When the Pacific Ocean Becomes an “Inland Sea”:

FIVE PLEDGES TO A FUTURE ASIA THAT “ACTS TOGETHER”

Speech by H.E. Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, Prime Minister of Japan
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New Japan-China, Japan-ROK Relations

Since last month, we have come across an unfortunate situation in Asia where natural disasters of extremely large scale have occurred in succession. Myanmar was struck by a devastating cyclone, after which western China experienced a catastrophic earthquake, resulting in a truly heart-rending number of victims in these countries, bringing deep sorrow to all of us. I would like to take a moment here to extend my most heartfelt wishes of peace for the souls of the departed as well as my sincere condolences to the many other people still suffering from these extremely tragic occurrences. Japan is assisting these countries to the greatest extent possible so that victims can receive emergency disaster relief immediately and affected areas can undergo recovery and reconstruction without delay. I strongly hope that the Government of the Union of Myanmar will accept openly the international community’s goodwill and engage in disaster relief and reconstruction in partnership with the international community.

Before I begin my main remarks, I would like to overview for you some recent developments. At the beginning of this month we had the honor of hosting President Hu Jintao of China during his State Visit to Japan. In our meetings we reaffirmed our common intentions to strengthen the “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests” between Japan and China, agreeing that our countries are standing at a new starting line. I think it is fair to say that Japan-China bilateral relations have adopted a global viewpoint for the first time.

Clearly it is critical that China as a major nation develop in a stable manner, and for that sake, Japan intends to cooperate with China where it is able. My personal perspective is that Japan must pursue these initiatives with an eye to ensuring a better future for Asia as a whole.

The broadening of this type of perspective is already evident. President Lee Myung Bak of the Republic of Korea, Japan’s nearest neighbor, firmly shares it, and he and I also concurred in our desire to build a “new era” for Japan and the Republic of Korea. I am deeply convinced that the enormous significance of the new era in Japan-China-ROK tri-lateral relations lies in the fact that we now recognize a shared responsibility towards our Asian region and in fact the entire world. In the autumn this year the Leaders of all three countries are planning to meet here in Japan to discuss various topics, and I am determined to build even further momentum for our relationship.
Asia in the past 30 years — Hope and Opportunities

What I have mentioned thus far are all quite recent developments. But, today I would like to explore “The Future of Asia” from a slightly longer-term viewpoint. I would like to share with you some considered reflections on where Asia has been in the past, and where it is going, using the Pacific Ocean in particular as a prism through which to examine this subject. I will also state here personal pledges, looking to the future of Asia and the Pacific.

Thirty years ago, in 1977, Japan outlined the principles forming the framework of its diplomacy towards Asia, which later became known as the “Fukuda Doctrine.”

Through these principles, our ideal relationship was spelled out as being somewhat like that of colleagues who share benefits and jointly address problems. It is my firm belief that no other relationship between Japan and the countries of Asia is possible. In that sense, I think, the Fukuda Doctrine is still very much alive.

When the Fukuda Doctrine was first outlined, the GDP per person for most of Asia was at a level of perhaps 300 dollars, and 700 dollars at best. This was about equivalent to the per capita GDPs of the countries of Africa, or even somewhat worse, and yet it was at this time that the countries of Asia began their trajectories of striking growth. These facts gave us the ultimate lessons in the power of hope and the blessings of opportunity. Here I must convey my firmest possible belief that what has been accomplished in Asia is most surely fully attainable in Africa as well. At the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or TICAD IV, convening in Yokohama next week, I will be calling for the sharing of Asian experiences with Africa and working to ensure that the strengths of Asia serve a useful role in African development.

In the next 30 years — The Pacific Ocean turns into an “Inland Sea”

Turning now to where we are headed in the coming 30 years, the time span to which I would like to draw your attention, what kind of world might this be 30 years into the future? I will be giving you my thoughts with nothing more than my hunch as their basis, but coming into my mind is the image of a developing Asia that is forming a network of countries for which the Pacific Ocean is an “inland sea.” I think that the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean has come to shrink to the size of the Mediterranean Sea, and it will become even smaller after 30 years’ time.

If we take the Pacific Ocean for an inland sea, then whose “inland sea” is this, exactly? Clearly, it is an inland sea for Japan and the countries of ASEAN, yet also one for North and South America and for Russia if the development of its Far East region progresses. It is most certainly an inland sea for China and the nations of Indochina as well as Australia, and New Zealand, and in my view this sea also continues beyond India to connect to the nations of the Middle East.

I can imagine that you might consider this argument to view the Pacific Ocean as an inland sea to be unexpected or grandiose. But let us take a moment to recall what the Mediterranean Sea itself was like in the 16th century. French historian Fernand Braudel drew a picture of the Mediterranean as an inland sea having vibrant exchanges among the countries that rim it, with people and goods transported actively by ships constantly traversing its waters.
Now, it happens that the Mediterranean stretches for some 3,700 km.

There is a distance of not quite 8,300 km from our conference hall here to the Golden Gate Bridge on the West Coast of the United States, and if we assume the speed of modern ships to be three times the speed of the ships of the 16th century, we can go all the way to the Golden Gate Bridge in less time than it used to take to get from one end of the Mediterranean to the other.

Besides the speed of ships, we can take into consideration other various factors, including telecommunications. I am sure that you can now understand that, if we call the Mediterranean Sea an inland sea, and even if we think only in terms of ship speed, the Pacific Ocean has already become an inland sea which is smaller than the Mediterranean Sea of the 16th century.

By taking this view, we can also expand our psychological outlook on the region dramatically, can we not? Here in the 21st century, should we not clear away the short-sighted psychological partitioning, a remnant of the 20th century, that divides the Pacific Ocean into western and eastern parts? By overcoming that thinking, don’t we feel as if a big weight has been lifted off our shoulders? I feel that we should adopt this change in perspective, which is appropriate for people who aim to turn the Pacific Ocean into a real “Inland Sea.”

“Openness” as the key word — A network of never-ending expansion and development

In that light, the key word here is surely “openness.” We sincerely hope to pursue the limitless potential of the region with our friends of Asia and the Pacific, and in order to do so, the starting point for the Japanese society must be living amidst openness and diversity, opening itself up to the diversity of the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

Already, the countries surrounding the Pacific Ocean account for some 60% of the world’s total GDP and over 40% of the total value of international trade. If we were to look around the “shoreline” of this future Pacific inland sea 30 years into the future, we will surely find the top ten or so economic powers lining these banks. Think of Japan, the United States and China for starters, and also the Republic of Korea, India, and ASEAN, which is now moving forward in its integration, as well as Russia—who can even imagine how far these economies will have come after 30 years?

I visited Russia just recently, where I had discussions with President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin about undertaking joint cooperation towards the stability of the region. Recently, Russia seemingly has begun to look once again to its Far East region, and it is seeking to forge closer ties with the Asia-Pacific region in order to advance the development of Far East Russia and Eastern Siberia. What I told my colleagues on that occasion is, for this reason too it is necessary for Russia to conclude a peace treaty with Japan. I believe that if Russia will deepen its relations with Japan and be connected with Asia and the Pacific, Russia itself would surely enjoy additional opportunities for growth while also contributing to the prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

I would like to turn your attention next to South Asia, with its veritable treasure house of young and highly skilled human resources, in particular in the fields of advanced technology. I think that you will surely agree with me in saying there is no question that India will become one of the pillars supporting the future of Asia.
Looking at it from that perspective, I think that we should all be very appreciative of the geographical location we have been blessed with. Our “neighborhood” is rapidly becoming ever more affluent, and beyond that, we are in a time and place in which people, goods, capital, and knowledge criss-cross the Pacific Ocean with the momentum to make it an inland sea. I believe that Japan should be giving careful consideration to working together with the countries of Asia and the United States among others to promote economic partnership, while bringing greater impetus to the international division of business operations and to the manufacturing and distribution networks within the Asia-Pacific region.

Asia has now come to the fore as a central player in world history. This region is a network of never-ending expansion and development linked to the rest of the globe by the sea.

However, such a network will not simply evolve on its own. Asian countries should steadily broaden their outlook towards the Pacific and develop their capacity to participate in the creation of this network. In addition, we have to improve the necessary environment. So the issue before us is what we must do in the concrete in order to achieve this network.

Five Pledges

Here I would like to state my promises to you in five areas regarding concrete actions that I intend to take.

**Pledge No. 1**

**Steadfast Support for the Realization of the ASEAN Community**

My first promise to you is that Japan will emphatically support ASEAN’s efforts to realize a Community, which have already seen bold and decisive movement forward.

Not only is ASEAN situated in the region that holds the key to this network of the Pacific Ocean, but also for the past 30 years it has been playing a central role in regional cooperation in East Asia and the Pacific. The countries of ASEAN have continued to send a message of cooperation and integration to Japan, China, and the Republic of Korea. The people of ASEAN are engaged in extensive efforts to bridge the intra-ASEAN economic gap, and moreover they are in the midst of establishing the ASEAN Charter, grounded in universal values.

I believe that the stability and prosperity of ASEAN is also in the interests of Japan. Therefore, I am determined to cooperate with the efforts of ASEAN, which is aiming to establish the ASEAN Community by 2015, and I intend to surpass even the cooperation that Japan has been engaged in until now. Japan would like to appoint an Ambassador in charge of ASEAN as this ASEAN Charter enters into force, and I can imagine that it will not be long afterwards that the Permanent Representative of Japan to ASEAN is established.

Recently Japan-ASEAN relations enjoyed a major step forward, and by that of course I am referring to the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement. There can be no doubt that this will serve as a major impetus in the creation of a single market within the ASEAN region.

However, I am convinced it will be absolutely imperative for us to eliminate intra-ASEAN economic disparities in order for this single market to attain robust development. I would like to declare the next 30 years the “thirty years of bridging Asian Development gaps” and propose that we work together to bring this into being.

In particular, as part of the support Japan provides to the countries of the Mekong Region, in addition to various efforts to bridge the gaps
within the region, we have been providing assistance to facilitate a corridor crossing Indochina east to west. This endeavor will connect the landlocked countries of ASEAN to this Pacific network of which I just spoke. This “East-West Corridor” will cross Myanmar and reach as far as India, which will unquestionably lead to even more dynamic development in this region.

There are a number of issues that Japan would like to address with ASEAN, including the simultaneous pursuit of environmental protection and economic growth, energy efficiency and conservation, or efforts to ensure food security. Arrangements that have been made to avert the proliferation of avian influenza are but one excellent example of our cooperative efforts.

Thus in these 30 years, the relationship between Japan and ASEAN has become one of profound depth. It is my pledge to you that Japan and ASEAN are “partners thinking together, acting together, sharing a future vision” and that this partnership will be enduring.

**Pledge No. 3**

**Contributing as a “Peace Fostering Nation”**

Continuing now with my third pledge, Japan will forge itself into a “Peace Fostering Nation,” sparing no efforts to work for the realization of peace in Asia, the Pacific and the world.

In order to make sea lanes—centered on the Straits of Malacca—waters that are free of piracy and not usable by terrorists, Japan intends to promote further cooperation with other countries, notably the countries of ASEAN. For the fight against terrorism, we are conducting refueling operations in the Indian Ocean, and we must continue with those efforts.

As for Japan’s endeavors in the area of peacebuilding, an area in which we built up our experience in Cambodia and Timor Leste, Japan recently launched a human resource development program to foster specialists in peacekeeping. It is our goal that in the near future, these specialists from Japan and other Asian countries trained here in Japan will travel to areas even outside the Asian region and work shoulder to shoulder as they conduct peacebuilding activities.

In addition, I would like to pursue “diplomacy for disaster management cooperation.” Asia has in recent years suffered from a series of large-scale natural disasters, from tsunamis to cyclones to violent earthquakes. In order to reinforce disaster response capacity, Japan is now working to promote “disaster management cooperation,” making use of, among other means, its ODA, first with the countries of ASEAN, and later with other countries in Asia and the Pacific.

I intend to consider, together with the countries of Asia, creating a network among disaster relief
organizations already existing in Asian countries and establishing a structure to enable immediate and coordinated disaster relief operations upon the occurrence of a large-scale disaster. I believe that we should take immediate steps to create what might be most appropriately called the “Disaster Management and Infectious Disease Control Network in Asia,” in consideration of the preparations against avian influenza already underway.

**Pledge No. 4**

**Fostering and Strengthening Infrastructure for Intellectual and Generational Exchanges in Asia and the Pacific**

Fourth, I intend to step up efforts in youth exchanges. As a necessary prerequisite to the entire range of cooperation, Japan will foster and strengthen infrastructure of Asia and the Pacific for intellectual and generational exchanges. Japan has already begun to undertake a “Plan for 300,000 Exchange Students.” Under the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths Programme (or the JENESYS Programme), we are inviting 6,000 youths to Japan every year from all across Asia.

I also hope to expand dramatically our exchanges among universities within the Asia-Pacific region, and I intend to exchange views with knowledgeable people within Japan and abroad, aiming to come to a conclusion on this plan at the East Asia Summit to be convened at the end of this year. Here one may recall the “ERASMUS Programme” that has been underway in Europe since the 1980’s, and I would like to bring about what would be called its Asian version.

As for ERIA, or the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia that has recently been established, I intend to nurture it into an organization that will take on roles similar to the OECD in this region in the future, in the expectations that Asia and the Pacific will become a dynamic development center.

**Pledge No. 5**

**Tackling Climate Change, Realization of a Low-Carbon Society**

Finally, my fifth pledge relates to tackling climate change. However, this is not something that Japan acting alone will be able to carry out.

Make no mistake; it is our Asian region that will become the largest growth center on the planet, at the same time it is also virtually certain that our region will be the world’s largest center for greenhouse gas emissions. The issue of climate change will be addressed as one of the main themes of the G8 summit that Japan will host in Toyako, Hokkaido a month and a half from now, and it is an area requiring everyone to make efforts so that we can agree on a post-2012 emissions reduction framework at an early stage and establish a low-carbon society.

With regard to this point, Chinese President Hu Jintao expressed a positive stance during his recent visit to Japan, by which we are strongly encouraged. Japan is able to assist in addressing climate change issues in a number of ways, and we very much hope to cooperate further with the countries of Asia and the Pacific.
Forging Bonds to “Act Together”

These are the five personal pledges that I have made to you towards the future of the Asia-Pacific region—first, resolutely supporting the integration and development of ASEAN; second, reinforcing the Japan-U.S. alliance; third, discharging our responsibilities as a “Peace Fostering Nation;” fourth, developing the infrastructure for intellectual and generational exchanges that will underpin the future of the region through the exchange of youth. The fifth of my points was that it is imperative to address through everyone’s joint efforts the challenge of achieving economic growth simultaneously with environmental protection and tackling climate change.

Just as 30 years ago no one could have anticipated what the current era would hold in store, so too do we find it difficult to predict how the world will be 30 years from now. Everything has a bright side and a dark side. There may indeed be times at which the troubled waters of change bring instability to the order of the Asia-Pacific region.

Among the challenges we face, preparations for climate change and attempts to mitigate it are matters requiring the engagement of everyone. This is also true for water concerns as well as energy and food security issues. As for serious challenges that still lie ahead, we must consider the population explosion and its concentration in urban areas. If in the future we do not have frameworks for better governance in place—and it will perhaps sound predictable as I say this, but here I mean governance that is transparent, democratic, and based on the rule of law—it will be impossible to overcome social turmoil or nip these problems in the bud.

It is at exactly those times—when difficult issues have arisen—that I hope Japan will be a country that can be relied on, or is one that other countries hope to cooperate with, as a colleague, or a partner.

Japan has been through quite a significant number of difficult problems in the past. Japan’s environmental pollution at the time of the Olympic Games in Tokyo 44 years ago was extraordinarily severe. Fifteen years ago the bubble economy burst, after which we also suffered a serious deflationary recession. But having taken the oil shock of 35 years ago as an opportunity, we succeeded in raising our energy efficiency and resolved the great majority of our pollution problems. Japan is a nation that used to be beset by a veritable mountain of problems, but we are also a problem solving nation that has managed to overcome them.

What’s more, despite the fact that society has become blessed with great material abundance, Japan has never lost sight of our philosophy of mostsaimai, which is the feeling that it is senseless to discard things that still have some value. It seems to me that we have a certain culture that can serve as a basis for achieving the lifestyle necessary for dealing with a new challenge, that is, establishing a low-carbon society. So in that sense, when the countries of Asia and the Pacific encounter various problems, I hope that Japan will be viewed as a peer, with whom they can exchange experiences, asking what Japan did to overcome these problems.

I believe that the relationship most appropriate for the Asia and Pacific region of today is one in which we each learn from and inspire the other. In Japan there are a number of problems that need to be resolved in the years to come. In my opinion, there is much for Japan to learn from the countries of Asia and the Pacific in such areas as further participation of women in society, in which Japan is lagging behind, or boosting inbound foreign direct investment, which is currently small in Japan, and determining how best to utilize the highly-capable human resources of Asia. I also suppose that people all around the Asia-Pacific region are greatly interested to observe how Japan is attempting to solve the problem of its aging population combined with a declining birthrate that it is facing. Japan too must transition into a country with greater openness.
Surely, a relationship in which we each learn from and encourage the other is the one we must aim for. If the countries and the peoples of this region, with its tremendous amount of diversity, put their minds together to tackle problems, perhaps solutions will appear that much more quickly.

I hope that in the great drive towards growth that will bring dynamism to Asia and make the Pacific Ocean an inland sea, Japan will execute a certain role, expanding the fields of its activities and serving as a central core of stability and development.

What is critical is that all the people of the Asia-Pacific region are engaged in building relationships of mutual confidence and trust—in other words, "act together."

The Asia-Pacific area is an expanding, dynamic network with the sea serving as a large intermediary. I will close my speech today by saying that Japan and the Japanese people need to forge bonds "acting together" with the people living in this region as we strengthen "heart to heart" trust.

Thank you for your kind attention.