

《Opening Address》

- I would like to welcome all the representatives of ASEAN countries, as well as the representatives of WPRO, ILO, and JICA, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, and all of the other honored guests who have joined us here today.
- I am Shinako Tsuchiya, Senior Vice Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare in Japan. It is a great honor for me to represent Japan at this meeting marking the 40th year of relations between Japan and ASEAN countries.
- Before we begin, I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to the victims of the devastating typhoon that struck the Philippines on the eighth of last month, claiming countless lives and leaving behind untold damages. Please accept my sincere wishes that residents will be able to return to their normal lives as soon as possible.
- The theme of this meeting is “Active Aging.” The growing senior population is a common issue shared by Japan and many ASEAN countries, as well as by China and Korea. In September of this year, the Japanese Government announced one quarter of Japan’s population has reached 65 years or older. Many ASEAN countries are expected to see similar increases in senior populations, at a pace that equals or even exceeds that in Japan. Through this meeting, The Japanese government would like to introduce some of the activities in Japan, where the senior

population is growing at a rate occurring nowhere else in the world. The Japanese Government would also like to exchange information on the issues and activities in each country, and, if possible, I hope that communication helps to promote future regional and international cooperation in this field.

- Japan is currently conducting a variety of activities aimed at extending “Healthy Life Expectancy,” which is defined as the period in which a person can enjoy life without any limitations in day-to-day activities resulting from health problems.

- For example, in terms of extending “Healthy Life Expectancy,” it is essential to minimize the growth in demand for medical and long-term care among Japanese citizens by enhancing preventative services, while at the same time providing higher-quality medical and long-term care when it is needed. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare must combine all of its resources in achieving this goal.

- Japan has also been emphasizing the importance of self-aid and mutual-aid functions in the family and the local community through the discussions when social security systems have been improved in recent year.

- For this purpose efforts are underway to build “Integrated Community Care,” in which an environment is put in place to provide medical care, long-term care, preventative approach in long-term care, housing, and living support services, all in an

integrated format. The goal of this approach is to enable seniors to continue living in the region and the manner to which they have become accustomed, maintaining respect for them and ensuring support for independent lifestyles, if possible to the last stage of their lives.

- Universal Health Coverage is one of the important factors in achieving the goal of “Active Aging.”
- In September of this year, Prime Minister Abe contributed an article to the British medical journal “The Lancet.” In that paper, he talked Japan’s success in achieving universal health insurance enabled equity in our health system, expanded coverage for Japan’s citizens, and controlled health-care costs. He also talked investment in UHC could also help the redistribution of incomes according to the developmental stage of individual countries, and in turn aid the stabilization of societies.
- In addition to these ongoing improvements to social systems, Japan has achieved the world’s highest rank in health indexes, including life expectancy through offering health checkups and healthcare guidance for citizens aged 40 and up.
- By sharing Japan’s experience in universal health coverage internationally, I believe that we can contribute to resolving many health-related issues on a global scale.

- Japan has a long history of friendship with ASEAN countries going back many years, and 2013 marks the 40th anniversary of these ASEAN-Japan relations. We have worked together to build strong relationships in a variety of fields, but it is my sincere hope that we will continue to share this path together to build an even better future. I trust that this meeting, which will continue over the next three days, will offer valuable opportunities for all of us to share our information and experiences. Thank you very much.