

Asan Plenum 2025

“80 Years of Independence and 60 Years of Korea-Japan Normalization”

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Distinguished guests, participants, ladies and gentlemen, Good Morning.
I am Mizushima Koichi, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Korea.

First of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on the Asan Plenum 2025, themed “80 Years of Independence and 60 Years of Korea-Japan Normalization”.

The Asan Plenum has provided a forum for the frank exchange of opinions, bringing together leaders and experts from Korea and abroad. It is also an important opportunity for international networking.

In this relation, I would like to express my respect for the efforts of Honorary Chairman Chung Mong-Joon, Chairman Yoon Young-kwan, and all the other members of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies who have worked diligently to develop this forum. And I would appreciate that you have organized today’s forum on a very timely manner.

The Republic of Korea is an important neighboring country for Japan, with which we should cooperate as partners in addressing various challenges in the international community.

Over the past six decades, through the effort of predecessors, exchanges between Japan and the Republic of Korea have grown both in quality and quantity, with particularly notable increases in recent years.

Following the significant progress in Japan-ROK relations facilitated by the leadership of both nations, 2024 has witnessed a further increase in exchanges at both governmental and private levels, including interactions among the leaders of our countries.

On the political front, since agreeing to resume “shuttle diplomacy” in 2023, Former Prime Minister Kishida visited the Republic of Korea three times and held 12 face-to-face summit meetings, including those held in third countries.

Prime Minister Ishiba also held a teleconference immediately after assuming his office in October last year, and face-to-face summit meetings were held in Laos and Peru.

On January 13 this year, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Korea and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, (who is present here today). It was the second high level visit to Korea since the political turmoil in Korea occurred last December, following the visit by the US Secretary of State.

In the meeting, the two emphasized that the importance of Japan-ROK relations remains unchanged, and that trilateral cooperation among Japan, the ROK and the US should be further enhanced on such areas as Indo-Pacific, economic security as well as policies toward North Korea.

Two Ministers met again in March in Tokyo. They confirmed that it serves the both countries' strategic interests to maintain and progress the positive atmosphere of bilateral relations, and to further strengthen the trilateral cooperation among three countries of Japan, ROK and the US.

In the economic field, our bilateral ties continue to strengthen. There are over 2,700 Japanese companies doing business in the ROK. Last year, Japan ranked the first for the foreign investment in the ROK.

As for people-to-people exchanges, the number of people traveling between our two countries reached more than 12 million last year. This is the highest number ever recorded.

While political activities in Korea are gearing up for the presidential election, the international situation in particular the strategic environment surrounding Japan and Korea is getting increasingly uncertain.

I do believe that the domestic and international situations become more and more complexed, the importance of Japan-Korea cooperative relations continues to grow.

Amid these complexities, neither country has any room to exhaust its energy in contending with each other. Rather we should focus our energies to cooperation in solving various challenges together. Japan will continue its peaceful path as it did over last 80 years, and remain committed to contributing to peace, stability and prosperity of the world in cooperation with the ROK.

Just like the catchphrase for the 60th anniversary of the normalization of our relations, "Hand in hand, toward a better future", let us walk together as partners toward brighter future.

In conclusion, I would like to touch upon the trilateral cooperation among Japan, Korea and the US. Upon declaration of a "New Era of Trilateral Partnership" that was issued by the then leaders of our three countries in August, 2023 at the Camp David, such cooperation has been expanded in terms of quality and quantity. Such cooperation must continue to play a center role in strengthening our deterrence and response capability toward the peace and stability in this region. Our three Foreign Ministers met already twice to confirm such stance this year. At the same time, I should emphasize the importance of close cooperation with like-minded countries in this region and beyond. We should cooperate each other with those like-minded countries in order to cherish our common values such as democracy, rule of law, free trade, human rights and so on. By doing so, I believe the both Japan and Korea will be benefited most and be able to maintain our peaceful and prosperous lives.

I hope that today's discussions will contribute to solving various challenges faced by the international community, and to building a better future for Japan, Korea, and the world.

Thank you for your kind attention.