

**A message from State Minister HORII Iwao
to the reception of the ASEAN-Japan Youth Forum
commemorating the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.**

November 24, 2023

Excellencies, Distinguished guests,

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

Japan became the first ASEAN partner among the world back in 1973. Since then, we have been working together for peace, stability and prosperity in the region for the last half century, as true friends with “heart-to-heart” relations.

I myself have visited many ASEAN countries, including during my time as Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, and have been working to strengthen ASEAN-Japan relations.

In the course of such efforts, I realized firsthand that the foundation of Japan-ASEAN relations is nothing less than trust and respect built up through exchanges among people in all walks of life.

The Japan Foundation and the Kamenori Foundation, the organizers of this project, have also played a vital role in promoting exchanges between Japan and ASEAN for many years.

I heard that you presented your action plans today as the result of several months of intensive discussions under the theme of "Envisioning a better world in 2050".

Your experience gained through participating in this project will surely be an asset to you.

At the Commemorative Summit meeting to be held in Tokyo in December, the leaders of Japan and ASEAN will jointly set out a vision for co-creating a new era together, and hand down the “heart-to-heart” partnership to the next generation.

I sincerely hope that you will continue the "Golden Friendship" that has been nurtured through this project and become leaders of the next generation.

Thank you very much.