

**Opening Remarks**  
**‘Symposium for Promoting Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture and**  
**Food System through Innovation:**  
**ASEAN’s Initiatives and Japan’s Contribution**

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Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning! First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to ASEAN Secretariat and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Japan for co-organising today’s event, as well as ERIA for its gracious support. Today’s symposium is very timely as we face a critical challenge of food security due to geopolitical developments, climate change and other emerging issues.

**(ASEAN and Japan Cooperation)**

It is a great honour for me to make this opening remarks.

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. In the last five decades, ASEAN and Japan have always been together to overcome challenges.

For example, when Asian countries faced the financial crisis around 1997, the first ASEAN+3 Summit was held and the “Chiang Mai Initiative” was established as a framework to prevent the recurrence of such crises.

After the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami in 2004, Japan strongly supported ASEAN’s efforts in the disaster management, including through the establishment ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, AHA Centre.

When Japan suffered from the earthquake and tsunami in 2011, immediate and significant assistance was provided by ASEAN countries. This is a testament to our longstanding trusted partnership. I would like to express my steadfast

commitment to enhancing our partnership which is mutually beneficial for years to come.

**(What are the common challenges of ASEAN and Japan)**

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

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 food security, energy, decarbonization and circular economy, digital transformation, health, ageing and well-being, disaster management, ASEAN and Japan can co-create solutions.

**(What steps should ASEAN and Japan take together)**

Then, what steps should 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.

For the youth, more than tens of thousands youth exchange has been achieved through JENESYS and SSEAYP. In Agriculture and Food industry areas, Human Resource Development which introduce Japanese agriculture industries and

technologies to the Universities among ASEAN continued around 10 years.

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

**(Conclusion)**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by sharing important events scheduled this year.

A number of important commitments, including ASEAN-Japan MIDORI Cooperation Plan, have already been made and deliverables announced to promote ASEAN-Japan cooperation throughout this year.

Next month in December, ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit will be held in Tokyo. 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. Prime Minister KISHIDA himself has expressed, on so many occasions, his commitment to elevating ASEAN-Japan relations to a new stage in this memorable year.

It is my hope that your participation and discussion in today's symposium, combined with this upcoming Commemorative Summit, will contribute to further promoting resilient and sustainable agriculture and food system through Innovation in ASEAN, Japan, the region, and the world in the next fifty years and beyond!

Thank you very much for your attention.

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