

The Seventh Japan-Singapore Symposium

23-24 February 2009 Tokyo, Japan

Conference Room, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA)

Co-sponsored by

**The Japan Forum on International Relations (JFIR) and
Institute of Policy Studies, National University of Singapore (IPS)**

Under the Auspices of

**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore**

Press Release

The Seventh Japan-Singapore Symposium was held in Tokyo, Japan from 23 to 24 February, 2009. It was attended by opinion makers from politics, government, business, academia and the media. H.E. Mr. ZAINUL Abidin Rasheed, Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs led the Singapore delegation. H.E. Mr. ITO Shintaro, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, led the Japanese delegation.

The Symposium reaffirmed the importance of mutual cooperation between Japan and Singapore in a rapidly changing world, and helping to achieve peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. Although the two countries are faced with serious challenges, both domestic and global, the participants emphasized that Japan and Singapore remained committed to free trade, open economies and globalization.

There were two closed-door sessions:

- a) The discussion entitled "In Search of a Roadmap towards an East Asian Community" was facilitated by Professor TAN See Seng and Professor TAN Khee Giap of Singapore and Professor SHIRAISHI Takashi and Mr KOIKE Hirotsugu of Japan.
- b) The discussion entitled "Challenges for Economic Integration and Sustainable Development in East Asia" was facilitated by Mr Leslie TEO and Mr Edwin KHEW of Singapore, and Professor URATA Shujiro and Mr YASHIRO Masamoto of Japan.

The participants shared the common vision of building an open and inclusive East Asian community. They recognized that the community is evolving, driven by the activities of the private and people sectors, intellectuals and governments. It is underpinned by four pillars: economics, political, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Participants noted that there are many pathways to achieving the goal of the integration, and they emphasized that a flexible, problem-solving approach was best. For example, there was no consensus over whether the ASEAN Plus Three or ASEAN Plus Six forum would be the preferred route to regionalism as participants felt they could be complementary.

The Symposium also recognized the important role that the United States plays. The US is an Asia-Pacific power and its alliances with countries in the region helps to maintain peace and stability in the region. The US is a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). With regard to APEC, participants noted a golden opportunity for Singapore, Japan and the US to work together to establish a common agenda for advancing the vision and the goals of the grouping. This is because Singapore is chairing APEC this year, and handing over to Japan in 2010 and the US in 2011. Participants noted that the Obama administration is seriously considering becoming a party to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). If the US were to do so, it would fulfill the three criteria for participation in the East Asia Summit.

Participants discussed at length the severity and the impact of the current economic crisis. They agreed that it would be desirable to re-examine the Asian growth model that has placed a large emphasis on exports to the US and other Western countries. They considered it crucial to rebalance Asian economies to rely more on domestically-led growth, while promoting macroeconomic policy coordination and strengthening the social safety net. Here, Japan could reprise its traditional role as a key friend to the region, providing thought leadership and investments. Participants also emphasized the importance of continued trade liberalization in the post-crisis era in promoting economic growth and the alleviation of poverty across the region.

Finally, participants felt that Japan and Singapore, as countries that adopt high environmental standards, could work together to transit the region from high-carbon to low-carbon economies. Japan, in particular, has embraced the ethic of living in harmony with nature and could help show the way globally in terms of best practice. In working to further develop business to business collaboration, participants suggested that a concrete next step could be to set up a secretariat or a centre to implement and drive joint initiatives on economic integration and sustainable development .

The two delegations were hosted to Welcome Reception by H.E. Mr. ITO Shintaro, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan, at the Hotel Okura on 23 February.

On 24 February, an open session was held to enable the participants of the symposium to share their views with the public and the media.

Co-chairmen: Mr. YACHI Shotaro and Prof. Tommy KOH.