

2022 NICE

Organizer's Greetings

We are delighted to announce that we will host this year's Northeast Asia International Conference for Economic Development (NICE) in Niigata together with the Japan-Russia Energy and Environment Dialogue in Niigata on January 25 and February 18. In a repeat of last year, the event will be conducted offline (venue: Toki Messe) and online owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Last year the event was divided into and arranged over four stages from January to March, however, this year it will be run across two days in January and February.

This year will mark the 30th staging of NICE, including its predecessors, the "Northeast Asia Economic Conference" (1996-2006) and the "International Forum on the Japan Sea Rim Region" (1990-95). We will celebrate the thirteenth installment of the Japan-Russia Energy and Environment Dialogue, which was inaugurated in 2008. By staging NICE and the Japan-Russia Energy and Environmental Dialogue as one event, we strongly believe that integrated discussions can be made on economic, energy and environmental issues from the perspective of sustainable economic development.

ERINA, in conjunction with Niigata Prefecture and the City of Niigata, has proudly been engaged in the management of NICE and the Japan-Russia Energy and Environment Dialogue. Founded in 1993, ERINA has been in operation for 29 years. To support economic development and regional economic cooperation in Northeast Asia, we have conducted research on key economic issues and foreign economic relations in each country of the region, supported the facilitation of economic and business exchanges and cooperation in the region, and disseminated economic and business information to the outside world. Expressly, we focus on Northeast China, the Far East region of Russia, the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Mongolia, concentrating on such areas as economic interdependence among Japan and these countries and regions, international transport and logistics, trade and investment, resources, energy and the environment, development finance, and people-to-people exchanges. Moreover, we are expanding the range of our analysis to include economic relations between Northeast Asia and the United States, Europe, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, among others. As a means to contribute to the strengthening of the economic foundations for peace, stability, and prosperity within Northeast Asia, we strive to identify critical issues, pursue solutions, and make policy proposals as a "Think and Do Tank".

This year's NICE will shed light on the current state and future prospects of regional economic cooperation in Northeast Asia from multiple perspectives. On Day 1 (January 25), Mr. Hitoshi Tanaka, Chairman of the Institute for International Strategy, the Japan Research Institute, Limited., will give a special address titled "The State of Affairs in Northeast Asia—How do We View the U.S.-China Conflict?" The session following, "Strategic Approaches toward Southeast Asia of Northeast Asian Countries", will examine the present state of policies toward Southeast Asia that Northeast Asian countries pursue, the possibility of broader economic cooperation, and the risks of competition between countries. In the next session, "Current Status and Prospects of Logistics in Northeast Asia—Utilization of Local Ports in Japan", we will reconfirm the importance and potency as a base of coastal cities along the Sea of Japan in Northeast Asian economic exchanges, and examine both the future of logistics in Northeast Asia and the possibility of actively utilizing local ports in Japan.

The Japan-Russia Energy and Environment Dialogue will be held on the second day (February 18). Prof. Takeo Kikkawa, Vice President of the International University of Japan, will give a special address titled "Toward Carbon Neutrality: Status Quo and Challenges". Against the backdrop of Japan and Russia announcing their intention to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and 2060, respectively, in the final session, "Toward a Carbon Neutral Society: Think Globally and Act Locally," we will discuss the current situation and future of Japan-Russia cooperation toward the realization of a decarbonized society by considering examples of initiatives at the local level in each country, particularly in Niigata Prefecture and Sakhalin Province.

Also on Day 2, we will host the third "Future Leaders Program" prior to the Japan-Russia Energy and Environment Dialogue. Undergraduate and graduate students who are based in prefectures that contribute to ERINA (11 prefectures in Chubu, Tohoku, and Kanto, including Niigata Prefecture) and share an interest in the Northeast Asia region are invited to explore the "Future Scenario of Northeast Asia," raise principal questions and provide solutions. The three groups which stood out in the preliminary screening will compete by way of oral presentations, with the best group to receive Niigata Prefectural Governor's Award. In such an event, we hope to see the younger generation rise and become future leaders on issues concerning Northeast Asia.

Through this year's NICE and Japan-Russia Energy and Environmental Dialogue, as well as the Future Leaders Program, it is expected that in addition to sharing their awareness of the state of affairs in Northeast Asia amid COVID-19 and U.S.-China conflict, cooperation with Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia's logistics, and carbon neutrality initiatives, all participants will recognize the challenges facing the Northeast Asian region and discuss ideas on the direction of cooperation toward addressing these challenges. Attention is also given to the activities of the younger generation. As always, we encourage lively debates in NICE and the Japan-Russia Energy and Environment Dialogue to ensure maximum benefit for all participants.

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