



Official logo for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

# 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

The year 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation. In celebration of this milestone year, the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit will be held in Tokyo from December 16 to 18. Back in 1973, Japan became the first country in the world to establish dialogue relations with ASEAN. Ever since, Japan has continued to build and strengthen its friendship and cooperation with ASEAN in a wide range of areas. Here, we will review the history of ASEAN-Japan friendly relations and cooperation as well as the various exchanges that have occurred over the past half century. We will also highlight the initiatives undertaken in the milestone year of 2023.

## Outline of ASEAN

ASEAN is an abbreviation for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It was established in August 1967 for the purpose of promoting peace and economic growth in the region. Amid the changes in the political and economic structure of Asia that arose in the 1990s, ASEAN served to strengthen intra-regional economic cooperation, including the signing of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) in 1992. In 2007, “The ASEAN Charter” (effective December 2008) was passed, reaffirming ASEAN principles such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, peaceful

resolution of disputes, and non-interference in internal affairs, and looking toward the establishment of an ASEAN Community. Subsequently, at the 2015 Summit, ASEAN adopted the “ASEAN Community Vision 2025 (2025 Vision)” to further deepen ASEAN’s integration by declaring the establishment of the ASEAN Community consisting of a Political-Security Community, an Economic Community, and a Socio-Cultural Community. Consultations are currently under way within ASEAN on the formulation of a Post-2025 Vision.



The 26th ASEAN-Japan Summit was held in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia (September 6, 2023)

Photo: ASEAN Official

### History of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation

The relationship between Japan and ASEAN as a whole goes back to 1973 when Japan and ASEAN agreed to establish a forum to discuss Japan's export of synthetic rubber. ASEAN countries, many of which were natural rubber exporters at the time, were concerned about losing their market to Japanese synthetic rubber. Japan sincerely listened to the voices of ASEAN countries and agreed to provide technical cooperation to ASEAN countries. The result of trade negotiations between ASEAN and Japan was also a success story for ASEAN in its early years.

Since then, over the past 50 years, Japan and ASEAN have worked closely together not only on economic issues, but more broadly, as well, for the sake of peace, stability, development, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. In 1977, the first ASEAN-Japan Summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with Prime Minister of Japan Fukuda Takeo in attendance. Immediately after the Summit, Prime Minister Fukuda visited the Philippines and announced the principles of Japan's ASEAN diplomacy, which later would become known as the "the Fukuda Doctrine."<sup>1</sup> These principles have become the foundation of ASEAN-Japan friendship, and Japan has solidified its position as one of ASEAN's most important dialogue partners.

In 2013, which marked the 40th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation, Prime Minister of Japan Abe Shinzo announced the Five Principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy (see attached material). At the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit held in Tokyo in December of the same year, the leaders of ASEAN and Japan adopted the "Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation" and the related Implementation Plan. They declared that Japan and ASEAN Member States would

promote cooperation based on four pillars: Partners for Peace and Stability, Partners for Prosperity, Partners for Quality of Life, and Heart-to-Heart Partners.

### Official Logo and Catchphrase for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

The design of the logo created for the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation in 2023 features a bundle of ten rice stalks representing the ASEAN member countries, wrapped like a Mobius ribbon around the rising sun as a symbol of the commitment to ensure that the friendship built by Japan and ASEAN will continue for many years to come. The blue waves at the bottom of the design represent the ocean that connects Japan and the countries of Southeast Asia, expressing the hope that all countries will enjoy the benefits of the bountiful ocean together and thus forge relations of friendship.

The 50th anniversary catchphrase, "Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities," expresses the hope that Japan and ASEAN, which have nurtured their friendship and forged strong ties through productive and cooperative relations over the past 50 years, will have opportunities to shine again in the next 50 years as their economies recover from the pandemic and move forward.

### Initiatives in 2023

In 2023, Commemorative Symposiums for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation were held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in February, and in Tokyo in March. In addition, private-sector organizations and government agencies conducted numerous events and projects to commemorate the 50th anniversary, including the ASEAN-Japan Business Week in June, the ASEAN-Japan Special Meeting of Justice Ministers in July, and the ASEAN-Japan

Tourism Ministers' Special Dialogue in October.

To conclude the 50th anniversary year, Tokyo will host the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation from December 16 to 18, 2023.

Earlier, in March, Prime Minister of Japan Kishida Fumio announced a New Plan for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)”, clearly positioning Southeast Asia as an important region. He also declared that Japan will make a new contribution of 100 million US dollars to the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). In addition, at the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF), a side event of the ASEAN-Japan Summit held in Jakarta in September, Prime Minister Kishida announced the “Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative”. Under this initiative, Japan has indicated its intention to cooperate to

strengthen connectivity in a wide range of areas, including transportation infrastructure, digital connectivity, maritime cooperation, supply chains, electricity connectivity, and human and knowledge connectivity. At the Commemorative Summit to be held in December, Japan and ASEAN will jointly set out a vision for the broad direction of future ASEAN-Japan relations and cooperation.

Note: This article was created using publicly available materials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and with MOFA's consent.

1. The Fukuda Doctrine consists of the following three principles that define

Japan's ASEAN diplomacy:

- (1) Japan will never be a military power
- (2) Establish a “Heart-to-Heart” relationship with ASEAN
- (3) Japan and ASEAN are equal partners

## Brief history of the Japan-ASEAN relationship

1967	ASEAN established (Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia)
1973	Japan-ASEAN Synthetic Rubber Forum launched. First cooperative relationship.
1977	Then-Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo announces the Fukuda Doctrine (see note 1.) in Manila. First ASEAN-Japan Summit Meeting held.
1978	First ASEAN-Japan Foreign Ministers Meeting held
1981	ASEAN-Japan Center opened in Tokyo
1997	Asian Economic Crisis. Japan announces its intention to provide 80 billion US dollars in support. Third ASEAN-Japan Summit Meeting held (annually thereafter).
2003	ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit held. ASEAN-Japan Tokyo Declaration.
2005	Joint Statement of the ASEAN-Japan Summit on Deepening and Broadening of ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership adopted
2008	ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement goes into effect.
2013	Five Principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy (see attached material) announced
2017	50th anniversary of ASEAN
2023	50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation



Japan and ASEAN Basic Data (figures based on 2022)

Source: IMF WEO(2023), Countries & Regions(MOFA)

## Five Principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy

In January 2013, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo announced the Five Principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy, with a view to Japan moving forward with ASEAN as an equal partner. The principles are as follows.

1. Work with ASEAN countries to consolidate and expand universal values such as freedom, democracy, and fundamental human rights.
2. Ensure, in cooperation with ASEAN countries, that the free and open seas, which are the "most vital common asset," are governed by "laws and rules" and not by "force," and welcome the United States' rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region.
3. Further promote trade and investment, including flows of goods, money, people, and services, leveraging various economic partnership networks to promote Japan's economic revitalization and the prosperity of both Japan and ASEAN Member States.
4. Protect and nurture Asia's diverse cultural heritages and traditions.
5. Promote exchanges among the younger generations to further foster mutual understanding.