



**For Immediate Release**

**Foreign Ministers of Japan and Australia to address Asialink dialogue in Hiroshima**

The Foreign Minister of Japan, Mr Fumio Kishida, and the Australian Foreign Minister, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, will be keynote speakers at the *Asialink Conversations* dialogue to be held in Hiroshima, Japan, from 10-12 April.

Ms Bishop and Mr Kishida will join more than 30 leaders from ASEAN, Australia and Japan at the retreat-style gathering which is being held in partnership with Japan's National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS). Ms Bishop will speak on Friday and Mr Kishida will speak on Saturday.

Delegates from business, government, academia and the media will participate in structured discussions over two days. Participating nations are Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The *Asialink Conversations* are held with the support of The Myer Foundation and with cooperation from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They explore issues of common concern while creating new and strengthened networks of leaders in ASEAN and Australia and the host nation.

It is the first time the *Asialink Conversations* have been held in Japan. The high-level, informal dialogue was initiated in Australia in 2002 and co-hosted by Malaysia in 2004, Vietnam 2006, Sydney 2007, India 2008, Cambodia 2010 and Myanmar 2012.

Asialink is pleased to be partnering this year with Professor Takashi Shiraishi, the President of GRIPS. Professor Shiraishi has played a major role in Japan-ASEAN relations and GRIPS has established an outstanding reputation in Japan and internationally.

Asialink's International Director, Professor Tony Milner, said: "At a time of growing tension in Northeast Asia it is vital that Australia engages in close dialogue with ASEAN and Japan.

"We are honoured to have the involvement of Minister Bishop and Minister Kishida, and delighted to be working with GRIPS and its outstanding leader, Takashi Shiraishi.

"Also joining us will be His Highness Raja Nazrin, the Regent of the Malaysian State of Perak and a distinguished commentator on international affairs," Professor Milner said.

The President of GRIPS, Professor Takashi Shiraishi, said dialogue topics would include: new developments in economic engagement between ASEAN countries, Japan and Australia; different national perspectives on regional security and political challenges; soft diplomacy and 'cool business'; the implications of demographic change on the Asian region; national strategies for advancing the internationalisation of education; and Japan's search for de-facto allies – ASEAN and Australian perspectives.

"We look forward to the Japan *Conversations* making a lasting, meaningful contribution to relationships and policies in the region," Professor Shiraishi said.

The CEO of Asialink, Jenny McGregor, said: “The Japan *Conversations* are being held at a time of historic closer economic ties between Japan and Australia and when the already very substantial Japan-ASEAN engagement is growing across many dimensions.

“*The Conversations* are designed to facilitate a relaxed and very frank exchange of ideas. Asialink is looking forward to the participation of key leaders from the Japanese Government, business and community, as well as leaders from Australia and ASEAN nations,” Ms McGregor said.

Media are invited to attend *The Conversations*, which are held under the **Chatham House Rule**. For details on the rule please see: <http://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chathamhouserule>

Professor Milner and Asialink CEO Jenny McGregor are available for comment. Selected *Conversations* participants may also be available for comment during the dialogue.

Photographs, selected audio and video from the event will be available on request.

#### **Media enquiries**

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#### **About Asialink**

Asialink is Australia’s leading centre for the promotion of public understanding of the countries of Asia and of Australia’s role in the region. Asialink excels in “soft diplomacy”, delivering high-level forums, international collaborations, leadership training, education and cultural programs in Australia and Asia. Its new business capability division – Asialink Business – was established with support from the Australian Department of Industry to build the Asia capability of Australia’s workforce. For more information please visit [www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au)