

# Toward the Realisation of an East Asian Community

Both the Japanese and Australian prime ministers are known to be actively giving careful consideration to the future framework of the Asia-Pacific region. On 15 November in Singapore after the conclusion of the 2009 APEC Summit, Japanese Prime Minister, Dr Yukio Hatoyama, outlined his initiative for an East Asian community in his address *Japan's New Commitment to Asia—Toward the Realization of an East Asian Community*.

Dr Hatoyama began his address by noting that 'there is no question about the importance of Asia'. He explained that Asia's economic power is likely to grow from its current position: in 2008, ASEAN Plus Six countries accounted for approximately 23% of the world's GDP and APEC economies accounted for more than 52%.

The Prime Minister stated that his new government attaches great importance to Asian diplomacy and that the main pillar of this policy is the initiative for an 'East Asian community'. He explained that the concept behind this initiative lies in a philosophy that he cherishes personally, that is *yū-ai*\* which is normally translated in this context as 'fraternity'. This entails respecting one's own dignity and freedom and that of others.

He said: 'Ever since I began my career in politics, I have constantly asked myself if we could find ways to create a bond of "*yū-ai*" between Japan and other Asian countries, and more broadly among Asia-Pacific countries. I set this goal because reconciliation in the real sense of the word is not necessarily believed to have been achieved in the region. This is the current situation, although more than 60 years have passed since Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly on the people of Asian nations.'

Prime Minister Hatoyama went on to contrast this with the situation in Europe, where the efforts to reconcile Germany and France, 'once bitter foes', had ultimately lead to the creation of the European Union. The central idea of the Prime Minister's 'East Asian community' initiative is based upon the reconciliation and cooperation in Europe.

Under his initiative, countries sharing a common vision would promote cooperation in various fields based on the principle of 'open regional cooperation', and through this, the region would develop a multi-layered network of functional communities.

Prime Minister Hatoyama cited several areas of cooperation.

Cooperating to prosper together—economic partnership agreements (EPAs) and free trade agreements (FTAs) are effective ways to promote economic ties in the region. While Japan already has EPAs and FTAs in the region, it intends to pursue those under negotiation to open Japan further.

Cooperating to save a 'Green Asia'—as the Prime Minister has previously stated\*\*, he believes that all countries should address the problems of climate change. This includes developing countries which should seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions based on 'common but differentiated responsibilities'. In this area Japanese companies have

already developed many environmentally-friendly technologies which can be taken advantage of.

Cooperating to protect human lives—in much of Asia natural disasters and infectious disease pose a greater threat to human security than war does. Among efforts in this area, Japan will despatch a Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel as a *yū-ai* boat with SDF, NGO and other personnel to conduct medical services and extend cultural activities in the Pacific and the Southeast Asian region.

Cooperating to build a 'sea of fraternity'—in a region linked together by seas, safe sea routes are crucial. Existing regional efforts to counter piracy should be extended, and it is important that East Asia improve joint efforts to prevent maritime accidents and ease tensions.

The most important key to promote an East Asian community initiative is *people*. To demonstrate Japan's commitment in this area, Prime Minister Hatoyama mentioned a yearly program, launched in 2007, that invites 6,000 youths from East Asian countries to Japan.

The Prime Minister concluded by remarking that in Singapore, a society open to the world, he senses the infinite possibilities for APEC's 'open regionalism'.

Prime Minister Hatoyama looks forward to welcoming APEC to Japan this year.

For the full transcript of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's address see: [www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/200911/15singapore\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/200911/15singapore_e.html)

\* 友愛 is *yū-ai* written in Japanese. The first character is the same as in friend and the second means love or affection.

\*\* See p.7 of the previous issue of *Japan Reports* Vol. 44 No.3.

## Letters to the Editor

The Editor of *Japan Reports* welcomes any comments and suggestions you may have. Letters relating to Australia and Japan (opinions/experiences) are also welcome.

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