

Newsletter from the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN
No. 30: From ASEAN-Japan Cooperation to Broader Partnerships

28 May 2025



Meeting between ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn and Parliamentary Association of AZEC
(5 May 2025, at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat, credit: ASEAN Secretariat)

The long holidays from late April to early May were the period when many prominent Japanese figures made overseas visits. In Jakarta, following the late April visit by then-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries ETO Taku, a delegation from the Parliamentary Association of AZEC, led by the Prime Minister's Special Envoy, KISHIDA Fumio, visited in early May. They met with Indonesian dignitaries and ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, and toured ERIA.

The following week, the annual ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)-Japan Interface Meeting was held on the 13th, followed by the ASEAN-Japan Medical Device Regulatory Symposium on the 14th. Furthermore, several events took place consecutively in the ensuing week: a dinner meeting with ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn at my residence on the 20th; the launch event of the ASEAN Blue Carbon and Finance

Profiling Project on the 21st; a graduation ceremony of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre)'s executive training programme on the 23rd; and the ASEAN Summit Outcomes Report Briefing on the 28th, during the final week of May that I attended.

Through this series of events, I felt that hereafter it is important to promote collaboration with a wide range of partners, building on the deepening of ASEAN-Japan cooperation. In this edition of the newsletter, I would like to share recent events and reflect together with you on how we can further strengthen collaboration with our partners.



Meeting between ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn and Parliamentary Association of AZEC
(5 May 2025, at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat, credit: ASEAN Secretariat)

● Parliamentary Association of AZEC visited Jakarta

On 3-7 May, former Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio visited Indonesia (Jakarta) and Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur) as the Special Envoy of Prime Minister ISHIBA Shigeru's and the Supreme Advisor to the Parliamentary Association of Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC), accompanied by members of Parliamentary Association of AZEC.

In [Jakarta](#), in addition to meetings and site visits with key Indonesian figures, the delegation [met with ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn](#) on 5 May, with my attendance as well. Special Envoy Kishida stated that the Parliamentary Association of AZEC had been established to further promote AZEC cooperation, and both sides exchanged views on the decarbonization in the Asian region. In [his opening remarks](#), Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim-Hourn said, *"The active participation of nearly all ASEAN Member States in the Asia Zero Emission Community initiative, led by Japan, stands as a testament to our shared commitment to a sustainable, low-carbon future."*

On the same day, Special Envoy Kishida [visited the Asia Zero Emission Center](#) within the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and was given an explanation of the AZE Centre's vision for decarbonization and the roadmap for achieving this goal.



The 4th AICHR-Japan Interface Meeting

(13 May 2025, at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat, credit: ASEAN Secretariat)

● ASEAN-Japan Cooperation in Business and Human Rights

On 13 May, the annual ["AICHR-Japan Interface"](#) was convened on the sidelines of the AICHR (ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) Special Meeting at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat in Jakarta. Held as a follow-up to last year's session, this marked the fourth edition of the discussion.

The representatives of AICHR countries (ambassador level) and I reflected on

AICHR-Japan cooperation to date and [exchanged views](#) on the direction of future cooperation, taking into account the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan, thematic [priority areas, and the issues](#) I raised. As a result, the two sides agreed to focus on the central theme of "business and human rights" and to formulate multi-year projects that are more efficient and have a greater social and economic impact, as well as projects that utilise the knowledge and expertise of a wide range of related organisations, including international organisations. We also agreed to further deepen AICHR-Japan cooperation in line with the AICHR-Japan cooperation cycle.

Ms. YAMADA Miwa, Senior Reserch Fellow at JETRO's Institute of Developing Economies and an expert in the field of "business and human rights," [suggests that](#) “ Based on the idea that promoting human rights initiatives by ASEAN governments and companies also benefits Japanese businesses operating in the region, Japanese companies can properly fulfill their responsibility to respect human rights by working together with the Japanese government, ASEAN governments, and other stakeholders to create an environment conducive to improving and addressing human rights issues in ASEAN.”

When I temporarily returned to Japan in March, I also delivered [a lecture](#) to Japanese experts on ASEAN-Japan cooperation in this field. We intend to continue advancing initiatives in this area going forward.



ASEAN-Japan Medical Devices Regulatory Symposium (14 May 2025, at a hotel)

● ASEAN-Japan Cooperation in Medical Field

On 14 May, [the ASEAN-Japan Medical Devices Regulatory Symposium](#) was held at a hotel in the city, with support from the Japan-ASEAN Integrated Fund (JAIF). The event was co-organised by the Ministry of Health of Indonesia, the University of Indonesia (UI), and the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA). It was a large-scale event with approximately 1,000 participants, including 400 in-person attendees.

The symposium, along with the two-day seminar that followed, provided a platform for sharing knowledge and experience, as well as for building capacity in medical device regulation in ASEAN and Japan. Through these efforts, we aim to deepen our understanding of regulatory harmonization and contribute to ensuring fair access to safe, effective, and advanced medical devices in the ASEAN region.

Vice Minister of Health Dante Saksono Harbuwono from the Indonesian Ministry of Health attended and delivered the opening remarks. The Vice Minister has experience studying abroad at Yamanashi University. I was impressed by his explanation of the great results achieved through the continued joint efforts of the three parties, which he illustrated using the Japanese proverb, "It takes three years on the stone".

In [my opening remarks](#), I explained the importance of this symposium, Japan's ongoing support through JAIF, and the efforts of PMDA which plays a central role. After the opening ceremony, Vice Minister and I visited various booths set up by Indonesian companies, and participated in a press conference for this symposium, where I sensed the enthusiasm of both the participating companies and the media.



ASEAN Blue Carbon and Finance Profiling Launch Event
(21 May 2025, at a hotel in Jakarta)

● A New Project for ASEAN Blue Economy

On May 21, [the launch event for the ASEAN Blue Carbon and Finance Profiling Project](#)—a collaboration among ASEAN, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Japan—was held at a hotel in Jakarta ([video](#)). I also attended and delivered [opening remarks](#), along with ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General Satvinder Singh and UNDP Resident Representative NORIMASA Shimomura. Many participants from ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste, including public and private partners, as well as civil society organizations, were in attendance.

[This project](#) is a follow-up to [the ASEAN Blue Economy Innovation Project](#), which was implemented by ASEAN, UNDP, and Japan under the ASEAN Blue Economy Task Force in 2024, following the [ASEAN Blue Economy Framework](#) agreed upon by ASEAN Leaders in 2023.

This time, we will focus on the potential for decarbonization in the ocean. We will develop available Blue Carbon Profiles (seagrass and peatland) for each of the 11 countries including ASEAN member states and Timor-Leste, and Blue Finance Profiles (blue bonds, blended finance, public-private partnerships, etc.) that are necessary for commercialization. Additionally, we will work with more than 50 academic research institutions and over 20 experts in this field—including Gadjah

Mada University in Indonesia and ERIA—to build a network for implementation and scale-up. The project is scheduled to conclude in March next year. The following day, I was [interviewed on this topic on television](#). We plan to continue working towards implementation hereafter.



AHA Centre Programme (ACE-LEDMP) Graduation Ceremony
(23 May 2025, at a hotel in Jakarta)

● AHA Centre Executive: Leadership in Emergency and Disaster Management Programme

On 23 May, [Graduation Ceremony of the AHA Centre Executive: Leadership in Emergency and Disaster Management Programme \(ACE-LEDMP\) Middle Level Course](#) was held, supported by the Japan-ASEAN Integrated Fund (JAIF). Following a video message from ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General San Lwin and remarks from Dr. Sithu Pe Thein, Director of Operations of the AHA Centre, I delivered [opening remarks](#).

This course was attended by 20 participants from ASEAN Member States' National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMOs). The trainees primarily underwent face-to-face training in Jakarta for five weeks, during which they not only attended lectures and workshops but also interacted with one another to build mutual trust. Furthermore, during a one-week study visit to Japan, they visited Tokyo and Kobe, where they exchanged views with government agencies,

international organisations, NGOs, and various facilities related to disaster management, broadening their horizons. On this occasion, they also had a special opportunity to visit the Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

Through this training course, we hope that each participant will enhance their knowledge and experience, take on leadership roles within their respective countries' disaster management agencies in the future, and promote the ASEAN initiative, “One ASEAN One Response.”



Dinner Meeting with the ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn

(20 May 2025, at the Residence of the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN, credit: ASEAN Secretariat)

● From ASEAN-Japan Cooperation to Broader Partnerships

On 20 May, I invited ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn and other senior officers of the ASEAN Secretariat to [a dinner at my residence](#) to follow up on the Secretary-General's recent attendance at the opening ceremony of the Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai, Japan, as well as the visit of the Parliamentary Association of AZEC, and to exchange views on the future of ASEAN-Japan cooperation. In this context, I realised the importance of further deepening collaboration with partners by utilising the ASEAN-led framework and AOIP, building on existing ASEAN-Japan cooperation in areas such as digital

transformation (DX), green transformation (GX), and people-to-people exchanges.

The following week, from 26 to 27 May, the ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN-GCC Summit, and the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit were held in Kuala Lumpur. On 28 May, ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn held a briefing ([video](#)) at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat in Jakarta to [report on the outcomes of the series of Summit meetings](#), which I also attended. The most significant achievement of this summit was the adoption and announcement of the [ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and the four strategic plans](#). Under the new vision set forth by ASEAN, Japan will take the lead in expanding the circle of partnerships.

Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN
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