently comprises of 18 participating countries, including 10 ASEAN Member States and 8 Dialogue Partners, namely: China, Japan, ROK, Australia, New Zealand, India, the US and Russia. After years of dialogues and cooperation since its establishment in 2005, EAS now conducts around three times Ambassador-level meetings per year in Jakarta.

The agendas including preparations for the EAS Summit in September as well as regional affairs were in discussion deeply. In my point of view, it is crucial to frankly convey their views and deepen their understanding of each other's positions, based on ASEAN centrality, as they formulate for successful summit meeting.

This meeting also marks a historic moment for the Ambassador of Timor Leste in attending their first EAMJ as an observer, and welcomed by all attendees. Japan intends to cooperate in the future towards formal membership of Timor-Leste.



EAS/SOM meeting (8 March 2023, provided by ASEAN Secretariat).

● ASEAN Plus Three and EAS Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)

The following week, on 7 and 8 March, the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) and [EAS](#) Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) meetings were held respectively, with Mr. HAYASHI Makoto, Deputy Director-General of the Asia and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, attending from Japan as Acting SOM representative.

The meeting with ASEAN, SOM meeting with United States and India, and various bilateral meeting were organized.

The reception was very busy with many dignitaries coming and going, giving a sense of the glamour of multi-national diplomacy.

I personally took the opportunity to meet, greet and exchange views directly with many of the attendees from ASEAN member states and dialogue partners. I gained a deeper understanding of the issues and situations of each country and recalled once again that ASEAN provides a valuable forum for dialogue countries.



Welcome remarks at the ASEAN Youth Economic Forum (17 March 2023)

● ASEAN Youth Economic Forum (AYEF) 2023

On 17 March, the [ASEAN Youth Economic Forum \(AYEF\) 2023](#) was hosted by the [ASEAN Youth Organisation \(AYO\)](#), an organisation founded in 2013 by two young people from Indonesia and Cambodia, which has developed a wide range of activities and currently has 270,000 followers.

The forum was held taking the occasion of the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation and was supported by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), the [ASEAN-Japan Economic and Industrial Cooperation Committee \(AMEICC\)](#) and the ASEAN Secretariat, under the theme of Circular Economy. Twenty young people from ASEAN, Timor-Leste and Japan, were selected from a pool of 400 applicants, attended sessions, visited waste-disposal facility, held joint discussions and made policy recommendations on the final day.

In my [welcome remarks](#) , I expressed my hope that the participants in the Forum would share a vision, as future leaders of ASEAN and Japan, to play an active role in making our societies sustainable and resilient. After the entire program concluded, I asked the Japanese participants of their impression of the Forum,

and they were strongly impressed by the ability, ambition and brightness of the selected ASEAN youth, as well as the diversity and qualitative difference in ASEAN.



Delegation visit of Dr. Theresa Mundita S.Lim
from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (15 Mar 2023).

● Exchange of Views with Institutes related to ASEAN

Various institutes related to ASEAN are established throughout ASEAN countries to address common issues within the ASEAN region.

Immediately after my arrival, I visited the ASEAN [Humanitarian Assistance Coordinating Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction \(AHA Centre\)](https://ahacentre.org/) in Jakarta, and received a visit from the Director of the [ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue \(ACSDSD\)](#) in Bangkok.

In March, I received visits from the Director of the [ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity \(ACB\)](#) situated in Los Baños, near Manila, and the Executive Director of the

[ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre \(ARMAC\)](#) from Phnom Penh.

ASEAN has taken the initiative to establish several institutes in their respective countries, bearing the Member State's particular strength, to benefit the whole ASEAN region. Japan has been cooperating and working directly with these centres mainly through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). In the future, I would like to further support the activities of the institutes, making full use of Japan's strengths and knowledge.



ASEAN-Japan Forum (28 March 2023)

● ASEAN-Japan Forum

On 21 March, I returned to Japan for a business matter, attending Conference of the Ambassadors to Asia and Oceanian Countries and International Organizations and the 38th Meeting of the ASEAN-Japan Forum. I also gave a lecture on '[Promoting the Rule of Law with ASEAN](#)' at a study session at the Parliamentary Association on Advancing Justice Affairs Diplomacy to Promote the Rule of Law. I then travelled to Kyoto and Osaka to exchange views with universities and Osaka/Kansai Expo officials.

[The 38th Meeting of the ASEAN-Japan Forum on](#) 28 March was co-chaired by Mr YAMADA Shigeo, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and H.E. Mr.Sarun Charoensuwan, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, the ASEAN Coordinator country for Japan. The forum was attended by representatives from ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat. A representative from the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste also attended as an observer, marking the first country with observer status to take part.

The meeting discussed regional and international developments, as well as the direction of strengthening relations in the lead-up to the ASEAN-Japan Special Summit to be held in Tokyo around December. This is the first time in three years that the meeting was held face-to-face. The timing was perfect, allowing the ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretariat participants to enjoy the cherry blossoms in Japan.



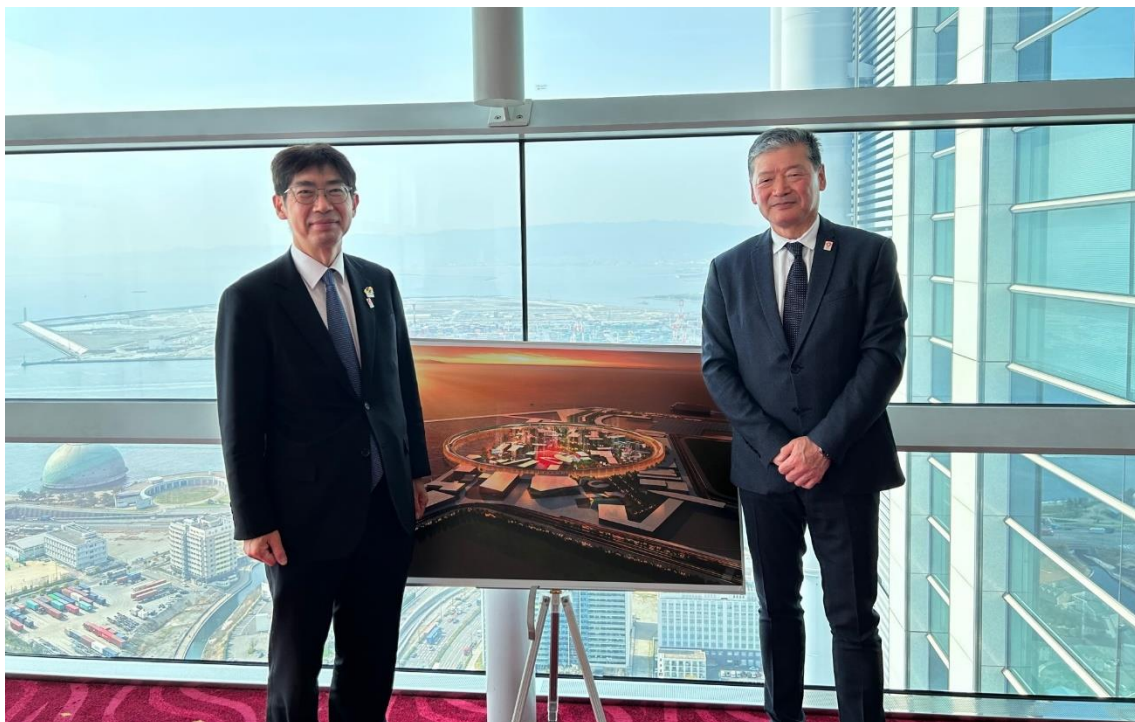
Discussion at the Institute for Southeast Asian Area Studies, Kyoto University,
(29 March 2023)

● Promoting Intellectual Exchange between ASEAN and Japan.

On 29 March, the delegation visited the [Center for Southeast Asian Studies Kyoto University](#), to hear about the progress of intellectual exchange between ASEAN and Japan over the years and to exchange views on how to strengthen efforts taking the occasion of the 50th Year of Friendship and Cooperation.

Kyoto University opened an [ASEAN hub](#) in Bangkok in 2014. In 2015, the [Japan-ASEAN Science and Technology Innovation Joint Research-Point \(JASTIP\)](#) project was also launched, promoting joint research together with universities and research institutions in ASEAN countries in the fields of environment and energy, bio resources and biodiversity, and disaster prevention.

Based on these track records of cooperation between ASEAN and Japan in the field of science, technology and innovation, I would like to find ways in which Japan and ASEAN can promote intellectual exchange and research cooperation in a wide range of fields, contribute to the world in a concrete way.



the Osaka Kansai Expo site in the background with Mr. ICHINOKI, Deputy Secretary General of the Japan Association for the Expo 2025 World Exposition.

(30 March 2023)

- Towards an Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai.

ASEAN is preparing to participate in the [Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai](#) scheduled to be held from April to October 2025. On the afternoon of 29 and 30 March, I visited Sakai City, the Kansai Economic Federation (Kankeiren), Osaka Prefecture and the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition to exchange views on how to make the most of this opportunity to promote ASEAN-Japan relation.

Sakai City has been engaged in [city-wide exchanges with ASEAN](#), in 2009, the city organised Sakai-ASEAN Week to commemorate the 120th anniversary of the city's incorporation, followed by a photo contest, cultural lectures and other projects, and recently a [pamphlet](#) by university students was published.

The Kansai Economic Federation (Kankeiren) has been inviting young ASEAN business leaders to Japan for [management](#) training since 1980. Based on this achievement, the [Asian Business Creation \(ABC\) Platform](#) was launched in 2019 along with seven ASEAN management associations.

I was able to discuss opportunities and challenges for linking the momentum from this year's 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation to the Osaka-Kansai Expo in 2025 with the Osaka Prefectural Government and the Japan Association for the Expo 2025 World Exposition, while enjoying view of the Expo venue from the top floor of the Osaka Prefectural Government Sakishima Building.



[Introduction to Thai culture](#), Ambassador's Interview series (28 February 2023).

● Tackling New Challenges Together with ASEAN

Encountering with officials from both Japan and ASEAN this past month has opened my perspective of the crucial need in promoting and realizing three elements of: Vision, Problem Solving and Trust.

To have a broad direction and future vision for ASEAN-Japan cooperation and a shared perception is imperative. It needs to demonstrate concrete action that are feasible to counter various problems in respective areas to be convincing and persuasive. In actualizing such cooperation, emphasis of years of mutual understanding and trust can be of great support.

As part of enhancing publicity to commemorate the anniversary, we have recently launched a campaign initiative by featuring one ASEAN Member States every month and having interview about its relationship with Japan and its culture. In March, we featured [Indonesia](#), the chair of ASEAN.

I would like to take this year as an opportunity to share our vision with many of you, to resolve issues from a wide range of fields and to make continuous efforts to deepen trust. For the achievements of ASEAN-Japan cooperation can be utilised not only by the two sides but also by the world.

Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN
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