



# SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



## Respect for Maritime Laws Urged

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi has spoken of the importance of paying due respect to international maritime laws within an address to the ASEAN Secretariat in South Jakarta in January.

In his first policy speech outside of Japan since taking office late last year, the Foreign Minister talked of moving “towards a new stage of co-operation” and raised matters of maritime law in discussing ASEAN as the hub of the Indo-Pacific.

“In June of last year, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the ‘ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific’, or the AOIP,” he stated.

“Japan fully supports the goals presented in the AOIP and expresses its greatest compliments to the leadership demonstrated by Indonesia in creating this initiative.

“Why does Japan support the AOIP? It is primarily because the future image of the Indo-Pacific indicated in the AOIP has much in common with what Japan envisions as the future of the Indo-Pacific.

“The Indo-Pacific is the core of global dynamism, inhabited by half of the world’s population. At the same time, the balance of power is now rapidly changing there, with various actors interacting with one another in an intertwined manner.

“If we are to seek a stable and predictable economic and social environment to fully enjoy prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, its regional architecture must be governed by clear rules with transparency.



*Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi*

“Particularly, in the waters of this region, which are public goods for the entire international community, all states must act and their rights must be entitled in accordance with the basic principles of the international law of the sea, like freedom of navigation, and all disputes regarding the seas must be settled peacefully. It is only by meeting these preconditions that this region can enjoy genuine prosperity as the hub of the sea lanes.

“Contemporary international law is the crystallised wisdom of humanity that is necessary for global peace, stability and prosperity, which has been built by overcoming the two World Wars. It is indispensable for building any regional order to firmly maintain the rule of law under the principles of international law. The AOIP is precisely underpinned by this unmistakable philosophy.”

The Foreign Minister emphasised that Japan’s support of the AOIP was also based on the recognition that ASEAN Centrality is an essential driving force for the development of the entire Indo-Pacific.

“... as you have already and successfully achieved by building multilayered frameworks for regional co-operation, such as ASEAN Plus One, ASEAN Plus Three, the EAS and the ARF.

“Looking back at history, without exception, in the places where lines of communication for people and commodities intersect, economies and societies with abundant diversity have developed. For 1500 years, Southeast Asia has enjoyed trade and people-to-people exchange through free and open seas, which spurred the creation of a global network that connected Europe and Africa to the west and Japan to the east.

“With this history as a backdrop, a great crossroads is emerging in the Indo-Pacific, as bright as the Southern Cross in the sky, connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and connecting the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Southeast Asia is located at its intersection.

“ASEAN is destined to be the hub of the Indo-Pacific, and in the AOIP, it has clearly expressed its will to further enhance co-operation in connectivity and maritime security, which correspond to the roles to be played by ASEAN.

“Since Japan has developed as a maritime and global trading nation, Japan’s prosperity also heavily depends on a free and open Indo-Pacific, in which an abundance of people, goods and information come and go. Japan will continue to create, hand-in-hand with you, this image of the future Indo-Pacific with an ever more vibrant ASEAN as its hub.”

Other topics covered in the speech – which can be accessed in full [here](#) -- included:

- the philosophy of Foreign Minister Motegi’s foreign policy – “diplomacy with a sense of caring and robustness”
- three courses of ASEAN-Japan co-operation – nurturing people, building institutions and amassing wisdom
- in the spirit of Gotong-Royong

March 2020

