

**Newsletter from the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN
No. 18: Promoting ASEAN-Japan Cooperation Projects**

31 May 2024



ASEAN Blue Economy Innovation Project Launching Ceremony

(14 May 2024, credit: UNDP)

How did you spend your time in May? In Japan, it was the so-called Golden Week holidays from late April to early May, and many people enjoyed their time off work. Whilst in ASEAN, it continued to be a busy month with meetings and events taking place.

The month of May started with the 10th anniversary commemoration of the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP), during the Ministerial Council meeting in Paris. In attendance was Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio and ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn. In mid-May, the ASEAN Blue Economy Innovation Project was launched and a meeting between Japan and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) was held at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat. Later in the month, ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn visited Japan and attended many events and meetings in Hiroshima, around Nagoya and in Tokyo.

Through the series of events and meetings this month, I felt that now is an opportune time to launch and promote ASEAN-Japan cooperation projects. Looking back the past month, I would like to share my thoughts with you on the promotion of the ASEAN-Japan cooperation projects.



OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP) 10th Anniversary Celebrations
(2 May 2024, credit: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

● Promoting Cooperation Between Southeast Asia with OECD

From 2-3 May, the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting was held at its Headquarter in Paris under Japan's chairmanship, which concurrently celebrates 60th anniversary of its accession. Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio and five accompanying ministers from Japan attended.

Post the opening ceremony, [celebration of the 10th anniversary of the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme \(SEARP\)](#) was held, attended and addressed by ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn and ministers from several ASEAN countries. [SEARP](#) is an initiative to promote Southeast Asian countries' participation in OECD's rules, standards and domestic reforms through policy dialogue and other means. It was launched in 2014, when Japan last chaired the Ministerial Council, and led many achievements such as the adoption of Indonesia's accession roadmap and Thailand's application for membership.

In [his speech](#), Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio announced the newly launched Japan OECD-ASEAN Partnership Program (JOAPP). This is a three-year, EUR 8 million (approximately USD 8.7 million) programme for expert dispatch, research, analysis, and training in the areas of private investment, connectivity, sustainability and digital. With the objective to channel OECD's strengths in reliable data and analysis for sustainable growth in Southeast Asia. Japan intends to continue its efforts to promote cooperation between Southeast Asia and OECD.



ASEAN Blue Economy Innovation Project Press Conference

(14 May 2024, credit: UNDP)

● ASEAN Blue Economy Innovation Project

On 14 May, the [launching ceremony](#) of [the ASEAN Blue Economy Innovation Project](#), in collaboration with UNDP and ASEAN Secretariat, took place at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat. The project will put into practice the ASEAN Blue Economy Framework agreed by ASEAN leaders last year. It calls for marine and freshwater-related innovation projects in 11 ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste, with the best 60 companies and organisations selected to receive funding and incubation support. By the end of the year, the projects will be matched with private sector as partners and will include Japanese companies.

It aims to promote maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific by linking ASEAN's priority measure and UNDP's global expertise in Japan. Importantly, to further scale up public-private partnerships through the co-creation of innovation between ASEAN and Japan. ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn delivered a video message at the ceremony, also attended by some Ambassadors of Dialogue Partners including Europe, Australia, and NZ. A [joint Op-Ed](#) with the Jakarta Post and other major Southeast Asian newspapers were carried, and the joint press conference was widely reported in ASEAN countries.

The deadline for the public call for projects is extended by one month till the end of June from the initial date (end of May). We hope to contribute to the development of the Indo-Pacific region through the realisation of many ideas.



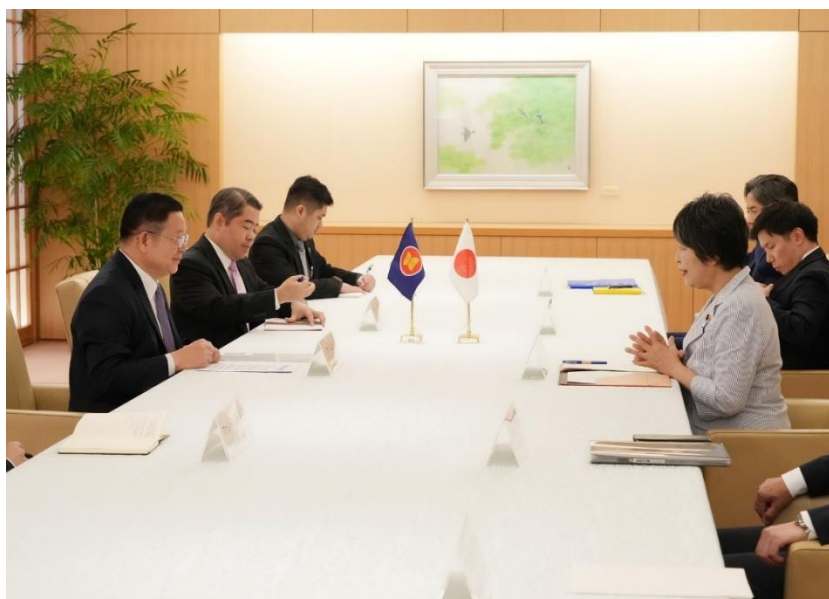
Third AICHR-Japan Interface Meeting (22 May 2024)

● ASEAN-Japan Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights

On 22 May, [the 3rd AICHR-Japan Interface Meeting](#) was held at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat, on the sideline of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Meeting. Following the agreement at [the 2nd meeting](#) in November last year to hold subsequent regular meetings, and the adoption of the Joint Vision Statement and Implementation Plan at [the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit](#) in December to further promote AICHR-Japan cooperation, the two sides discussed the formulation and implementation of concrete cooperation projects.

I made a [presentation](#) on past cooperation records and future directions, and listened to opinions and requests from the ASEAN side. The meeting was attended not only by the Mission of Japan to ASEAN, but also by Professors from the International Cooperation Department of the Research and Training Institute of the Ministry of Justice, who were on a business trip to the region, and JICA experts in Jakarta.

During the discussion, noting that AICHR-Japan cooperation has achieved significant results with the adoption of [“the ASEAN Master Plan for Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,”](#) since its first meeting in 2015, the two sides agreed to work together to develop cooperation projects with a focus on “business and human rights”. Furthermore, the AICHR representatives from ASEAN countries presented various ideas and requests, which will be considered in parallel. We would like to aim for ‘co-creation,’ where Japan and ASEAN can learn from each other, also in this area of human rights.



Meeting between ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn and Foreign Minister Kamikawa
(23 May 2024)

● Visit of the ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn to Japan

Through 19-25 May, ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn visited Japan for the first time this year at the invitation of ERIA. During his first visit to Hiroshima, he [toured the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum](#) and [laid flowers at the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims](#). He exchanged views with [Hiroshima Governor YUZAKI Hidehito](#) and [Hiroshima Vice Mayor KOJINBARA Masashi](#), and [delivered a lecture at Hiroshima University](#), where he was awarded the title of Specially Invited Professor.

Next, they visited the outskirts of Nagoya, where they observed JERA's ammonia-coal co-firing project at its [Hekinan Thermal Power Station](#) to see the company's decarbonisation efforts and [Denso's Anjo Plant](#)'s digitally-enabled manufacturing technology for next-generation vehicles.

On 23 May, in Tokyo, he held a series of meetings with [Foreign Minister Kamikawa](#), [Environment Minister Ito](#), [Health, Labour and Welfare Minister Takemi](#), [Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Saito](#), [Justice Minister Koizumi](#), [Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Sakamoto](#), [LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Tokai](#), and [Keidanren Chairman Tokura](#) to discuss promotion of ASEAN-Japan cooperation, and also participated in a panel discussion at [the Nikkei Forum 'The Future of Asia.'](#) at a session on digital cooperation.

Following four visits to Japan last year, this was Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim-Hourn's very first visit to Hiroshima and tour of Japan's decarbonisation and digital-related industries. In addition, meetings with many ministers and a presentation at the 'Future of Asia' session were realised on the same occasion. The visit was extremely meaningful from the perspective to follow-up on the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.



Prime Minister Kishida's speech at the Nikkei Forum 'Future of Asia' dinner

(23 May 2024, credit: Cabinet Public Relations Office)

● Promoting ASEAN-Japan Cooperation Projects

[Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio delivered a speech](#) at the Nikkei Forum 'Future of Asia' dinner on 23 May, which I participated online from Jakarta. During his speech, Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio announced (1) to invite young leaders from ASEAN countries to discuss the future of ASEAN-Japan again this year, as in last year; (2) to hold the 2nd AZEC Ministerial Meeting in Jakarta in August this year and launch the Asia Zero Emission Centre at ERIA; (3) to formulate for the first time and announce with ERIA, an Automotive Strategy for the next 10 years to deepen ASEAN-Japan cooperation whilst advance ASEAN's central position in the world in the next-generation automobile industry as early as this Autumn; and (4) to formulate a programme for human resource development in AI and semiconductors, aiming to develop 100,000 advanced digital human resources in the next five years. This means further progress, building on the measures already committed.

The ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit in December last year was a new starting point. It is important to concretely kick off and promote ASEAN-Japan cooperation projects based on the Joint Vision Statement and Implementation Plan. Now is the time to go ahead. Starting with the series of high-level events held this month, I look forward to working with you all to formulate and develop cooperation projects. Thank you for your continued support!

Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN
KIYA Masahiko