

ADDRESS BY
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Japan's New Commitment to Asia
-Toward the Realization of an East Asian Community -

1. *Greetings*

His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean,
His Excellency Ambassador and Dean of S. Rajaratnam School of International
Studies, Mr. Barry Desker,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Just a short while ago, the APEC leaders' Summit was successfully concluded under the esteemed chairpersonship of His Excellency Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. I have come to this lecture immediately afterwards. I am very honored to be able to speak with you about the new Japanese administration's policy toward Asia. I especially thank Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo for serving as the moderator today.

2. *Asia and Japan*

Today, there is no question about the importance of Asia.

The world is becoming increasingly multipolar. If we look at economic power against this backdrop, we see that the ASEAN Plus Six countries produced about 23 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product in 2008 while APEC economies accounted for more than 52 percent. These figures are likely to grow.

As you know quite well, in Asia, regional integration is making progress in the real economy. At the same time, it is an interesting fact that Asia is prospering through its openness to the rest of the world. We should be encouraged by the fact that the ASEAN countries, China, the Republic of Korea and others have

begun to play a constructive role in the region and in the entire international community while working together to promote their economic development.

Of course developing Asia is not free of problems. In this regard, the presence of the United States has been playing and will continue to play an important role in ensuring the peace and prosperity of Asia, including Japan. This is one of the greatest reasons that Japan continues to regard the Japan-U.S. alliance as the linchpin of Japanese foreign policy. President Obama and I have agreed to further deepen our alliance. Yesterday, President Obama gave a speech in Tokyo and reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to Asia. Together with you, I would like to welcome this commitment.

Japan is quite a unique country in Asia. Among Asian nations, Japan was the first to achieve modernization. It is endowed with excellent technology and a mature economy. Japanese society is also endowed with values to be proud of, such as diligence and teamwork. Minister Mentor His Excellency Mr. Lee Kuan Yew wrote about these in his memoirs. Japan also has a long history of parliamentary democracy. As you well know, about two months ago, the Japanese people chose a change of government, turning a new page in the history of Japan's democracy.

Japan's uniqueness is not, however, limited to these dimensions. Japan has begun to face "post-economic growth challenges" well before many other Asian nations. Its falling birth rate, aging population, and development of urbanization simultaneous with depopulation of rural areas are just a few examples of these challenges. After much trial and error, Japan has developed the knowledge and experience to address these challenges.

It is important to note that almost all nations will face similar challenges sooner or later. When they tackle their own "post-economic growth challenges," they can benefit from Japan's store of knowledge and experience as something like public goods. Experiencing hardships earlier than other countries is one of Japan's strengths, which in turn helps to strengthen Asia.

For this reason, I believe that if Japan cooperates with other Asian countries, truly any challenge can be overcome.

3. *Promoting the initiative for an East Asian community*

The new government of Japan has declared that it attaches great importance to Asian diplomacy. The main pillar of this policy is the initiative for an "East Asian community."

The concept behind my initiative for an East Asian community stems from the philosophy of "yu-ai." I personally cherish this "yu-ai" philosophy. "Yu-ai" is typically translated as "fraternity." Within "yu-ai," people respect the freedom and human dignity of others just as they respect their own freedom and human

dignity. In other words, “yu-ai” means not only the independence of people but also their coexistence.

Ever since I began my career in politics, I have constantly asked myself if we could find ways to create a bond of “yu-ai” between Japan and other Asian countries, and more broadly among Asia-Pacific countries. I set this goal because reconciliation in the real sense of the word is not necessarily believed to have been achieved in the region. This is the current situation, although more than 60 years have passed since Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly on the people of Asian nations.

Now let us turn our eyes to Europe. Europe had the disastrous experience of two world wars. But Germany and France, once bitter foes, have increased their cooperation dramatically. This started with the establishment of a common market for coal and steel production. Then, through further exchanges among people, they succeeded in establishing a *de facto* community. Now, wars against one another are unimaginable. These efforts were initially centered on Germany and France. But, they continued through twists and turns over the years, and they finally resulted in the creation of the European Union. The central idea of my “East Asian community” initiative is based upon reconciliation and cooperation in Europe.

In my initiative, I propose that countries sharing a common vision promote cooperation in various fields. This would be based on the principle of “open regional cooperation.” Through this, our region would develop a multi-layered network of functional communities. I attach the greatest importance to the promotion of concrete cooperation in a broad range of areas such as trade, investment, finance and education. I will explain that in more detail later.

As we cooperate, we will set rules for ourselves, work together, share our wisdom, and respect the rules we have made. Therefore, we will be able to not only achieve practical gains, but also build mutual trust.

Here, I would like to cite a few examples of the cooperation that I consider important.

First of all, we need to cooperate to prosper together.

The experiences of Europe and ASEAN show that developing economic ties in principle promotes cooperation. Economic partnership agreements (EPAs) and free trade agreements (FTAs) are effective ways to promote such economic ties in the region under a common set of rules.

Japan has EPAs with a total of ten countries and one region. These include agreements with seven ASEAN member countries and ASEAN as a whole. Still, these agreements are insufficient to fully “open up Japan.” Going forward,

we will accelerate EPA negotiations with the Republic of Korea, India and Australia and pursue the possibilities of EPA negotiations with other countries as well. We will also actively participate in the discussions for the “Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia” (CEPEA) among the ASEAN Plus Six countries, as well as the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) among APEC economies.

Second, we must cooperate to save a “Green Asia.”

No country on earth can escape from the threat posed by climate change.

Japan has set a reduction target for greenhouse gas emissions of 25 percent by 2020, compared to the 1990 level. This target is premised on the establishment of a fair and effective international framework and agreement on ambitious emissions reduction targets by all major economies. Negotiations for the upcoming COP 15 are now underway. For the sake of future generations, we need to ensure the success of the Conference.

We all know that growth alone will not make people happy and will not be sustainable. Japan experienced serious air pollution and environmental degradation during its period of rapid economic growth. Today, rivers are being polluted and mangrove forests are being destroyed in many parts of Asia.

I wish from the bottom of my heart that people in developing countries pursue greenhouse gas reductions based on “common but differentiated responsibilities.” By doing this, they will help tackle climate change even as they achieve sustainable growth. They can take advantage of advanced energy-saving technologies, smart grid systems, water purification techniques and other environment-friendly technologies owned by Japanese companies.

Third, we need to cooperate to protect human lives.

In the thirty years until 2007, more than 1.3 million Asians died in natural disasters. Infectious diseases like SARS, avian influenza and the new A-H1N1 flu have raged across national boundaries. It would be no exaggeration to say that in this part of the world, natural disasters and infectious diseases pose a more serious threat to human security than war.

We have witnessed devastating earthquakes such as the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and those that hit Sumatra and Java. We have seen monsoons and typhoons repeatedly strike our region. Whenever major natural disasters have occurred, we have helped and have been helped by one another. The image of rescue efforts by devoted NGOs and volunteers has been engraved in my mind. We should ask if we can help each other more often and more extensively.

Japan will make a proactive contribution, for example, to encourage governments and other organizations to register their human and material assets for disaster relief. Through this, we can conduct more prompt and effective rescue and relief activities in case of disasters. This will be an important step toward the establishment of a new framework for disaster management.

In the field of sanitation, next year Japan will dispatch a Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel as a “yu-ai boat.” This ship will carry not only SDF officials but also people from NGOs and other private sector and civil society entities. Their mission will be to conduct medical services and extend cultural activities in the Pacific and the Southeast Asian region. In this way, Japan will participate in the “Pacific Partnership” initiative launched by the U.S. in 2007. Japan will work together with the U.S., Australia, Indonesia, and other participating countries. Together, we will help improve the well-being of local people.

Fourth, we need to cooperate in building a “sea of fraternity.” The Asian region is linked together by many seas. And, most regional commerce depends on sea routes. The realization of a “sea of fraternity” in this region will bring about peace and prosperity in the region as a whole. As for multilateral joint efforts in this area, Japan, as a maritime country, has the know-how and assets to maintain the peace at sea.

For instance, we can cooperate further to counter piracy. Existing regional cooperation in Southeast Asia, including in the Strait of Malacca, has already become a model for many countries. Why don’t we further expand these efforts to other regions? Many Asia-Pacific countries, including Japan, the United States, China, the Republic of Korea, Australia, India, Malaysia, and Singapore, are currently engaging in activities to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia. We can work even more closely together in this area as well.

East Asia is lagging in joint efforts to prevent maritime accidents and to ease tensions. It is important for countries in the region to promote concrete cooperation, such as by concluding agreements on search and rescue, in case of maritime accidents.

Cooperation for our region need not be limited to these areas. We can also work together in such fields as nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation,

cultural exchanges, social security, and urban issues. There may also be an opportunity for us to discuss possible political cooperation in the future.

It may be possible that countries with the will and the capabilities to cooperate in a particular field may choose to participate in projects initially, and as their efforts bear fruit, other countries could join later.

Ladies and gentlemen,

What do you think about these ideas? After hearing my views today, perhaps you would still like to ask who will be the members of my initiative for an East Asian community.

To that, my answer is - people who share these ideals and dreams.

4. *Conclusion*

Finally, I would like to touch upon my thinking on “the most important key to promote an East Asian community initiative.” That key is people.

Japanese products have spread to other Asian countries and Japan’s imports from the rest of Asia have increased. Yet, greater trade volumes alone will not lead to mutual understanding. “Person-to-person contact” will be the only way to help us truly understand each other. It is also important to learn together about the technology and tools we will share as we move forward. This is how we can begin cooperation in a variety of fields.

There are many things Japan can do to promote people to people exchanges in the region. In one program, Japan invites 6,000 youths from East Asian countries every year. The Japanese government launched this project in 2007, and we will continue it in the years ahead. We are also resolved to expand the ability to transfer credits interchangeably among universities. Similarly, we will redouble efforts to harmonize the standards of assessment among universities in the region.

In this region, the ASEAN Plus Six countries include more than 3.2 billion people and the APEC economies include 2.7 billion people. The energy of these diverse populations is tremendous. I am sure that unimaginable, new capabilities and wisdom will emerge if the people -all the different people- living in this region, take the opportunity to get to know one another across national borders.

Today, I am in Singapore. This country provides a great example of how openness to the world can lead to a dynamic and prosperous society. Here, I also sense the infinite possibilities for APEC's "open regionalism."

I hope that people from various walks of life in this area will cooperate more closely in diverse ways. I hope that we will fully discuss among ourselves what kind of community we want to build in this region. I also hope that we will work together to build a new Asia for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Next year, Japan will chair APEC. I hope you will take this opportunity to visit Japan.

Japan has snow. Japan has hot springs.

Japan has people with warm hearts, and they are waiting to welcome you.

Next year, I look forward to welcoming you to Japan.

(END)