

Part I

Speeches

Opening Remarks

OBUCHI KEIZO

Prime Minister of Japan

IT IS A GREAT HONOR for me to be here today at this Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia's Tomorrow, and I am very pleased to have with us today so many of Asia's intellectual leaders. I wish to extend my sincerest gratitude to the staff of the Japan Center for International Exchange, headed by Mr. Yamamoto Tadashi, and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, under Ms. Chia Siow Yue, for their dedicated efforts to organize this meeting. I am also privileged to welcome H. E. Mr. Surin, minister for foreign affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and the other participants in this meeting who have come from such great distances to join us despite their busy schedules.

Last May as the foreign minister of Japan, I made a policy speech in Singapore on the outlook of Japan and East Asia. In my speech, I stressed the need for intellectual interaction within the region to help make the 21st century a "century of peace and prosperity." As a first step, I proposed the holding of this Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia's Tomorrow.

The fact that the current economic crisis spread so rapidly throughout East Asia within only a few months showed clearly the depth of interdependence among the countries in Asia and in the international community. I proposed this kind of meeting for intellectual dialogue because I strongly felt the need for us to mobilize the diverse intellectual assets and resourcefulness of each country for the peace and prosperity of the Asian region.

In my speech in Singapore, I proposed five key elements as Obuchi's version of the essential five Cs for overcoming the Asian economic difficulties. These five Cs are: courage, creativity, compassion, cooperation, and confidence. These elements are based on my viewpoint that attaches great importance to a human-centered approach to the crisis. As the recent Nobel Prize winner in economics, Professor Amartya Sen from India, pointed out, "the process of development is not primarily one of expanding the supply of goods and services but of enhancing the capabilities of people."

An unavoidable fact is that Asia's remarkable economic development in recent years also created social strains. The current economic crisis has aggravated these strains, threatening the daily lives of many people. Taking this fact fully into consideration, I believe that we must deal with these difficulties with due consideration for the socially vulnerable segments of the population, in light of "human security," and that we must seek new strategies for economic development that attach importance to human security with a view to enhancing the long-term development of this region. At this year's ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference in July, Foreign Minister Surin, whom, as I said, we are very pleased to have with us today, proposed the organizing of the ASEAN-PMC Caucus for Social Safety Nets. I believe the basic thinking behind his proposal is very similar to mine.

"Human security" is the theme of today's dialogue. It is my ardent wish that creative intellectual interaction emerge in this area, which involves many urgent issues, and that wise leadership be exercised for overcoming the current crisis.

Allow me to make use of this opportunity to share with you, distinguished audience, my view on human security.

In our times, humankind is under various kinds of threats. Environmental problems such as global warming are grave problems not only for us but also for future generations. In addition, transnational crimes such as illicit drugs and trafficking are increasing. Problems such as the exodus of refugees, violations of human rights, infectious diseases like AIDS, terrorism, antipersonnel land mines, and so on pose a significant threat to all of us. Moreover, the problem of children under armed conflict ought never to be overlooked.

It is my deepest belief that human beings should be able to lead lives of creativity, without having their survival threatened or their dignity impaired. While the phase "human security" is a relatively new one, I

understand that it is the keyword to comprehensively seizing all of the menaces that threaten the survival, daily life, and dignity of human beings and to strengthening the efforts to confront these threats.

Since many of the problems affecting human security cross national borders, no country can solve these problems alone; coordinated actions by the international community are necessary. Moreover, since these problems directly affect the lives of human beings, and since it is this area where activities of citizens through nongovernmental organizations and others are most effective, it is important for governments and international organizations to strengthen linkages and cooperation with citizens' activities in coping with these problems.

To support Asian countries in the economic crisis, we have pledged and steadily implemented contributions of the largest scale in the world. With human security in mind, we have given, as one of the most important pillars of our support, assistance to the poor, the aged, the disabled, women and children, and other socially vulnerable segments of the population on whom the Asian economic difficulties have the heaviest impact.

I believe we should make the 21st century a human-centered century. This has always been the basic idea in my diplomatic activities. In order to build such a future, that is to say such a "tomorrow," the most important thing is for intellectuals to gather across national borders and share their confidence toward the future based on the common aspirations emerging from their intellectual dialogue.

Rich in human resources, abundant with potential, Asia has sufficient capability to overcome the current crisis and to develop further. I'm confident of this. The hope which Asia would generate in the process of overcoming our present difficulties might be an excellent example for the future of the international community as a whole.

The establishment today of a new forum for intellectual interaction toward Asia's tomorrow is exceptionally significant. I sincerely hope that these efforts will continue. The government of Japan intends to continue to support these efforts as far as possible.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to express my heartfelt wish that the discussion at this intellectual dialogue be fruitful, serving as a bridge as we proceed toward Asia's tomorrow.

Keynote Speech

H. E. DR. SURIN PITSUWAN

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

I MUST ADMIT THAT when I received the invitation to attend and address this important conference, I accepted with much pleasure but also with some trepidation. I was pleased because Prime Minister Obuchi's initiative for the holding of the conference could not have come at a more timely and crucial moment, given the pressing challenges we in Asia are facing. Especially, the focus of this meeting would be on the social impact of the present economic crisis on the lives and livelihood of millions of people in our region—an issue which I have been deeply concerned about, and I am sure all of you are, as well.

And yet, in coming here I also had some trepidation because talking about the future always has its inherent risks, particularly in these times of change and uncertainties. And also because I knew that what I have to say today will have to measure up to the wisdom of the leading minds gathered here in Tokyo for this conference. For, as we all have witnessed, it is the power of the human intellect and the power of ideas and knowledge that have been the wellspring of much of the progress and prosperity that our nations and humankind as a whole have come to enjoy and, I believe, at times taken for granted.

It has been over 50 years since the tragedy of war befell Japan, Asia, and much of the world, bringing in its wake great suffering, miseries, consternation, and suspicion. With the end of the war, we have put the past behind us and set ourselves to the task of rebuilding our nations and our relations. And within a period of decades, Japan and much of East Asia

have achieved a feat that took many other nations centuries to accomplish. But unfortunately, as we have found out the hard way, success often breeds complacency. Now we are faced with a crisis of a scale and magnitude unprecedented in our recent history. Optimism and confidence have given way to pessimism and self-doubt.

Now, more than ever, we in Asia must together pool our knowledge and wisdom as we come to grips with the formidable challenges confronting us—challenges that bear upon the future of Asia, our own future, and that of generations to come.

We must ask ourselves what went wrong and what the lessons are that we have learnt. For Asia is once again in the midst of a major transition and transformation. The financial crisis is but a prelude.

Whether Asia can reemerge with renewed confidence and vigor shall depend on whether we are able to seize the opportunities arising out of the present challenges in order to correct our past mistakes and build a stronger foundation for the Asia of tomorrow. It shall depend on us keeping the faith and having the courage and wisdom to make the right choices and the right decisions, however difficult they may be.

To be sure, the challenges that confront us are daunting and manifold. The challenge of the current financial crisis, the challenge of our interdependence, the challenge of economic integration, the challenge of technological change, the challenge of rising expectations of our peoples, and the challenge of protecting the environment—how we respond to these challenges will go a long way toward determining Asia's tomorrow.

For sure, there are no easy answers or solutions to these challenges both of today and tomorrow. For Asia itself defies any sweeping generalization, given its diversity and vastness. But in the midst of such great diversity, we in Asia have found our fate and destinies increasingly intertwined. Together, we need to work toward our common aspirations. And together, we need to be guided and inspired by a common vision of the future.

Defining the vision of the future of Asia in itself will be a struggle of ideas. For there are extremists on both sides. On the one hand, there are those who see themselves as the vanguard of the established order and have sought to defend the status quo at all costs. There are also those who are defiant in their belief in the supremacy of the so-called Asian values over the so-called Western values.

On the other extreme end, there are those who seek to break with the past and start anew and who see traditional "Asian values" as antiquated and have zealously embraced the Western way lock, stock, and barrel.

In any struggle of ideas in human history, accommodation must be found, flexibility must be present. All of us stand to lose if we allow extremism to win the day over reason, moderation, and tolerance. For in the end, the way forward requires continuity and change, cooperation, the permutation of ideas, and enlightened leadership.

So instead of engaging in a win-all or lose-all debate, we need more than ever to have an open-hearted as well as an open-minded dialogue on the issues that unite us rather than the issues that divide us. For at the end of the day we will find that our goals and aspirations are one and the same: common prosperity based on the fullest realization of all our human potential and dignity.

In looking to the future, I do not profess to have all the answers. But I believe that what has become apparent in the midst of the current economic turmoil is that while our success was real indeed, much of it rested on fragile foundations. Our economies grew by leaps and bounds. Much of it was due to the influx of investments, capital, and management from Japan in particular, but also from Europe and America. Factories were relocated and production lines were transferred. We touted the abundance of our resources and our lower wages. We gave inadequate attention to the preservation of our environment. We embraced free markets and globalization with open arms but with minimal supervision and discipline. In our rush to catch up, we became fixated on growth rates and on the façade of progress and prosperity. And in the end we became victims of our own success.

In my opinion, the origin of the current financial and economic crisis is deeply rooted in our sociopolitical structures. It is indeed a systemic problem. For we have equated order, stability, and continuity with growth. And we assumed that the prosperity achieved as a consequence of that system was to be sustained. In the end, it has proven to be an illusion and a fragile bubble of growth.

For everything was fine as long as our economies kept growing. Now with the crisis, our excesses, our weaknesses, and our deficiencies have been exposed. And without growth, legitimacy and justification for leadership are undermined. We now hear the yearning for reform, for greater democracy, and for wider participation of our peoples in the political and economic processes.

The current economic crisis has subjected us to a rude awakening. For, in the final analysis, real and sustained development must rest on a solid foundation of the development of our human potential. The fruits of development must trickle down and uplift all in our society.

The ever-changing and rising skyline of our Bangkok metropolis should never be mistaken for real development. If we fail in our task to address the untold sufferings and miseries arising from the current economic crisis, we are indeed sowing the seeds for future instability. Rising unemployment, social dislocation, and unrest invite a social implosion that can lead only to total insecurity of the entire region. That was the rationale behind my proposal for the Caucus for Social Safety Nets at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and the Post-Ministerial Conference in Manila last July, referred to by Prime Minister Obuchi this morning.

In these difficult times as we focus on the immediate tasks of economic recovery, the need for adequate social safety nets—to protect the unemployed, the poor, and the marginalized—assumes even greater urgency. But it would be a terrible disservice and demeaning to our peoples if we thought of social safety nets solely in terms of handouts. For real human security—the real social safety net—is human development, holistic human development. Intelligence and equal access to opportunities are the best insurance against future calamities.

Caring for and developing our human resources—our most precious asset—or, put simply, helping them to help themselves, constitute the most important investments that we can make for our own future and shall help enable us to emerge from the present crisis on to the path of stronger, more disciplined and sustained growth.

Indeed, the call for democracy and human rights that resonates in each of our nations is not meant as an end in itself. It is rather because when people are free to express their will, to decide what kind of government they want, and to engage in the business enterprise that suits their talents, then society as a whole benefits. Political and economic liberalization unleashes the forces of knowledge, creativity, and opportunities that shall propel our nations forward toward a brighter tomorrow.

The pressing need for human security, the desire for equality and social justice, and the call for greater accountability and transparency in the way we manage our economy and conduct our politics are challenges that are not confined to any one nation. They are the challenges of the 21st century. And they are the challenges that we in Asia face together, and we cannot simply wish them away. Our peace and prosperity have become too intertwined and indivisible for us to seek our salvation alone in isolation. We simply cannot close ourselves from the forces of globalization that have transcended our borders and touched our shores. We cannot turn back the dynamics and imperatives of globalization.

THE ASIAN CRISIS AND HUMAN SECURITY

To be sure, we must protect and conserve the traditions and values that reflect the best of our societies. But, at the same time, we must keep up with the rapid pace of change. We must adapt and adjust in order to muster the ever-mounting forces of globalization to our maximum advantage or otherwise we will run the risk of being engulfed by the tsunamis of on-rushing tides.

And above all, we in Asia need to have a common mission and a common vision in meeting these challenges. We need to work together in order to march forward into the 21st century together. And, indeed, this is our task here in this room at this conference—to define that vision. No doubt, the pace will differ from country to country because circumstances are not the same in every society. We all must lend a helping hand to those in need. On the other hand, we cannot sit still and take comfort behind the status quo or continue to do business as usual. We all must be prepared to adjust ourselves and accommodate the pressures and demands of the changing times.

The tasks of shaping the future of Asia will of course fall on some more than others. Just as Japan helped fuel and inspire our past success, Japan can now help set the pace and provide a model by virtue of its own ongoing reforms. Japan, with its resources and experiences born of its hard-earned success, can help answer the needs for social safety nets and human resource development of countries in the region, as emphatically reiterated by Prime Minister Obuchi in his opening speech this morning.

If, as the legend goes, the sun rises in Japan, then it is for Japan to radiate warmth, compassion, and leadership. This initiative of Prime Minister Obuchi confirms Japan's willingness and readiness to play that role.

What is more, the tasks at hand will also require the building of a new generation of leaders who are conscious of hard-earned achievements of past struggles and, at the same time, open to new ideas and ready to reach out beyond one's borders to cooperate with those sharing common aspirations for the future. The younger generation must be inspired. And they are inspired. We in the present generation must make sure that they are connected in an ever-widening network of youthful enthusiasm and exuberance for a brighter future.

For, indeed, Asia as a whole has the momentum to move forward. The deep roots of our history, the richness of our cultures, the wealth of knowledge that we have accumulated, and the progress that we have achieved so far are testaments that we certainly do not lack the individual and collective ingenuity and strength to take charge of our own destiny.

As we set our sights on Asia's tomorrow, we need to think in terms of shared prosperity with a human face. We need to think of development with compassion. As we in Asia seek to recover from the economic crisis, we shall need to draw strength from one another to create a synergy that would light up the way toward Asia's renewal.

In this age of globalization and interdependence, no one nation or people can stand alone on the island of prosperity in a sea of turmoil. We either survive together or we risk being overwhelmed by the rising tides of popular discontent and unfulfilled aspirations.

We are grateful that you here in Japan regard our misfortune as your own. This gathering is a clear testimony of your concern and cognizance of the words of a 17th-century English transcendental poet, John Dunn, who admonished us over three centuries ago when he said:

No man is an island, entire of itself; everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe [or Asia] is the less, . . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee.