

Keynote Speech
12nd ERIA Editors' Roundtable
Challenges of Digital and Geopolitical Transformation in ASEAN
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Mr. Taufiqurrahman, Chief Editor of The Jakarta Post,
Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning! First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to ERIA and The Jakarta Post for co-organising today's event and giving me an opportunity to make a keynote speech on ASEAN-Japan Cooperation under Indo-Pacific frameworks.

Today, I would like to raise the following three issues:

- 1) What have ASEAN and Japan achieved together?
- 2) What are the common challenges of ASEAN and Japan?
- 3) What steps will ASEAN and Japan take together?

(What have ASEAN and Japan achieved together)

This year marks the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. During the five decades, ASEAN and Japan have always been together to overcome challenges.

It all started in 1973, when ASEAN was united to address the issue of growing export of synthetic rubber from Japan. The dialogue turned out to be the very first successful experience of ASEAN's external engagement.

In 1977, after the 1st ASEAN-Japan Summit in Kuala Lumpur, then Prime Minister Fukuda outlined Japan's vision for its relationship with ASEAN in Manila. This included our commitment to peace and not becoming a military power, "heart to heart" relationship based on mutual trust, and support for ASEAN's own efforts to strengthen their solidarity and resilience. This vision is valid till today.

From around that time, ASEAN achieved rapid industrialisation as well as expansion to "ASEAN 10" by the 1990s. When ASEAN faced the financial crisis

around 1997, the first ASEAN+3 Summit was held. As a framework to prevent the recurrence of such crises, the “Chiang Mai Initiative” was established and developed with Japan’s active engagement.

As ASEAN accelerated its efforts to promote the ASEAN Community in the 21st century, Japan was again supportive, through the Japan ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA).

After the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami in 2004, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management, AHA Centre, was established.

In response to Covid-19, it was agreed that the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, ACPHEED, would be established. Again, both were strongly supported by Japan.

ASEAN will continue to be important for Japan. ASEAN is in a strategically important location, the centre of the Indo-Pacific region enjoying a growing economy with a population of 670 million as the centre of global growth, and becoming a multilayered regional cooperation hub such as ASEAN Plus Three, East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum.

Prime Minister KISHIDA has expressed, on so many occasions, his commitment to elevating ASEAN-Japan relations to a new stage in this memorable year.

(What are the common challenges of ASEAN and Japan)

And now, ASEAN and Japan are facing two common challenges:

- 1) Peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, and
- 2) Emerging cross-cutting global issues.

We should address these challenges together.

On peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), which Japan promotes, share fundamental principles, including openness, transparency,

inclusiveness, and respect for international law.

On emerging cross-cutting global issues, including but not limited to energy, decarbonization and circular economy, digital transformation, health, ageing and well-being, disaster management, ASEAN and Japan can co-create solutions.

(What steps will ASEAN and Japan take together)

Then, what steps will ASEAN and Japan take together? I believe that there are two important directions.

First, ASEAN and Japan should co-create practical solutions under AOIP.

For practical cooperation, the Government of Japan already announced several concrete initiatives.

For example, on the announcement of New Plan for FOIP in March, an additional contribution to 100million USD to the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund was announced. On the occasion of ASEAN-Japan Summit in September, Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative was released.

Second, ASEAN and Japan should continuously promote exchange for “heart to heart” relationship to deepen and expand our mutual trust.

For the youth, more than tens of thousands youth exchange has been achieved through JENESYS and SSEAYP, and this year we launched new exchange initiative for young business leaders, namely ASEAN-Japan Young/Generation-Z Business Leaders Summits.

We also promote exchange of scientists and researchers through JASTIP and AUN/SEED-Net.

These connections are fundamental for co-creating practical solutions and multicultural society.

(Conclusion)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude my address by sharing important events scheduled this year.

Already, a number of important commitments have been made and deliverables announced to promote ASEAN-Japan cooperation throughout this year.

In December, ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit will be held in Tokyo and ASEAN and Japan plan to adopt a new Joint Vision Statement and its Implementation Plan to set out direction for the partnership in the coming decades.

I wish that as many of the editors gathered here today will take an interest in ASEAN-Japan relations and cover the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit in December.

Thank you very much for your attention.

(END)