

**A message from Foreign Minister HAYASHI Yoshimasa
to the Commemorative International Symposium
for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation
*ASEAN-Japan Relations: Entering a New Stage toward a Global
Partnership***

March 16, 2023

Excellencies, Distinguished guests,

I am honored to speak at this reception commemorating the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.

"Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities."

This is the catchphrase symbolizing the 50th anniversary. When you compare ASEAN-Japan relations with those between ASEAN and other countries, a distinctive feature can be found in the "heart to heart" mutual trust. I have heard these words from many people I met in ASEAN.

This is the result of our joint efforts for peace, stability, and prosperity in the region for the past 50 years, spanning almost two generations.

Through a wide range of exchanges among our citizens, we respect each other, learn from each other, and join hands even in times of difficulty.

This year is and will be a golden opportunity to take a step further into a new era based on this precious friendship shining like gold. It is exactly what makes this year significant.

Today, we are at a turning point in history, nations are once again competing fiercely, and the international community has entered an era in which cooperation and division are intricately intertwined.

ASEAN was established more than half a century ago by five Southeast Asian countries, and has worked for regional peace and development through solidarity while expanding its membership. ASEAN has also contributed to the promotion of dialogue and cooperation by establishing a framework for consultation with countries outside the region.

Japan was the first country in the world to start talks with ASEAN in 1973.

Since then, Japan has placed ASEAN at the center of Japan's foreign policy towards Asia. Japan has embraced ASEAN's endeavors and efforts from the bottom of the heart.

Japan has been consistently supporting ASEAN Centrality and Unity, and always standing by and supporting ASEAN with ODA and private investment as the two wheels of a vehicle.

I understand that participants from Japan and ASEAN had lively discussions on how our cooperation should evolve in the future during today's commemorative symposium for the 50th year.

Taking into account the valuable opinions presented today, we would like to further strengthen the ASEAN-Japan relations in the future.

In addition to these intellectual exchanges, the Japan Foundation, the organizer of today's symposium, has been conducting art and cultural exchanges and supporting Japanese language education under the "WA Project" which was announced on the occasion of the 40th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.

We will continue to promote cultural and people-to-people exchange initiatives that will succeed the "WA Project" in order to deepen exchanges between Japan and ASEAN and to continue these exchanges to the next generation.

Japan and ASEAN will hold the Commemorative Summit in Tokyo in December this year.

Based on "heart to heart" mutual trust and respect, we would like to jointly set out a vision for achieving sustainable development and establishing free and open international order based on the rule of law, and take a new step forward for our future.

We would like to sincerely ask for the continued support from those of you here today.

Thank you very much.