

Keynote Address

**H.E. PRAK Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
at the Public Seminar on**

“ASEAN-Japan Cooperation and Ways Forward in the Next 50 Years”

06 August 2022

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

- *H.E. HAYASHI Yoshimasa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan,*
- *H.E. Dr. SOK Siphana, Chairman of the Board of Director, ASEAN Vision Institute,*
- *Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Good Afternoon!!

1. I have to say that I am very glad to be with my good friend, H.E. HAYASHI, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, this afternoon. I managed to make the extra mile, but it is a great pleasure to be with you because you come from afar and every one of us is tired, but we are so happy to see each other again today. I thank the Asian Vision Institute and the Embassy of Japan for inviting me and for organising this seminar, which is quite futuristic, in my view, as we all try to foresee how we can take this ASEAN-Japan cooperation forward to the next 50 years. As you said, we don't know where we will be in the next 50 years, but let's set some visions for our children and grandchildren for the next 50 years.

2. But before I move on to my main keynote address, please allow me to take this opportunity to sincerely offer my deepest condolences once again to

the people of Japan for the loss of former Prime Minister Shizo Abe. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we spend the last few days discussing on many burning issues and tremendous challenges facing our region and the world, utilising many platforms of ASEAN (the EAS, the AARF) to exchange our views and our positions in a search for peace, for stability, for prosperity in the region and then as ASEAN turns 55 in the next few days, actually after tomorrow.

3. The ASEAN-Japan relations were established nearly 50 years ago, making Japan one of ASEAN's oldest partners. Since then, ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation have continued to deepen and broaden, based on mutual trust and equal partnership. Japan's continued commitment to promoting durable peace, shared prosperity and sustainable development is truly felt and appreciated in our region. Indeed, ASEAN views Japan as our closest friend and a reliable partner.

4. Next year, we look forward to the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Relations. All these years, ASEAN appreciated Japan's unwavering support for ASEAN centrality and ASEAN-centred regional architecture which have substantially contributed to regional peace and security. Our cooperation covers various areas from combatting transnational crimes, maritime security, and cybersecurity to practical trust and confidence building measures in the region. In the context of Japan's Free and Open Indo Pacific strategy, many cooperation activities found some synergy in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

5. In the area of economic cooperation, Japan is ASEAN's fourth largest trading partner, with two-way trade amounting to USD 204.0 billion. Japan is also ASEAN's third largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI), with total FDI inflows from Japan amounting to USD 8.5 billion in 2020. Together, ASEAN

and Japan have worked to promote regional supply chain connectivity, especially in recent years as we intensify our economic recovery efforts in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. Here I find the role of the Japanese business sector very crucial and they continue to invest in ASEAN, taking advantage of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

6. In the area of Socio-Cultural Cooperation, ASEAN appreciates Japan's "heart-to-heart" partnership which has made substantial inroads in promoting cultural, sports and people-to-people exchanges. Advancing people-to-people connectivity, especially among the youth, was also another way to strengthen cooperation in tourism and education. Japan's support to ASEAN's efforts in narrowing the development gap through the Initiative for ASEAN Integration was and is also much appreciated.

Excellency HAYASHI, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Moving forward for the next 50 years, there are great expectations that the ASEAN-Japan relations will be greatly enhanced. Japan's interest in establishing ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is certainly the best route to boost our relations in the areas of digital economy and digital infrastructure, innovation, smart cities, infrastructure development, and human resource development, especially for highly-skilled digital workforce.

8. The huge potential and benefit of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement, which has entered into force on 1 January 2022, will be a significant contributor to the post-pandemic economic recovery efforts in the short term. In the long run, this mega free trade agreement will certainly transform our region beyond our expectations.

9. I also foresee ASEAN-Japan advancing cooperation in building capacity for Small and Medium Enterprises, women and young entrepreneurs,

especially in their application of digital technology for businesses. In addressing climate change, there are also much more potential in expanding practical cooperation on green growth as well as promoting transition to clean energy and low-carbon society.

10. As the year 2023 will mark the Golden Jubilee of ASEAN-Japan relations, we look forward to commemorating this auspicious occasion with our peoples placed at the heart of our agenda. We certainly see great opportunity to pushing forward the ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership to greater heights.

11. Allow me now to end my remark by encouraging all the participants here to actively contribute your ideas and thoughts on how we can enhance together ASEAN-Japan relations for the better.

12. On that note, may I wish this event a resounding success and declare the seminar open. Thank you!

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