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**KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR
THE 8TH JAPAN-SINGAPORE SYMPOSIUM
BY SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE ZAINUL ABIDIN RASHEED
ON 25 APRIL 2011 AT CRESCENT BALLROOM,
FOUR SEASONS HOTEL, AT 9.10AM**

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Yutaka Banno

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. *Minna Sama, Ohayo Gozaimasu. Singaporu e yokoso. Honjitsu wa, atsumatte itadaki arigatou gozaimasu.* (Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Singapore. Thank you for gathering here today.)
2. Let me extend a very warm welcome to State Secretary Banno and his delegation members to Singapore for the 8th Japan Singapore Symposium (JSS).

A Friend in Need

3. When State Secretary Banno dropped by Singapore two months ago in February, he told me that he was planning to come for the JSS. I am very glad that he can join us today in spite of his heavy schedule and the recent earthquake and tsunami that hit the Tohoku (Northeast Japan) region on March 11th.
4. We had a chat on the side a few minutes ago. State Secretary Banno gave me a good update on the latest situation. I am glad to learn from him that life is returning to normal and the Japanese government is on top of a very complex situation.
5. Let me say a few brief words on Japan's response to the calamity, which Prime Minister Naoto Kan has described as Japan's worst post-war crisis. Prime Minister Kan also said that the crisis has strengthened the "*kizuna*", or bonds, between Japan and the world.
6. I would like our Japanese friends here to know that even though more than a month has passed, the thoughts and prayers of many Singaporeans are still very much with the survivors and people of Japan. Singapore considers Japan as one of our closest friends, the *kizuna* between us is strong, and so we wish Japan the very best as you embark on the long road to recovery.
7. We are confident that Japan will emerge stronger from this trial. The presence of State Secretary Banno and his delegation members sends a powerful message to all of us that Japan will not be held back by adversity. The country is back on its feet and is standing tall.
8. Indeed, history has shown how an indomitable and enterprising spirit enabled the Japanese to transform their war-torn country into an economic powerhouse.
9. The world had a glimpse of that same spirit recently when it saw how ordinary Japanese from all walks of life faced the disaster stoically as a nation. The news

carried many moving accounts of Japanese who stayed behind to warn or save their loved ones and compatriots as the towering tsunamis engulfed coastal villages and towns. Many haplessly lost their lives. But for those who lived to see another day, their determination to survive and rebuild their homes is nothing short of inspirational.

10. Even in Tokyo and elsewhere in the country, many Japanese have rallied together to support their fellow countrymen during the darkest hour. They were unfazed by daily inconveniences such as electricity shortages and transportation disruptions.
11. When news first broke that a magnitude 9 earthquake had struck Japan, Singapore quickly offered to help. A search and rescue team from the Civil Defence Force and their search dogs left for Japan the following day, and were deployed at Soma City in Fukushima Prefecture. We also flew in humanitarian supplies to Sendai city in Miyagi Prefecture where it was redistributed to the evacuation centres. Last week, we sent over another 500 water containers at the request of the Japanese Government.
12. Singaporeans of all ages have also responded spontaneously. Kindergarten and school children presented colourful drawings to Ambassador Suzuki to encourage Japanese survivors. Three teams from Mercy Relief went to Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures to assist with relief efforts on the ground.
13. The Singapore Red Cross (SRC) launched a public appeal on 15 March and has since collected over S\$25 million. I assured State Secretary Banno during our meeting earlier that Singapore will continue to support Japan in its recovery. I asked him to let us know how Singapore can help Japan during this difficult period.

Handling Adversities

14. Many of us would have seen from the media the sheer destructive power of the earthquake and tsunami that hit the Tohoku region last month. I am sure we have the same question in our minds: How did the Japanese manage to respond to the devastation with such discipline, composure and fortitude and unity?
15. I have visited Japan many times before, and have always admired their deep sense of mutual respect. The Japanese are well-known for their civic consciousness. In their pursuit for harmony or “*wa*” (和), they have taken upon themselves to exercise self-restraint or “*jishuku*” (自肅) and perseverance or “*gaman*” (我慢). Perhaps that resilience is a function of history and geography and the fact that Japan is a homogeneous country.
16. I hope our Japanese friends will enlighten us as there are useful lessons for us. Singapore has survived difficult times before. But we are still a relatively young country, and we can learn from Japan on how to cope with a cataclysmic event.

Today's Challenges

Ladies and Gentlemen,

17. Governments must prepare themselves and their citizens to face the anticipated and unexpected challenges which can happen anytime and anywhere.
18. When I led the Singapore delegation to Tokyo for the last JSS in February 2009, the world was grappling with the “Great Recession” after the financial turmoil in the US and Europe. The outlook then was pessimistic.
19. Thankfully, the economies in the West today are in a better shape. Many Asian countries have recovered strongly. According to the Asian Development Bank, Asia is forecast to grow more than 7 percent for the next two years.
20. But the global economy remains fragile, and the world is no less unpredictable and no less dangerous. Many governments have had to deal with inflation and growing asset bubbles as well as widening income disparities and social inequalities. Global

economic imbalances still need to be corrected. Food security remains a serious challenge for many developing countries which have a growing population base, as does climate change.

21. Economies are also vulnerable to external shocks and disruptions, be it natural disasters or instability in places half way round the globe. Witness the political transitions in Algeria and Egypt and the ongoing uprisings in Syria, Yemen and several other Arab countries. Libya is in chaos. Afghanistan and Iraq continue to be of concern.
22. Partly as a result of instability in the Middle East, oil prices have peaked at US\$127 per barrel earlier this month. I hope we will not see a recurrence of the 2008 Great Recession which was preceded by a hike in oil prices.
23. The threat of Islamic extremism has not receded. In this age of Twitter and Facebook, the free flow and exchange of information through social media has enriched human interactions. But unfortunately, it has also empowered terrorists with a new tool to propagate the doctrine of hate and radicalise the young and alienated.
24. Countries like Japan and Singapore cannot afford to be passive by-standees or turn a blind-eye to evolving trends and developments around us. We need to look outwards, and stay vigilant.
25. I believe this is one of the reasons why the JSS was initiated by former Prime Ministers Tomiichi Murayama and Goh Chok Tong in August 1994 during Murayama-sensei's visit to Singapore. Although first started under a socialist government, the fact that the JSS has continued through different administrations of the Liberal Democratic Party, and now the Democratic Party of Japan, demonstrates the enduring relevance of the JSS through the years.
26. Having participated in two previous JSS myself, I have always been impressed by the astute opinions and perspectives put forward by government representatives, business leaders, media and academic experts from Singapore and Japan on the key global and regional challenges of the day. I look forward to hear from the participants again at this year's Symposium.
27. Allow me now to leave you with what I consider to be three broad responses for us to meet the challenges that we face today.

Peaceful Co-Existence

28. The starting point must be maintaining the peaceful co-existence of major and non-major players in our region. This sounds politically and diplomatically correct. But we know that it is not easy to achieve.
29. Our region has come a long way and we have made much headway on many fronts through the existing regional architecture. The structure is not perfect and even untidy. But it is working well.
30. The fact that regional countries like Thailand, Australia, China, Malaysia, South Korea, the US etc., came quickly to Japan's aid recently, just as the region responded to the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Typhoon Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, and the earthquake in Christchurch this year, exemplifies the strong community spirit in our region today.
31. We cannot take regional security and solidarity as a given. We cannot wait or depend on a major disaster to spur us towards greater cooperation. The ethos for regional collaboration needs to be propagated and substantiated if our neighbourhood is to remain peaceful and prosperous.
32. We cannot afford to rest on our laurels. This is why ASEAN is looking beyond its goal of becoming an ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. We are pushing the envelope

through trade liberalisation initiatives like the East Asia Free Trade Agreement (EAFTA) and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia (CEPEA) – which we applaud Japan for initiating.

33. These regional economic integration efforts complement the expanded Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, which is currently being negotiated. Singapore supports Japan's entry into the TPP.
34. The ASEAN Connectivity Initiative is another important undertaking which will help bring Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia closer together. Geographically, Japan is separated from continental Asia. But as an important maritime nation and aviation hub, Japan can help to expand the regional network. With its excellent technology and know-how, Japan can also help Southeast Asian countries develop their overland infrastructure as well as build and connect smart communities.
35. ASEAN, of course, has always welcomed Japan's contributions to develop our diverse region. When I attended the recent Special ASEAN-Japan Ministerial Meeting in Jakarta two weeks ago, one of the recurring themes in the speeches of my ASEAN colleagues was how they were the beneficiaries of Japan's generous development assistance, capital investments, knowledge transfer and human capacity development.
36. ASEAN also welcomes the constructive involvement of the other major players like Australia, China, India, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, which has helped to strengthen our regional architecture. Obviously, the US plays an indispensable role in the regional equation. I am confident that their role in APEC, which they are chairing this year, the ARF and the East Asia Summit (EAS) will elevate regional collaboration to a higher level.

Promoting Functional Cooperation

37. This brings me to my next point, which is the importance of promoting functional cooperation among regional governments in fora such as the EAS because it is ultimately concrete initiatives and projects that bring tangible benefits to the people of this region.
38. For any regional dialogue to succeed, it must be supported and complemented by a substantive economic and functional cooperation agenda. In my view, there is scope for greater cooperation in areas such as education, human capacity development, urban planning, sustainable development, anti-trafficking, food security, science and technology research and development, arts and culture, to name a few.
39. To that list, I believe we need to pay closer attention to disaster and post-disaster management. And in this regard, I am glad that at the recent Jakarta meeting, Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto announced that Japan will be hosting an ASEAN-Japan seminar on disaster management later in the year.
40. I hope that Japan will also take the lead to promote nuclear safety in the region. As the ongoing problems in the Fukushima nuclear reactors illustrate, countries planning to build nuclear power plants need to be well equipped and residents amply prepared for various contingencies that also have transboundary implications.

Public People Partnership

41. The third response, which I hope this Symposium will discuss, is how governments and the people sector can work together to address challenges more effectively. Or what is commonly referred to as "Public People Partnership" or PPP.
42. I believe there is potential for greater Public People Partnership. Neither the government nor the people sector has a monopoly of expertise and experience. And it is better for both sides to put their heads together, ride on each other's strengths and

cooperate for the greater good of society or the region at large.

43. PPP is not new to Japan and Singapore. Japan's new growth strategy, which was unveiled in June 2010, advocates a PPP approach. Likewise, the recommendations compiled by Singapore's Economic Strategies Committee in February 2010 were the result of close consultations between the government and industry leaders in Singapore.
44. More recently, Singapore's humanitarian relief assistance to Japan was a multi-agency effort between the Singapore Government, Singapore Armed Forces, the Singapore Red Cross and Mercy Relief. The Reconstruction Planning Council set up this month by Prime Minister Kan is another case in point.
45. The JSS is well-suited to discuss PPP because the format of the symposium includes today's closed-door session and a separate session tomorrow which will be open to the public. The participants gathered here either come from public or private sector backgrounds. Some even have experience in both sectors.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen

46. Tomorrow's challenges will undoubtedly be more complex than those faced today. The impact of major events and developments, near and far, will be felt more widely and deeply. There are no easy solutions. And countries may or may not have the resources or capability to resolve problems on their own.
47. This is why we need to foster more meaningful and constructive government-to-government collaboration, during good and difficult times. We need to actively promote greater partnership between the government and various stakeholders.
48. But ultimately what will carry us through is human tenacity and the collective will to overcome the odds, qualities that are best personified by the people of Japan today. To our Japanese friends, "*ganbatte kudasai*" (please press on).
49. On that note, I wish everyone a productive and memorable symposium.
50. Thank you and *arigatou gozaimashita*.

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