

ICAPP 8th General Assembly
Theme: “Building an Asian Community”

Towards an Asian Community

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Introduction

Honorable chairpersons and distinguished delegates, it gives me great pleasure to attend and speak at ICAPP’s 8th General Assembly on behalf of the DPJ, the Democratic Party of Japan.

First of all, let me congratulate the organizers for this successful General Assembly. The DPJ has been participating in ICAPP since its inaugural General Assembly in the Philippines in year 2000. Over the past 14 years, ICAPP has promoted dialogue and exchanges among political parties and political leaders in Asia, and contributed to peace and development in this region. I would like to once again express my profound respect to everyone at ICAPP for their tireless efforts since its inception.

Significance of Holding the General Assembly in Sri Lanka

About 35 years ago, I was assigned as a diplomat to Sri Lanka – to this country with rich traditions and history, beautiful nature, and wonderful people. I consider Sri Lanka to be my second home.

Along with me, my country Japan shares a special appreciation for Sri Lanka. It is a famous story in Japan that on the occasion of the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951,

Ceylon, as Sri Lanka was known at the time, abandoned its claims to reparations from Japan, asserting that, “hatred ceases not by hatred, but by love.”

These words led the difficult and hard conference to be succeeded.

The suffering Sri Lanka endured during its long civil war was truly heartbreaking. Today, Sri Lanka, having overcome this painful civil war and having achieved reconciliation, is embarking on a path to building a peaceful country with the people working together as one. In this sense, it is very meaningful that this year’s General Assembly on the theme of “Building an Asian Community” is being held right here in Sri Lanka.

The DPJ’s View on “Building an Asian Community”: A Society Built on Mutual Coexistence

I believe the foundation of “building an Asian community” rests on the concept of “unity in diversity.” This unity can be realized only by promoting dialogue and exchanges as well as deepening mutual trust and understanding.

The DPJ’s Platform sets out as follows: “We will build a strong and accepting society in which people support each other while embracing diversity.

What I just said is also a universal concept in the international community. The DPJ will realize harmonious relations with neighboring countries in the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, we will contribute to the peace and prosperity of the international community through multilateral frameworks. We will realize the basic spirit of “popular sovereignty, respect for basic human rights and pacifism” enshrined in the Japanese Constitution.

Japan's Peace Diplomacy and the DPJ's View: The Foundation Should Not Be "Force" but "Dialogue Diplomacy for Mutual Coexistence"

At present it is deeply worrying that many innocent lives are being lost due to armed and violent conflicts as well as terrorism incidents taking place all over the world – violent terrorism of a brutal and inhumane nature, ceaseless chain of killings out of revenge, the spread of nuclear and missile development.

How can these challenges be solved to build an Asian Community? Lasting stability, or a peaceful society built on mutual coexistence, certainly cannot be realized by any approach that involves exchanges of armed or violent clashes and attacks.

Japan, based on its experience with World War II, pledged in its Constitution never to wage a war again. During the 69 years since the end of World War II, Japan never once exercised force outside of its border. The DPJ's position is that Japan, as a peace-creating nation, while adhering to its exclusively defense-oriented policy, should make all possible efforts to execute two types of diplomacies: (1) preventative diplomacy, Japan supports the realization of socioeconomic development, human security, and other achievements in order to eliminate the causes of war, such as poverty and disparities; and (2) mediation diplomacy, Japan promotes mediation for the establishment of peace based on dialogue and trust.

Nonetheless, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of the Liberal Democratic Party has changed the Cabinet's existing interpretation of the Constitution in order to allow for Japan's exercise of the right to collective self-defense. Based on the DPJ's position and in view of the fundamental spirit of Japan's

Constitution, the DPJ, as the largest opposition party in Japan, is against this change and is requesting the Cabinet to withdraw its decision.

We need to promote dialogue and exchanges by recognizing each other's dignity and having the tolerance to accept diversity. This demands responsible actions from all countries, including major powers.

The ongoing initiatives to establish communities in Asia are a welcome development. We are convinced that what is pivotal to solving challenges is not fighting each other, but collaborating with each other as friends sharing the future.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to once again express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to everyone in Sri Lanka, the host country of this General Assembly. I hope this General Assembly will prove to be fruitful for the building of a peaceful Asian Community in which its members can exist and prosper together. Thank you very much.