

**Opening Remarks by Mr. ONISHI Yohei,
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs,
at the ASCOJA-ASJA Symposium
September 11, 2026, Singapore**

I am Onishi Yohei, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, as introduced just now. On this joyous occasion of the 25th ASJA-ASCOJA Symposium, I would like to extend my greetings on behalf of the Government of Japan.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere respect to Japanese University Graduate Association of Singapore, led by President Shen Yue, as well as all those involved with ASJA International and ASCOJA, for their tireless efforts in organizing this symposium. I am truly delighted that this symposium is being held in such a grand manner in this very year, which marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Singapore.

I understand that ASCOJA was established in June 1977 by former participants of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' invitation program, 'Reunion of Southeast Asian Graduates from Japanese Universities,' which was initiated in 1974 by Mr. Takeo Fukuda, then Minister of Finance and later Prime Minister of Japan. Former Prime Minister Fukuda is also the grandfather of Mr. Fukuda Tatsuo, who is present here today. ASCOJA has dedicated itself for nearly half a century since its founding to promoting relations between Japan and ASEAN, as working in cooperation with its Japanese counterpart, ASJA. I would like to once again express my heartfelt gratitude for the contributions made by ASCOJA and ASJA over the years.

As the world undergoes major structural changes, the role of ASEAN is becoming increasingly important, as it is positioned at the “cornerstone” of the Indo-Pacific region. In this ever more significant ASEAN region, I find it tremendously encouraging that more than 50,000 ASCOJA members are actively engaged in alumni association activities in their respective home countries, including promoting study-abroad opportunities in Japan and disseminating Japanese culture. I sincerely hope that you will continue to lend us your support in further strengthening the relationship of mutual trust between Japan and ASEAN – the one that truly connects “heart to heart.”

I sincerely hope that the deep discussions among all of you who know Japan very well will be held at today’s symposium and will lead to further leaps in future people-to-people exchanges between Japan and ASEAN.

In closing, I would like to once again express my deepest respect to all of you who have made promoting study-abroad exchanges with Japan your life’s work and pursue it with such passion. With the hope that ASCOJA’s cherished “heart-to-heart” spirit will be passed on to the next generation of your successors, I conclude my remarks.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.