

Keynote Speech

The 16th Japan-Singapore Symposium

1 Opening Remarks

Our chairmen, Your Excellency Ambassador Tommy Koh and Your Excellency Ambassador Kenichiro Sasae,

Your Excellency Ms. SIM Ann, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of National Development,

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am Shunsuke Takei, State Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is my great pleasure to join you today at the opening of the 16th Japan-Singapore Symposium. In the long history of this symposium, we had to gather online since the meeting in Tokyo in 2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is with delight that we hold this symposium in person for the first time in four years. It is my great honor to deliver a keynote address on this special occasion as Japan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs. On behalf of the government of Japan, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for the efforts of everyone involved in organizing this symposium in both Japan and Singapore.

Today, I would like to share my thoughts on the Japan-Singapore relationship and the contributions of our two countries to the regional and international community.

2 Bilateral Relations

Japan and Singapore have maintained and strengthened their close ties in recent years, even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, last year, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Foreign Minister Balakrishnan's visits to Japan in May, Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Singapore in June, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's visit to Japan in September, and Foreign Minister Hayashi's visit to Singapore in October, symbolized such close bilateral relations.

Through these high-level exchanges, the two countries further deepened cooperation on our common challenges such as security, digital and climate change, and confirmed to closely coordinate to address increasingly severe regional and international situations. We must not forget that all of this is based on the "trust" that has been built between Japan and Singapore. On top of that, we have steadily made concrete achievements in individual areas. For example, in the business field, it is my pleasure to note that the Japan-Singapore Economic Dialogue was launched, and

under the framework of this dialogue, discussions have begun toward cooperation in supporting startups, enhancing supply chain resilience by utilizing digital technologies, as well as digital economy. In the area of startups, in particular, the two governments have concurred to hold the "Japan-Singapore Fast Track Pitch" in April as a concrete cooperation initiative. In terms of cooperation in the digital field, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong affirmed to enhance cooperation including on collaboration between Japan's Vision for a Digital Garden City Nation and Singapore's Smart Nation Initiative. Based on this, a meeting of experts in the digital field was held, and intensive discussion started to explore concrete possibilities for cooperation.

People to people exchanges are also important. In 2019, before the pandemic, approximately 490,000 Singaporeans, 10% of its total population, visited Japan. We will work to revitalize cross-border travel between Japan and Singapore to recover the pre-pandemic level.

At the same time, Japan is also working to expand exports of agricultural, forestry and fishery products and food. Japan considers Singapore as one of the key overseas markets. Particularly, Japan's prefectural governments have high expectations for Singapore as a regional information hub as we seek to

promote Japan's attraction. For this, each prefecture has launched its own food promotion programs in Singapore. I am pleased to learn that "wagyu" beef and citrus fruits from Miyazaki Prefecture, my hometown, have been very popular in Singapore. I hope that Singaporeans will enjoy safe and delicious Japanese foods and fruits, share their excitement with people in Singapore and beyond, and encourage many more people from the region to visit Japan.

I, myself, will continue to support such ongoing efforts of both Japan and Singapore in these various areas. As a member of the Japan-Singapore Parliamentary Friendship League, I visited Singapore last summer, and candidly exchanged views with government officials and members of the parliament on how we advance the bilateral relations even further. I also had the opportunity to rediscover the diverse nature of Singapore by visiting the calm and warm neighborhood of the Potong Pasir, where I once lived, and by experiencing the country's cutting-edge technology at the Agency for Science Technology and Research. During this visit, I hope to have candid discussions with the people of Singapore as well as visit various places so that I will have even deeper understanding of Singapore. I am determined to make further contribution to further development of the

Japan-Singapore relations as well as the deepening of "trust" between the two countries.

3 Regional Situation

Singapore is an important partner for Japan, sharing the responsibility of addressing challenges facing the region and the international community. [?]

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong expressed his hope for Japan's role in regional security at the international conference of "the Future of Asia" last year, which was a reassurance of trust to Japan and very encouraging for us.

Japan formulated a new National Security Strategy late last year. This strategy refers to principles of attaching importance to the coexistence and co-prosperity with other countries, collaboration with like-minded countries, and multilateral cooperation. It also illustrates Japan's determination to lead efforts to reinforce with steadfast resolve the international order based on the rule of law while engaging in diplomacy under the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. We are confident that such efforts will improve the security environment and benefit countries in this region including Singapore. In addition, this year, Japan assumes the G7 Presidency, and is a member of the Security Council. With this, Japan will make even more

contributions to securing regional and international peace and stability, as well as lead the international community as we work to defend the rule-based, free and open international order. Japan will also work on strengthening the functions of the UN, including the Security Council reform, in order to restore the trust on the UN, which was undermined by Russia's aggression.

The vision of a “Free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” has come to gain broad support and resonated in the international community, and FOIP- related initiatives have been announced by many countries. Especially, Japan has consistently and fully supported the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP),” which shares fundamental principles with the FOIP. Japan will further support ASEAN’s own initiatives toward the mainstreaming of the AOIP. This year marks the 50th year of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation. The Commemorative Summit will be held around December. We would like to cooperate with Singapore to set out a new vision for future ASEAN-Japan relations, and achieve great success at the summit.

Now let me turn to the recent security environment in the region. In the East China Sea, where Japan is located, as well as in the South China Sea, unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, inconsistent with international law, are

continuing. Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, located between these two seas, is also extremely important.

Also, the ongoing Russia's aggression against Ukraine is an act that shakes the very foundation of the international order. We seriously take the fact that many civilians have been victimized in various parts of Ukraine as a result of Russia's aggression. Russia seemingly cannot care about the General Assembly resolutions and the ICJ orders, as if they were just pieces of waste paper. They are also abusing their status as a nuclear weapon State with irresponsible rhetoric.

It is clear that these issues are not "regional problems" that should be addressed by local players alone, but they are directly related to values and principles in the international community. It remains important that we continue to deal with North Korea, including on the nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue, as well as respond to issues on Myanmar and other countries.

The crisis in Ukraine has revealed the risk that the unbalance in global supply chains could bring about vulnerability for stable logistics. The fact that some countries do not hesitate to put pressure on other

countries by taking advantage of their economic dependence is implying that these risks are not transitory. Addressing these challenges of economic security is one of the top priorities of the Kishida administration, and I attach great importance to cooperation with other countries in this area as well.

Also, in order to build a free and fair economic order, it is important to maintain the high standards of the CPTPP, as well as to uphold its spirit and principles of not tolerating economic coercion or unfair trading practices. Japan highly appreciates Singapore's contribution as a Chair of the CPTPP Commission last year. We will continue to work closely with Singapore.

Additionally, Japan will also work with Singapore to address our common and global issues such as energy and climate change, including through cooperation in “the Asia Zero Emission Community.”

Japan and Singapore have jointly conducted training courses for third countries through the JSPP21 since 1997 in order to tackle a wide range of global issues. The two countries have been recently cooperating in building third countries' capacity through providing training courses on critical issues such as Maritime Safety Management, Green Economy, and Supply-Chain Resilience.

4 Concluding Remarks

Japan and Singapore work together towards shared causes, and address jointly common challenges. I am convinced that there is tremendous potential for Japan and Singapore to jointly exercise wisdom, lead the international community together, cooperate even more closely on regional and global challenges to which I have brought your attention today.

I would like to conclude my keynote speech by expressing my sincere hope that the discussions at today's symposium will lead to the building of trust between peoples and nations, which both Japan and Singapore value, to further developing the bilateral relations as well as the ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation which has reached a historic milestone of the 50th anniversary this year, and to enhancing collaboration between the two countries towards peace and stability in the region and the international community.

Thank you very much for your attention.