

Joint Press Statement by Japan and Brunei Darussalam

on the Occasion of the Visit of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Muizzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam to Japan

16 December 2023, Tokyo

1. His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Muizzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam made an official visit to Japan on the occasion of the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. During the visit, His Majesty had a meeting with His Majesty the Emperor at the Imperial Palace on 15 December 2023.
2. His Excellency KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan, hosted a working lunch for His Majesty at the Prime Minister's Office on 16 December 2023. During the meeting, both leaders applauded the long-standing cooperation since establishing diplomatic relations in 1984. Both leaders concurred in making the year 2024 as the Japan-Brunei Friendship Year to mark the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations and looked forward to high-level visits and activities to celebrate this significant milestone for both countries.
3. In this regard, both leaders shared their hope for the visit by His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince and Senior Minister in the Prime Minister's Office of Brunei Darussalam to Japan in commemorating the 40 years of friendship.
4. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to deepening bilateral cooperation in energy, people-to-people exchanges, maritime security, the rule of law and climate change as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest. Towards realizing the full potential of bilateral cooperation, both leaders tasked their officials to explore the possibilities of elevating the bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership. Both leaders looked forward to the convening of the 2nd Policy Dialogue in the near future.

People-to-People Exchanges

5. Both leaders reaffirmed the importance of intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchange programs between both countries, including the Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship, the "Ship for Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Program (SSEAYP)", "the Japan - East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS)" and the WA project and its succeeding new projects of the Japan Foundation, including the "NIHONGO Partners" program, which deepen mutual understanding between both countries, especially among the next generation, and form a solid foundation for bilateral relations. Both leaders also expressed their commitment to further promoting these meaningful cooperations.
6. Both leaders welcomed the resumption of direct flights between the capitals and looked forward to the finalization of the visa waiver arrangement for ordinary passport holders that grants 30 days of stay at the time of the landing permission in order to further facilitate people-to-people exchanges between both countries.

Defence, Maritime Cooperation and Rule of Law

7. Both leaders welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation on Defence Cooperation and Exchanges on 3 February 2023 as well as the swift convening of the first Defence Policy Dialogue in June 2023, based on the Memorandum. Both leaders underscored the steady progress in defence and security relations between Brunei Darussalam and Japan which would continue to be strengthened by exchanges of visits, unit-to-unit exchanges and others. Both leaders also commended the close defence cooperation at the regional-level, particularly through ASEAN-led defence mechanisms towards the maintenance of peace and stability of the region.
8. His Majesty expressed appreciation for Japan's continued cooperation on maritime law enforcement including capacity-building initiatives for Brunei Government officials, particularly in deepening the understanding of international law and implementation of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Both leaders also expressed their willingness to promote exchanges between the Japan Coast Guard and its counterpart organizations in Brunei Darussalam.

Energy and Climate Change

9. Both leaders welcomed the long-standing cooperation in energy, spanning over fifty years, and reaffirmed their commitment to further enhancing bilateral cooperation in this area. His Excellency Prime Minister Kishida expressed his appreciation for Brunei Darussalam's stable supply of LNG to Japan and His Majesty reiterated his commitment to continuing this cooperation based on mutually beneficial contracts.
10. Both leaders welcomed the completion of the 'Study of Roadmap for Decarbonization of ASEAN Energy Systems: Optimum Technology Selection Model and Analysis for Brunei Darussalam' by the Department of Energy at the Prime Minister's Office of Brunei Darussalam and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan in September 2023.
11. Both leaders expressed their intention to further enhance energy cooperation under the Memorandum of Cooperation on the Realization of Energy Transition signed between the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and the Prime Minister's Office of Brunei Darussalam on 15 December 2023.
12. Both leaders welcomed the convening of the first Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) Leaders' Meeting and affirmed promoting closer coordination among AZEC Partner Countries towards net zero emissions, while ensuring economic growth and energy security.
13. Both leaders welcomed the progress of the bilateral cooperation on forest preservation. They confirmed their intention to make necessary arrangement for promoting knowledge exchange and expertise between the two countries.

Other Areas of Cooperation

14. Both leaders welcomed ongoing discussions between the Ministry of Health of Brunei Darussalam and Osaka University on the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding encompassing the mutual cooperation.
15. Both leaders also welcomed the continued capacity-building cooperation offered by Japan Patent Office in the field of intellectual property.

Regional and Global Issues

16. Both leaders acknowledged the significant progress in the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue Relations as this year marked the 50th year of partnership and looked forward to the successful convening of the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation on 16 – 18 December 2023.
17. Both leaders expressed pleasure in the establishment of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership last September, and looked forward to continuing working closely to ensure that the partnership will be substantive, meaningful and mutually beneficial.
18. Both leaders expressed satisfaction on the substantive progress in the implementation of the Revised Implementation Plan of the Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation: Shared Vision, Shared Identity, Shared Future, whereby all activities and projects have already been implemented. They also looked forward to the adoption of the new Joint Vision Statement and its Implementation Plan at the Commemorative Summit, which will serve as guiding documents for the future direction of ASEAN-Japan relations.
19. Both leaders underscored the importance of expanding trade and investment, including through the transparent implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement and the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement. They also welcomed ongoing cooperation between both countries on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), reaffirming the importance of upholding its strategic values and maintaining its high-standards.
20. His Majesty expressed appreciation for Japan's valuable support in promoting cultural, educational, sports, and people-to-people exchanges through various programmes, including the ASEAN-Japan Actions on Sports, Sport for Tomorrow and WA Project. His Majesty also expressed appreciation for Japan's support for the ASEAN Junior Fellowship Programme (AJFP). Moving forward, they reaffirmed their commitment to continue enhancing the bilateral relations based on mutual trust, mutual respect, mutual benefit, and equal partnership.

21. His Excellency Prime Minister Kishida expressed Japan's support for the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change in Brunei Darussalam, which would play a pivotal role in facilitating regional cooperation and coordination on climate change initiatives among ASEAN Member States with relevant national governments, regional, and international organizations, and provide policy recommendations on addressing climate change to ASEAN Member States.
22. Both leaders underscored the importance of upholding international law in contributing to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity. They stressed a strong commitment to strengthening multilateralism and the international order based on the rule of law. Both leaders also reaffirmed commitment to working together in realizing the common objectives of the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)" and the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)".
23. Both leaders reaffirmed the importance of maintaining peace, security, and stability in the region, and their commitment to the freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, consistent with international law, in particular the 1982 UNCLOS. The leaders further urged countries concerned to avoid any actions that would complicate or escalate tensions and affect peace and stability and reiterated the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with international law, in particular the 1982 UNCLOS.
24. Both leaders exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East, particularly Palestine and expressed deep concern over the loss of many innocent lives on the ground. They welcomed the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution entitled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations" on 12 December 2023. They also stressed the importance of preventing the potential spread of violence across the region and reaffirmed their commitment to a two-state solution towards achieving independent Palestinian State.
25. Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) ongoing development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles including the launch using ballistic missile technology last month in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs), is a worrisome development that threatens peace and stability in the region. They emphasized the importance of abiding by the relevant UNSCRs as well as addressing issues of human rights and humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.
26. Both leaders also discussed issues vital to international peace and security, including the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as regional stability, and reaffirmed that they would continue to work together to address these issues.
