

Luncheon Address by H.E. Dr. Makio Miyagawa
Ambassador of Japan
At 29th Asia Pacific Round Table
Hilton Kuala Lumpur
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Tan Sri Rastam Mohad Isa, Chairman and Chief Executive of ISIS, Malaysia,

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. As a leading track 2 forum, ISIS Malaysia has been offering invaluable opportunities for policy makers and opinion leaders in their engagement in various challenges this region faces. In one of the most renowned seminars held for a long time in Malaysia to discuss the future of this region, I am pleased and honoured to share views with so many prominent scholars, think-tankers, and researchers, who are present in this room, on what I observe current issues with strategic gravity in this region. The year 2015 will become a major turning point for the future of Asia in various angles.
2. First, ASEAN is flourishing economically and integrating politically. There could not be anything more delightful than its advancement for Japan, as we have continuously rendered support for its formation, economic foundation and political stability for many years since its inception, and even days before its formation. The late Mr Lee Luan Yew depicted ASEAN as “unpromising start but promising future”.
3. In 2015, ASEAN is set to formulate an economic community. It is said that, through this means, the connectivity would immensely be uplifted among countries in Southeast Asia. But many evaluate that some of the expected positive factors have already been anticipated and discounted, and that the added value should be in areas of further reduction of non-tariff barriers, and liberalisation in trade in services.

(1) A challenge to ASEAN seems whether ASEAN could further expand its horizon to create a broader regional co-operation. RCEP, now planned to complete its negotiations by the end of this year, will further expand the scope of

connectivity beyond ASEAN. As it subsumes the whole ASEAN nations, RCEP could drive a vehicle to realise an expanded form of ASEAN economic community in the near future. Some of the ASEAN members are also engaged in TPP process. Should ASEAN succeed in these forms, their market potentiality will become remarkably large.

(2) Further, ASEAN is expected this year to establish not just an economic community but also a community in politico-security and socio-cultural domain. Challenges exist, on the political arena, to what degree members could reduce self-imposing restrictions on the application of democratic rules at the sacrifice of internal security risks and intervention risks from outside. On the security front, could ASEAN countries lower guard with one another, and be prepared collectively to face threats from outside the association?

(3) Some argued in the past that Asia, characterised as awfully diverse, could in no way create a community. This idee fixe started gradually to wither when Asians moved to create bilateral trade networks and to deepen regional co-operation. For Asia, 2015 is a testing year to demonstrate that this region, being highly diverse in political systems, cultures and religions, could really give birth to a community building with full of dynamism.

(4) If it does, the words of Former President Soekarno will sparkle, "What harm is in diversity when there is unity in desire."

4. Secondly, 2015 is a pivotal year for the future of Asia, as it celebrates the 60th anniversary of Bandung conference and reconfirms the spirit it established.

(1) Even after the war fought in this region ended 1945, battles and diplomacy aspiring for independence agonizingly continued. Internal strife against communism persisted and intensified. The Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, in 1955, calling for colonial rule to end, was still halfway to the independence of all. By mid-1960s, most states in Southeast Asia began to stand on their own feet.

(2) Organised in 1955 by five Asian nations; Indonesia, India, Burma (Myanmar), Pakistan and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the conference was attended by, from Asia, all the already independent countries in Southeast Asia, later forming ASEAN, as well as Japan, India and China.

(3) It is noteworthy that 2015 reaffirmed that the spirit of this conference enshrined in the 10-point Declaration should still be relevant today. Amongst them include (a) respect for fundamental human rights, (b) respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, (c) recognition of the equality of all nations large and small, and (d) settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means.

(4) Our Prime Minister stated in its 60th anniversary meeting at Jakarta this year, "We should never allow to go unchecked the use of force by the mightier to twist the weaker around. This wisdom of our forefathers in Bandung was that the rule of law should protect the dignity of sovereign nations."

5. This year, 2015, thirdly, can also become a major turning point for the future stability and security of Asia, as it faces a surge of apprehension on the peace in Asia.

(1) The Leaders of ASEAN gave a categorical warning in its Chairman's Statement about a month ago that its Leaders "share the serious concerns expressed by some Leaders on the land reclamation being undertaken in the South China Sea, which has eroded trust and confidence and may undermine peace, security and stability, in the South China Sea."

(2) The Statement emphasised the importance of freedom of navigation in and over-flight over the South China Sea; no threat or use of force; and resolving their disputes through peaceful means, in accordance with international law referring to UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

(3) On maritime security, our country is also one of the stakeholders. Our Prime Minister articulated three principles on the rule of law at Sea at the Shangri-la Dialogue last year: to make and clarify their claims based on international law; not to use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims; and to seek to settle disputes by peaceful means.

(4) Against the backdrop of the surge of apprehension, the year 2015 is a critical year to ensure free and stable communications route at and above the sea in our region.

6. Fourthly, the year 2015 falls on the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. 2015 is a decisive year for its reform. Malaysia is now a member of the Security Council. However, the reform the Security Council is already very long overdue for more than two decades, and is still staggering.

(1) Despite the profound transformation which has undergone in the international community since 1945, particularly with the quadrupled number of independent members, and their contributions, financial or otherwise, the composition and modus operandi of the Security Council have deviated from what they should be and do in no way reflect such transformation, causing partiality, inefficiency, paralysis and distrust.

(2) One wonders whether this unique organ, with prime responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, could effectively address any incidents, which might possibly occur in future in this region, constituting any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression.

(3) 2015 is a critical year for the revitalisation of this organisation.

7. Lastly, 2015 reminds us, not only the whole citizens in Japan but also a large number of people around the world, of the two nuclear bombs which ravaged civilians in our two cities, no need to name their names. 2015 is a 20th anniversary of the signing of the Southeast Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty, denying such weapons from their territories, including their EEZ and airspace above them.

(1) While the world without such weapons of mass destruction is the ultimate goal, the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference this year failed to reach consensus to adopt a final document, spreading disappointment and suspicions all around the world.

(2) If one draws a circle of 1000 kilometre radius with Kuala Lumpur at its centre, Bangkok, Jakarta and even Kota Kinabalu are located outside the circle. The same circle with Hiroshima at its centre finds Vladivostok, Pyongyang and Shanghai within its circle. This illustrates how geographically close our nation is situated to those countries now possessing such weapons of mass destruction.

(3) This geographical propinquity, together with the actual experiences of bomb attacks, suggest the unique security environment of our nation. The failure of ensuring global consensus in the NPT framework may arouse debates on diplomacy and strategies.

8. Let me conclude my remarks by saying that, the greater the complexity of security environment, the more heavily the world rely on profound wisdom of prominent figures. Your debates value very highly.

Thank you.