

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Katsuya Okada,**  
**Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan,**  
**at Bali Democracy Forum IV**

December 8, 2011  
Bali, Indonesia

Your Excellency Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, and  
Your Excellency Ms. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today in Bali, a place symbolic of Asian diversity, to participate in Bali Democracy Forum IV on behalf of the Government of Japan.

Let me begin by offering my heartfelt condolences to the people of Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and the Philippines, who have recently suffered from floods, typhoons and other natural disasters, and express my sincere hope for early recovery in the disaster-affected areas.

It will soon be nine months since the occurrence of the Great East Japan Earthquake. Supported by warm words of encouragement and tremendous aid from around the world, Japan is making steady progress in its recovery efforts. In the midst of the difficulties and despair caused by the disaster, the Japanese people have become more keenly aware of their close bonds with people around the world, and I would like to sincerely thank you all once again for your generous assistance.

The 21st century has been called the "Asian Era," and I have consistently emphasized this point. Here in Asia, the global center of growth, the middle class has been expanding as a natural consequence of economic growth, and democracy has been becoming more deeply rooted.

It is of particular significance that Indonesia has taken the initiative to share its own experiences of development and democratization with the international community. Indonesia, as a core member of ASEAN and home to the world's largest Muslim population, has great potential to make a substantial contribution to democratization, not only in Asia but in the Arab region as well.

In order to achieve regional development in this area, it is necessary to build a prosperous and stable order based on democratic values. To this end, Japan intends to strongly encourage Indonesia's efforts and, in so doing, to promote the broader tide of democratization in Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The movement toward democratization in Asia has spread, albeit in different forms, to Bhutan, Timor-Leste, Kyrgyzstan, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This historic tide of democratization is unstoppable. We must spare no effort to maintain the momentum of this trend.

The recent changes in Myanmar are seen as positive, and the Government of Japan highly appreciates the series of measures toward democratization and national reconciliation taken by the Government of Myanmar following the transition to civilian rule after the general elections last year. In particular, we welcome the re-registration of the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, as a political party, regarding this as a concrete step toward national reconciliation. The Government of Japan, together with the international community, will strongly encourage the Government of Myanmar to make steady progress in its democratization and national reconciliation efforts, including the further release of political prisoners.

Substantial changes have also occurred in the Middle East and North Africa. In this process, it is vital that Indonesia and other Asian countries share their own experiences of democratization with Arab countries. One noteworthy example of such support is the projects to assist the democratization process in Egypt implemented within the framework of the Bali Democracy Forum. Japan will work with the Asian democratic countries in supporting democratization efforts in the

Middle East, which is now in the midst of the dramatic transformation known as the "Arab Spring."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan has consistently maintained peace with foreign countries during the 60 years that have passed since the end of World War II and has continuously followed the path of a democratic state. As a result, Japan has achieved economic prosperity and built an affluent society, while fully dedicating its national capabilities to the realization of international peace and stability. The path taken to arrive at this point has not necessarily been smooth. Japan was only able to achieve its current status by enduring numerous challenges and much trial and error, after its bitter experience of the collapse of its prewar democracy and the subsequent world war.

Based on Japan's experiences, I would like to offer some thoughts on what is needed to realize democracy.

In the first place, it is necessary that individuals enjoy broad democratic rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of thought and conscience. In a democratic society, independent individuals must respect each other's value systems. In other words, members of a democratic society must respect diversity. A state also needs to be tolerant of the individual rights and diversified value systems of its people.

Secondly, democratization must be institutionalized through the establishment of supporting systems. Public participation in decision-making processes is the foundation of democracy, and it is essential to build democratic systems that fairly reflect the voices of citizens demanding political participation in national policy decisions. Concretely speaking, the first step for steady advancement of democratization is to realize good governance, such as fair election systems, parliamentary systems reflective of public opinion, rule of law, civilian control of the military, and effective and efficient administrative institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that establishing this combination of democratic rights and systems will ensure the achievement of genuine democratization. Let me stress, however, the valuable lessons learned from the process of democratization in Asia. Our varied experiences have taught us that there is no reason at all that democratization must be embodied in a uniform system. It is important that each country move ahead on its own initiative while learning from other states' experiences of democratization.

One more thing that we must keep in mind is the speed of democratization. The key is to create an environment for democratization one step at a time. I need hardly emphasize that any delay in democratization is not desirable. At the same time, however, we are all familiar with the saying, "More haste, less speed."

The 21st century is indeed the Asian Era. I mentioned this at the beginning of my speech. Standards of living in Asia are rapidly rising. The next important step for those Asian countries which have achieved economic development is to make steady progress in Asian-style democratization. And it is essential for those which have already achieved democracy to contribute to other countries' democratization efforts, based on their own experiences.

Japan will exert all efforts, in collaboration with all of you, aiming at continued progress in the democratization of Asia.

Thank you very much.