

Statement by Ambassador Ishikawa Hiroshi at
ASEAN-JAPAN: Embracing Diverse Partnerships for the Future

05 February 2026

Mr. Choi Shing Kwok, Director and CEO of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute,
Distinguished panelists and colleagues,

A very good morning to all of you.

It is a great honour to deliver opening remarks at this seminar on “ASEAN – Japan: Embracing Diverse Partnerships for the Future.” I would like to express my sincere gratitude to ISEAS ASEAN Studies Centre for organising this timely and important event.

The world is witnessing a tremendous shift. Geopolitical realignments, supply chain reconfiguration, and rapid technological advancement are unfolding simultaneously at an unimaginable pace. These developments are generating heightened uncertainty and posing significant challenges to the rules-based international order.

What is even more concerning is the erosion of trust that can accompany such change. This is particularly troubling at a time when collective responses are urgently needed to address global challenges such as climate change and demographic transitions. For Japan, building trust is a practical approach to diplomacy – one that emphasises dialogue, inclusiveness, and mutual respect .

In this context, the Japan–ASEAN partnership is not only a beacon of stability and trust, but also a strategic necessity for the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific. According to the Centre’s annual “State of Southeast Asia” Survey, Japan has consistently been recognised as the most reliable partner by regional respondents. This enduring confidence speaks volumes about the strength and credibility of our relationship.

Japan’s engagement with ASEAN has always placed ASEAN’s needs and aspirations at the centre. One example is the Asia Zero Emission Community, or AZEC. This Japan-led initiative aims to advance Asia’s decarbonisation while pursuing sustainable growth. AZEC reflects

Japan's approach to regional cooperation: addressing shared challenges through partnership, technology, and long-term commitment. Japan remains firmly committed to working together with ASEAN, guided by trust, shared interests, and mutual respect.

This commitment to addressing shared challenges brings me to the second theme of today's seminar: Leveraging AI Technologies for Sustainable Development. Japan has been actively leading international discussions on the use of AI, including through the Hiroshima AI Process. Japan believes that technological progress must be accompanied by appropriate global governance and transparency, so that innovation contributes to sustainable growth of the world. It is essential that Japan and ASEAN member states deepen collaboration on AI to address economic, social, and developmental challenges, while building a safe, secure, and trustworthy AI ecosystem.

Singapore is a vital strategic partner for Japan—both as a trusted bilateral partner and as a key anchor of ASEAN unity and effectiveness. As Singapore assumes the ASEAN Chair next year, and our two nations also celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations this year, Japan is determined to build on this momentum to advance not only our bilateral ties, but also Japan-ASEAN cooperation on regional and global issues.

To conclude, I sincerely hope that today's discussions will generate valuable insights and contribute meaningfully to shaping practical cooperation that strengthens the Japan-ASEAN partnership for the future.

Thank you.