

Welcoming Address by Mr. Ryota Takeda
Parliamentary Secretary for Defense
March 17, 2009

As Parliamentary Secretary for Defense, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you. It is my pleasure that senior officials of Vice-Minister and Permanent Secretary level from Japan and ASEAN member countries have come together today to discuss “Common Security Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region.”

Each member country of ASEAN is truly a significant partner of Japan and we have enjoyed “heart-to-heart” relationships as members of Asia. In this regard, our cooperation in the security area should be further enhanced in addition to our economic ties. I expect a meeting of this kind will take place more frequently in the future.

In the Asia-Pacific region, not only do traditional security issues such as North Korea and the Taiwan Straits related matters exist, but non traditional issues such as natural disasters, terrorism and piracy also call for new measures. In these areas, we have seen significant development while respecting diversity in Asia. We all know that there was regional cooperation after the large-scale earthquake off the coast of Sumatra and the ensuing tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Needless to say, ASEAN played a major role in assisting Myanmar when she was hard-hit by a cyclone. There is a nation which was suffering from conflicts in the past and has achieved successful nation-building at last. The nation now deploys its troops as UN Peacekeeping forces instead of receiving them. In the Malacca Straits, close cooperation among countries concerned resulted in drastic decrease in the number of piracy incidents.

ASEAN member countries have been gradually gaining capability to cope with various security challenges, in cooperation with countries in wider areas. Japan also would like to further develop cooperative bilateral and multilateral relationships with each member of ASEAN. We are also determined to contribute to further development of regional cooperation together with major players in the region including the United States.

The main objective of today’s meeting is to forge personal relationships among Vice-Minister-level officials that enable frank discussion on common security challenges of the region on a daily basis. I believe this meeting serves further development of mutual understanding among participants to promote regional cooperation in security areas.