

Keynote Address by H.E. Mr. Yutaka Banno
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at the 8th Japan-Singapore Symposium
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“Post-Disaster Japan and its Regional Diplomacy”

H.E. Mr. Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Singapore,
Professor Tommy Koh,
Mr. Shotaro Yachi,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Yutaka Banno, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

I would like to extend my congratulations for holding the 8th Japan-Singapore Symposium. It is a great honor for me to have the opportunity to deliver a keynote address on behalf of the Japanese delegation on this significant occasion.

Today, under the title “Post-Disaster Japan and its Regional Diplomacy,” I will explain the current situation of Japan as it stands one and a half months after the Great East Japan Earthquake. I will also state my own views on the way Japan’s foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region will change – or it will not – in the wake of the great earthquake.

First of all, before moving on to the main subject, I would like to express deep gratitude on behalf of the government and people of Japan for the heartfelt sympathy and assistance provided by Singapore in the wake of the great earthquake. Immediately after the occurrence of the earthquake on March 11, Singapore sent a strong message concerning its readiness to provide any possible assistance necessary for Japan, and it dispatched a rescue team with rescue dogs on the following day (March 12). We also received assistance materials such as blankets, water, and emergency food in response to needs in the areas affected by the disaster. Also, the Singapore Red Cross has been collecting large donations, including donations from the government of Singapore. We received heartfelt messages from President Nathan, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and many other high-level officials. Numerous Singaporeans were kind enough to visit the Embassy of Japan to express their condolences. Names in this

regard included Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, and Foreign Minister George Yeo, as well as Minister Zainul and Professor Tommy Koh, who are present here today. Let me reiterate my deep appreciation.

(Significance of the Japan-Singapore Symposium)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Symposium was agreed to be held at the Japan-Singapore summit meeting in 1994. Since the first symposium in Tokyo in the following year (1995), the symposium has been held almost biennially, with the venue alternating between Tokyo and Singapore. Japan attaches significance to this symposium as a pillar of intellectual exchange between Japan and Singapore, as it is an event at which frontrunners of multiple sectors of both countries gather to discuss regional challenges and the future outlook from a broad perspective.

It is only with Singapore that Japan regularly holds intellectual exchange events such as this in Southeast Asia. There are three main reasons for this.

The first reason is that Singapore is the intellectual leader of ASEAN that has developed through strategic management of the country. Since its independence in 1965, despite its various limitations including land-, population-, and resources-related constraints, Singapore has achieved an amazing degree of development under the leadership of prominent figures such as former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Japan pays a great deal of attention to Singapore's high-level strategy, as seen in its national development efforts, as well as to its capability for diplomacy, which has been exerted effectively in the complex and quickly changing East Asian regional environment. We would like to learn from Singapore's experience.

The second reason is that Singapore is a top runner in creating new value in regional economic activities. Singapore is not only a regional hub of economic activities such as transportation, logistics, and finance, but it is also making advanced efforts such as for Biopolis, a center for the biomedical industry, and Fusionopolis, a center for information and communication technology as well as media-related industry. Most of the approximately 1,000 Japanese companies in Singapore have placed their regional bases there, so Singapore plays an essential role in economic activities of Japan.

The third reason, which we regard as even more important, is that Singapore is a partner for Japan that shares interests and views with us. As both countries have land and resources limitations, among other areas, we have shared interests in an open

and free trade system, and the need for U.S. engagement in the region both in terms of security and the economy. Also, as both countries have the almost same level of GDP per capita and face the challenge of declining and aging populations, we can learn much from each other in terms of domestic policy, too.

In fact, the three reasons I mentioned are the foundation of the three main themes of the current symposium.

The theme of the first session, “Relations among the Major Powers,” is meaningful in light of the first reason mentioned earlier. As Singapore has strategically managed the country and its foreign policy, the discussion will contribute to deepening strategic exchanges and planning future foreign policy strategies based on recent changes in the global and regional strategic environment.

The theme of the second session, “Regional Economic Integration,” is meaningful in light of the second reason mentioned earlier. As Singapore is the top runner in creating value in regional economic activities, it is meaningful for the two countries to lead future discussions in the region.

The theme of the third session, “Evolving Regional Architectures in East Asia,” is meaningful in light of the third reason mentioned earlier. As Japan and Singapore are partners who share interests and views and have common interests in necessary frameworks of regional cooperation, it is highly significant for the two countries to discuss the way forward.

As I have explained, the Japan-Singapore Symposium is an invaluable asset for Japan, which places importance not only on the strengthening of our bilateral relations but also on the development of the East Asian region as a whole. The current symposium is being held at a difficult time, soon after the earthquake, but I decided to attend because I thought it would be important to demonstrate the continued commitment of the government of Japan, although my stay here will be rather short.

In addition, I must note that it is my promise to Minister Zainul, who just delivered his keynote address and who I met here in Singapore in February, that I participate in this symposium. Unfortunately my current stay in Singapore will be as busy and short as it was last time, but I am truly pleased that I was able to fulfill my promise to Minister Zainul and that I am here at the moment delivering this speech.

(Great East Japan Earthquake)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nearly 14,000 precious lives were lost due to the March 11 earthquake and subsequent tsunami. The figure for people still missing is similar. Approximately 150,000 people continue to remain in shelters as evacuees.

With regard to the situation of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, which is a matter of concern for everybody, we are currently mobilizing all resources to bring the situation under control and working to stabilize it at the earliest possible time. In response to the instructions of Prime Minister Naoto Kan, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) released a “Roadmap towards Restoration from the Accident at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station” on April 17. This “Roadmap” aims to achieve a situation where radiation dose is in steady decline in around 3 months, and then achieve a situation where release of radioactive materials is under control and radiation does is being significantly held down in around 3-6 months after achieving the first step. This is an important step forward in the move from the “emergency response phase” up until now to the “planned and stabilizing action phase.” The situation is still unpredictable, but we will continue to do our utmost to bring the situation under control and swiftly provide accurate information for the international community with maximum transparency. I encourage everyone to keep calm and reasonable eyes on the current situation.

The disaster drove home three points for me in particular.

The first is that a person is not “alive” but is “kept alive.” There is little difference between the victims and survivors of the disaster. I cannot help but believe that the power of nature was at work with a force that transcends the powers of human beings. The human beings must be humble before nature and put away ideas that nature can be challenged or overcome in competition. It is presumptuous to think that science is almighty or that the ability of human beings is unlimited. Considering this idea, we will notice, for example, that future plans for disaster prevention must be made not based on an attempt to overcome nature itself, but rather rooted in a fear for the power of nature.

I came across the Malay phrase *balik kampung* in Singapore. The literal translation is “return to the village,” but the word *kampung* is interpreted more widely among environmental groups in Singapore and has the meaning of valuing the earth and nature. At the beginning of my speech, I mentioned that Japan and Singapore share certain views. Personally, I feel that the idea of *balik kampung* shares much with the appropriate attitudes about nature as I believe.

The second thing that the disaster reminded me of is that a person cannot remain alive by himself or herself, and that mutual aid for survival transcends national borders. Japan has received much assistance from the international community, including the mental and physical assistance from Singapore, as I have mentioned. The Japanese people, including myself, have been greatly moved by the support and solidarity shown by many foreign governments and their people, which have said, in effect: “Japan has extended assistance to us; now is the time for us to return the favor.” In particular, as for ASEAN, the Special ASEAN-Japan Ministerial Meeting was held on April 9 at the initiative of the ASEAN side, which Minister Zainul was also kind enough to attend. Solidarity was clearly shown on this occasion, and it was demonstrated that Japan is not alone in this region. Japan is currently in an extremely difficult situation, but at the same time, we are truly grateful that we were once again able to realize that Japan stands together with the world – the “kizuna,” or the bonds of friendship, between Japan and the international community.

The third point is that living a life means to transform crisis into opportunity. For example, many people may be concerned about the influence of the disaster on Japan’s economy. The damage is certainly enormous. In the short term, production will drop due to the destruction of equipment and buildings of companies, as well as because of damaged physical infrastructure. We cannot overlook damages caused by groundless rumors spread in the wake of the nuclear accident. The tourism industry has been also damaged.

However, Japan is shifting to the stages of restoration and recovery. And here is the key for transforming the crisis of the disaster into an opportunity. There is an opportunity to create a new society based on the disaster experience. Prime Minister Kan stated three principles, namely: 1) a regional society that is highly resistant to natural disasters, 2) a society in harmony with the global environment, and 3) a compassionate society that cares about people, and in particular, the vulnerable. For these purposes, on April 11, exactly one month after the earthquake, the government of Japan decided to hold the Reconstruction Design Council in Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake. It will gather the voices of people living in areas affected by the disaster, as well as wisdom drawn from a more broad-based group of people, and it aims at achieving a future-oriented recovery. We believe that Japan will be able to play a leadership role in cooperation with the international community in the area of disaster response, as a result of our experience with a disaster of this magnitude.

Japan's nuclear accident will also provide experience that will allow for contributions toward international efforts in the area of nuclear safety. In these ways, Japan will be able to offer much to the global community in the future.

Despite the great loss, there is no doubt that Japan will recover and become an even more marvelous country. In living up to the cordial encouragement and solidarity extended to us by the international community including Singapore, I consider walking down the road to such a rebirth to be incumbent upon us, and the best way for Japan to reciprocate your kind concern.

(Japan's Post-Disaster Regional Diplomacy)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us look now at Japan's regional diplomacy following the disaster, in accordance with the three themes of today's symposium.

The theme of the first session is "Relations among the Major Powers." The dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region are constantly changing. Japan and Singapore share interests in the development of the major powers in the region, such as U.S. involvement in the region and the rise of China. Also, as ASEAN's status in the region has been enhanced towards the building of the Community by 2015, the developments of Indonesia, the ASEAN chair this year, have been drawing considerable attention. Given this situation, Japan's policy to support ASEAN in the building of the Community and the strengthening of connectivity remains unchanged after the disaster. Also, North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles as well as its humanitarian situation including the abduction issue continue to be issues of serious concern for the international community. It remains to be an important challenge how major powers in the region address these issues toward resolution.

I expect that useful discussions toward regional stability and economic development will take place at this symposium from the viewpoint of how the respective major powers have been developing and what roles they will play in the region.

The theme of the second session is "Regional Economic Integration." At APEC, which Singapore chaired in 2009 and Japan chaired in 2010, both countries worked together closely in leading discussions regarding the nature of and specific

paths toward regional economic integration. In the “Yokohama Vision,” which is the fruit of the discussions, the APEC leaders shared the view that they would take concrete steps toward the realization of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). Japan, for its part, formulated a “Basic Policy on Comprehensive Economic Partnerships” and demonstrated its determination as APEC chair to promote regional economic integration. Even after the disaster, Japan considers that promoting economic diplomacy continues to remain important, recognizing that further enhancement of its national strength is necessary in order for Japan to play a role in the international arena. We will have full discussions on how we should deal with the important policy issues that had been addressed since before the disaster, including regional economic integration, as we place necessary policies in the blueprint of post-disaster reconstruction from the viewpoint of “creating a new Japan.”

I expect that a free exchange of views on the prospect for an FTAAP and desirable policy options will take place at this symposium taking into account the international economic situation after the disaster.

The theme of the third session is “Evolving Regional Architectures in East Asia.” While ASEAN is aiming to build the Community by 2015, the United States and Russia are expected to officially join EAS this year. The deepening and expansion of regional architecture is moving ahead. Given these developments, Japan’s policy that ASEAN should be in the “driver’s seat” of regional cooperation fora remains unchanged. Japan will actively contribute to discussions toward the development of regional cooperation in order to make use of various regional cooperation fora and strengthen multi-layered cooperative relations in an open manner. Based on experience drawn from the disaster, we will further develop practical cooperation including in the areas of disaster management and nuclear safety.

I expect that discussions about the desirable form of the regional architecture and a roadmap for that goal will take place at this symposium, free from conventional ideas.

(Conclusion)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a town named Mihama-cho in Chita Peninsula, Aichi, where I am from. As a literal translation of its Japanese name indicates, the town has a beautiful beach. In 1832, a ship that left this beautiful beach became wrecked, and after drifting

over 14 months, the crew reached the United States, where they were rescued by Native Americans. One of the crew members was named Otokichi. After moving to London, Macau, and Shanghai, Otokichi settled here in Singapore. Otokichi succeeded in running a shipping business and passed away here in Singapore in 1867, one year before the Meiji Restoration.

My senior from the same *kampung* 150 years ago taught me the strength of Japanese people who are able to transform crisis into opportunity with unyielding spirit, whatever disaster they may face. At the same time, I learned about the generosity of Singapore, which accepted this Japanese person. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Japan will definitely revive. And it is possible only with the support of the “friends indeed” in this region. Allow me to conclude my speech by conveying this sense of determination and gratitude.

Thank you for your kind attention.