

**Speech by H.E. Dr. Yukio Hatoyama**  
**Prime Minister of Japan**  
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*Introduction*

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased and honored to have this opportunity to address you at this forum, which welcomes leaders active in politics, business, and higher education in countries all around Asia to discuss the future of Asia.

Last November, I put forth my vision of an East Asian community in Singapore, which was hosting the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting. I proposed that, based on the principle of open regional cooperation, we expand economic partnership agreements (EPAs), overcome environmental challenges and achieve sustained growth, and cooperate in the fields of disaster management and health, anti-piracy measures, and maritime search and rescue operations. Today, I should like to focus on the interpersonal cooperation that runs through these as a common thread and also on cooperation in the cultural realm.

*The Origin of My Own Interaction with Asia*

The first non-Japanese person who became a close friend of mine was Agus Solewa, who hailed from Indonesia and whom I met during high school. Agus had accompanied his father, a diplomat, to Japan and was in my grade at Koishikawa High School, which is just five kilometers away from here. Agus was a star soccer player and popular throughout the school. He returned to Indonesia upon graduating high school and continues mainly to work there, having gone on to establish a business in the field of communications. Our friendship, however, has continued to the present.

Agus gave me a telephone call one day in December 2004 in the wake of the enormous earthquake off the coast of Sumatra. “Yukio,” he said, “you must come to see for yourself just how much damage this natural catastrophe has wrought.”

Then serving as the shadow Foreign Minister, I flew to Indonesia immediately at the behest of my close friend. Agus led me around Banda Aceh, which had been transformed virtually into a city of death with hardly any people in sight. Shocked at the devastation, upon returning to Japan I urged the government to undertake various relief measures, a number of which came to be implemented.

Of course, cooperation in the field of disaster relief and recovery should not be dependent only on personal friendships. Yet it also seems to me that in critical situations such as this, it is interpersonal links and personal trust formed through long years of friendship spanning oceans that form the cornerstone for cooperation that stands up to risks and adversity. This [truth] was driven home to me by the strong bond between Agus Solewa and me.

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, which preceded the Sumatra earthquake by roughly a decade, was also a catastrophic disaster which claimed over 6,400 lives. Kobe is my wife’s hometown, and the blow suffered by this region where many of our friends and relatives live was very painful for me also on a personal level. However, the relief and recovery activities which followed this disaster strengthened the sense of solidarity among the Japanese people and led to the birth and growth of a large number of NPOs in Japan. Meanwhile, Japan, and I myself, will never forget that we received a great deal of assistance from all around the world, not least from neighboring countries in Asia as well as support for relief activities underway in the affected areas.

Many of the countries and regions of East Asia include areas prone to frequent earthquakes as well as typhoons and other natural disasters. In addition, many Asian countries have yet to establish sufficient health and sanitation systems. The dangers of new types of infectious diseases constitute a common threat that transcends borders. Such issues are but a few examples of areas where cooperative relationships among neighboring countries are indispensable.

In Japan we have a proverb which says “better a stranger nearby than a relative far

away,” but indeed there is nothing more reassuring than having a close friend nearby. Regarding large-scale natural disasters, new types of infectious diseases, and other such threats to human life, we are all quite literally in the same boat. For us, the people of East Asia, has not the time now come to forge bonds of true friendship that supersede short-term interests and calculations?

Agus and I studied together during our impressionable adolescence as peers without any particular status or titles. One’s perception of countries where one has such friends differs totally from other countries. When such bonds extend from one neighboring country to the next, they help to expand people’s circle of trust and to lay the foundations of a regional community. This is the starting point for the East Asian community initiative that I have proposed. It is only through warm-blooded relationships between people that a “community of life” can be fostered.

#### *East Asia as a Community Based on Cultures*

East Asia differs from Europe in that it is home to very diverse religions and cultures and that the stages of economic development vary greatly across the region. Many regions are separated by sea, making movement from one place to another difficult. There are skeptics who doubt the feasibility of the East Asian community initiative due to such factors.

Yet are they right? Is it really a mere pipe dream to believe that the essential roots of a community transcending national boundaries lie in interpersonal exchanges and earnest exchanges among youth?

Exactly 1,300 years have passed since the Heijo-kyo capital was founded in Nara. Commemorative events based on the theme or catchphrase of “Narasia,” a word created to signify the links between Nara and Asia, will be held on a grand scale throughout the year. Heijo-kyo was a “museum of civilization,” the terminus of the Silk Road to which cultures from China and India to Greece and the lands of the Orient were brought. For example, this was the age in which *manyo-gana* was invented, based on the *kanji* characters introduced from China. We created an original Japanese culture based on culture and

institutions which came from various parts of the Eurasian continent. Since then, for example in the Kamakura period, Japan was receptive to the Nansong civilization, and since the start of the modern era, Japan's unique culture developed by incorporating Western culture as well, as expressed in the phrase *wakon-yousai* [meaning "Japanese spirit combined with Western learning"]. Japanese culture is unique and something of which to be proud, but if we trace it to its origins, we find its roots in wisdom brought over across the seas from around the world, and above all in the cultures of various Asian countries.

From 1,300 years ago or even before, a large number of young people pursuing dreams and embracing hopes literally risked their lives in small oared ships and sailboats, crossing the sometimes turbulent seas of Asia, aiming to reach this small island nation from the Korean peninsula, China, or Southeast Asia, as well as from Polynesia in the South Pacific. They took part in the nation-building of Japan, which was then like a toddler as a nation, and forged the foundations of our culture.

I firmly believe that we must not repeat the unfortunate history of the past hundred years in which the seas of East Asia were made into seas of conflict. If we trace history back still further in units of several hundreds or thousands of years, we see that these seas have also yielded prolific rewards, transmitting knowledge and skills and fostering the development of rich cultures in East Asia by facilitating human exchanges. The sea did not create differences in language or antagonism among religions; instead it blended such differences and served as the foundation for mutual development. Had this not been so, we would not have so many people living in this region with an awareness of themselves as Asians, nor would this [Nikkei] forum have continued on such a tremendous scale. Whether viewed from the history of Japan at the far eastern edge of Asia or from the other countries of East Asia, East Asia is a fusion of cultures.

### *Nurturing Our Cultural Community*

I believe that one characteristic of Asians is that we do not perceive ourselves and others or humans and the environment in a western dualistic manner, but rather attach importance to the sameness between the two. In order to enhance this characteristic and make the youth who will shoulder the future of East Asia adopt an attitude of giving positive

value to and learning from the cultures of others, it is necessary to provide them with common opportunities in education, just as I had in high school and whose importance I felt so keenly. This will surely also serve as a launching point for a “cultural community.”

Japan faces a number of challenges in bringing this about. When I returned from my [postgraduate] studies in the United States and began work as an assistant researcher at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, there was a single foreign student, from Cambodia, in my research group. His parents had been killed by the Pol Pot faction, and he had come to Japan with neither money nor anyone on whom he could depend. But he had the dream of earning a doctorate and then returning home to work for his country. I assisted with his research in the hope that I could help him even marginally to fulfill his ambition. He kept up his research despite the linguistic and financial difficulties he faced. But as I left that research group after a while I regrettably do not know whether or not this Cambodian student managed to achieve all his goals.

Life as a researcher is exacting in any country, but I feel that if Japan as a country had provided sufficient Japanese language education support and if it had had a well-developed scholarship system, it could have nurtured students with high potential such as this Cambodian to become researchers at the very forefront of their fields in Japan. A degree of frustration remains in my mind though more than thirty years have passed.

In the policy speech I delivered to the national Diet in January this year, I announced a project in which over the next five years over one hundred thousand youth, mainly from Asian countries, would be welcomed to stay in Japan. Behind this is my wish to avoid the sense of helplessness and frustration that I experienced during my time as an assistant researcher, i.e. I do not want to see promising Asian students who harbor noble dreams and who ask Japan to provide them with the opportunity to pursue their studies, having to give up on their aspirations because of linguistic or financial difficulties.

However, that is by no means merely personal sentiment. Rather, it is a policy adopted in the hope that Japan as a country avoids sliding into narrow-minded nationalism, opens itself to the world and welcomes a large number of aspiring people from around the world and especially from the countries of Asia, and that the Japanese people will interact with their brethren from Asian countries in a spirit of friendship and thoughtfulness to the greatest possible extent, and in so doing they will together create a Japan, and an Asia, with

a vibrant future in which we learn from each other and engage in friendly competition.

We must also give Japanese youth the opportunity to travel to various places in East Asia and foster friendships. We will provide assistance that will dramatically increase opportunities to learn a wide variety of Asian languages. Measures to enable reciprocal transfers of university credits among the University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University will begin in the near future and thereafter a stream of similar tie-ups is being planned. By expanding measures for such human resources exchanges, I believe that we will be able to transform Asia's diversity into an advantage. Should we not share our superior human resources so as to enhance regional competitiveness as well as to create a sense of solidarity and community consciousness as people living in this same Asia?

The stage for fostering a cultural community is not limited to educational settings. Since shortly after the end of World War II, Japan's prefectures have hosted national-level sports competitions and arts festivals on a rotation basis. While one of the goals was regional promotion through the development of sports and cultural facilities in the host prefecture, the most important result was that every year athletes, artists, and spectators from all around the country were exposed to the natural environment and the culture of the host locale, experienced various local characteristics of the land and climate, and acquired a sense of unity by competing and engaging in activities together. Can we not replicate this experience in East Asia?

For example, every year an Asian city of the arts could be designated on a rotation basis, with various cultural and arts activities to be held there, seeking the participation of a large number of persons from East Asia. I propose that we consider such a project. I believe that by drawing out and blending diversity in a city of artistic creation, we can create the foundations of a cultural community. Japan shall take the lead in helping to bring into existence the first "city for the creation of culture in East Asia" at an early date.

### *Creating a Community by Opening Up the Nation*

Since the start of my government, I have continued to put forward "opening up" as a key word [or theme] in addressing both domestic and international challenges.

In “opening up the bureaucracy” we are promoting activities to make transparent the decision-making process that used to be monopolized by bureaucrats, fundamentally review various regulations from the viewpoint of the private sector and transfer authority and fiscal resources that have been held by the central government to the regions.

At the same time, I am emphasizing the importance of a third opening of Japan to the outside world, of “opening up Japan” once more. In order to draw large flows of investment from all around Asia to Japan and attract centers of transborder business activities to Japan, we must enliven the debate on opening the Japanese economy, on how the tax system ought to be and how to improve the functions of our sea and air port facilities, and to reflect the discussion on action to be taken. From such perspectives, I have decided that Japan shall boldly advance liberalization of trade and economic partnerships with the countries of East Asia, centered on the Republic of Korea, China, and India, as well as the countries of ASEAN which historically have actively entered into free trade agreements and economic partnership agreements.

When doing so, in order to have highly talented people active in Japan, including in corporate activities, it will be necessary most of all to make the living environment here an appealing one. When moving abroad from one’s familiar home country, the first thing a person worries about is whether or not he or she can consult medical facilities with peace of mind in a language he or she understands in the event of illness or an accident. It is thus necessary to increase the range of regional languages in which medical interpretation services are available. We should increase the numbers of non-Japanese nurses in Japan and consider ways to enable them to help their compatriots here when required as nurses who speak the same mother tongues. And in order that the family members of non-Japanese persons in Japan can receive the right education with peace of mind, we will develop educational facilities and enhance Japanese language educational institutions in the country. It will also be necessary to give further consideration to traffic signs and signboards, which remain inadequate. The development of the domestic environment related to “(protecting) life” and systemic reforms to “open up the nation” further in lifestyle and social system aspects are as important, or indeed in some cases even more important, than economic measures such as trade liberalization.

*The Community Mindset Necessary to Resolve Global Environmental Challenges and Other Global Issues*

It is necessary for the East Asian region, which has developed to a scale of producing some twenty per cent of global GDP, to present to the world a new model for conserving the global environment and achieving sustained growth in a compatible way. This is required both for the region's own sustained development and from the viewpoint of contributing to the global environment in a way that befits its economic scale. Humbly recognizing that within this Asia-Pacific region there are regions that may even become submerged [by the sea] if emissions of greenhouse gases continue to increase unchecked, I believe that we must propose to the world an East Asian initiative on environmental issues, including measures to catalyze innovations in the fields of the environment and energy, with Japan, China, and the Republic of Korea at the core at first.

Natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, and tsunamis may strike a wide area, and thus it is important for countries to integrate and share the information they gather. In light of this I propose the establishment of a joint satellite observation system, in which all countries can participate. This would dramatically improve information-gathering of disasters and be useful in relief activities. In addition it would be possible to use this system to resolve the common challenges of food issues and environmental degradation at the global level by analyzing the information obtained to project yields of agricultural products and monitor the natural environment. By making use of leading-edge technology, East Asia, which has been connected by the sea, will come to be connected also by the sky and by space.

The nuclear threat is another major issue facing Asia. At the Nuclear Security Summit convened in Washington, D.C. last month, I proposed the establishment of an integrated support center that would conduct education and training of human resources which would eliminate the nuclear threat from East Asia. I want to imprint the sheer devastation of nuclear weapons on people's minds and spread the determination to deter their use. This is an earnest appeal from the only country to have ever suffered the devastation of atomic bombings in war.

*Putting Forward a Community Model for the Twenty-first Century from East Asia*

As I have been saying thus far, I believe the East Asian community initiative to be advanced from now should be something new, which embodies a grand dream, and one or two shades different from the various kinds of regional communities that exist today.

The origins of the current European Union can be found in the European Coal and Steel Community established in 1952 by six nations. The twentieth century was stricken by major wars that resulted in destruction on an enormous scale, and during the reconstruction which followed it was imperative to achieve material affluence. This Community, established with the goal of sharing the resources and materials of coal and steel, developed into a Union which even has a common currency and foreign policy, and this became the twentieth-century model for regional communities.

There are highly encouraging aspects of the European experience. In Europe as well as elsewhere there was no agreement from the beginning to create a Union. The start sixty years ago was the establishment of the Coal and Steel Community, and then with alliances in the economic, energy, and political fields advancing in parallel with participating countries overlapping to a degree, the European Union was established by integrating these efforts. Therefore, I believe it possible to create a community in East Asia too by building on each other's ideas on various specific areas.

The issue, then, is where we should start. I have been advocating "spending not on concrete, but on people" as one of the slogans which usher in a new kind of politics in Japan. If the previous century was an age in which we pursued material affluence, the twenty-first century should be one in which human resources, culture, and wisdom are increasingly sought as the foundations of well-being.

An age has arrived in which the pillars of the regional community in Asia should also shift from expanded liberalization of trade in goods, beginning with coal and steel, to the liberalization of services and harmonization of systems, and furthermore to exchanges of people related to such areas as culture and the arts, the sciences, and philosophy and thought. I intend to create a community in Asia for a new era, which naturally in East Asia actively promotes FTAs and EPAs yet begins through cultural exchanges in the broad sense, ranging from movies to music, plays, fine art, and fashion, as well as through

exchanges in the natural sciences as well as the fields of philosophy and thought. I then wish to expand this to the world.

### Conclusion

I believe now is the time to overcome the past that turned our seas into seas of dispute and to set off on a voyage to weave a history of prosperity in which we coexist in a sea of fertile abundance and a sea of fraternity. In times past, young people crossed the sea full of grand hopes and courage and lent their support to building this country. Let us all give thought to their hopes. Before us lie the vast sea and an unknown horizon. There will indeed be various challenges. We may be inhibited by rough waves. And yet, we must set out on these waters.

This morning, the results of the investigation into the sinking of a South Korean military patrol vessel on March 26<sup>th</sup> were announced in South Korea. They determined that the sinking was caused by a North Korean torpedo. North Korea's action cannot be condoned by any means, and Japan strongly condemns it together with the international community. Japan firmly supports the Republic of Korea, will closely collaborate not least with the United States as well as the other countries concerned, so as to have the entire international community respond to this situation in cohesion. We must not flinch at such challenges or rough waters; rather, we must overcome them and set out to sea. It goes without saying that a rock-solid Japan-U.S. alliance should serve as the basis of such an undertaking.

It is incumbent upon Japan, which is located at the terminus of the Silk Road and flourished more than any other country by enjoying the blessings of a bountiful sea, to strive for a new departure in East Asia. These efforts represent a repayment made out of thousands of years of gratitude towards this region. As Prime Minister of Japan, I pledge to you that step by step I will make solid the path leading to an East Asian community.

I very much hope for that reason as well that this conference achieves important results. Thank you.