

Conference Overview

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Northeast Asia International Conference for Economic Development

The "2010 Northeast Asia International Conference for Economic Development (NICE) in Niigata" which took place over two days, ended successfully in short time. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for everyone's enthusiastic participation and cooperation. Approximately 310 persons from within Japan participated in the conference this time around. From overseas approximately 70 persons participated, from China, Russia, Mongolia, the ROK, the US and Britain, and the international organizations of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Asian Development Bank.

1. Firstly, in the opening addresses of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, it was stated that they have been making efforts to form the Northeast Asian economic subregion, with Niigata and the prefectures with a coastline on the Sea of Japan, centered on Niigata, exploiting the regional advantage. In the process of overcoming the financial crisis the framework for international deliberation has shifted from the Group of Eight (G8) to the Group of Twenty (G20), which has added the emerging nations, and under Japan's new administration the concept of an East Asian community is being called for. Amid such circumstances, Northeast Asia is yet further the focus of attention. At this international conference there were signs of timely themes being raised.
2. In the special address, the Vice Governor of Heilongjiang Province, Yu Shayan, forcefully stated that "It is already 27 years since this province and Niigata Prefecture concluded a cooperation agreement in 1983, and I would like to exploit this relationship for the development of the Northeast Asian economy in a new phase.
3. In the keynote addresses approaches were raised on the two major problems for the development of this region: the conditions for the formation of the Northeast Asian economic subregion and environmental problems. In the first report, an overview was made of the Northeast Asian economic subregion from the experience of the formation of ASEAN, and in particular the establishment of infrastructure investment funds and the roles of the institutions which will be central for the formation of the economic subregion, and the necessary commitment of the leaders of each country to those ends were emphasized. In environmental problems, a conclusion with binding restrictions did not emerge at COP 15, yet the carbon-market mechanism, which the Copenhagen conference raised, was clarified. Furthermore, it was suggested that it would be possible to make a concrete proposal, centered on ERINA, at the COP 16 Mexico conference.
4. For each of the sessions there were reports as made by the moderators, but I would like to mention briefly what I myself felt. In Session A, *Seamless Logistics in Northeast Asia*, the Director of the UNDP Greater Tumen Initiative, Nataliya Yacheistova, reported that the Greater Tumen Initiative Consultative Commission is currently a unique governmental cooperation organization in Northeast Asia, and for the last few years has made concrete plans for cooperation in five areas—including energy, transportation, tourism, and trade and investment. Furthermore, she stated that "At the Transport Board we have raised the problem of the border-crossing formalities, customs clearance and visas, etc., for seamless distribution. With the active engagement of many government organs—starting with the foreign ministries of countries in the plural—being vital, the solving of this problem has become one of the tasks for the Consultative Commission. Among the ten topics that the commission has raised, recently five were transportation-related problems, such as the connection of the railways of eastern Mongolia and China and the construction of the port at Zarubino." In addition, Biswa Bhattacharyay, Special Advisor at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Institute, stressed that for the formation of an infrastructure network a powerful international bank along the lines of the ADB is necessary.
5. In Session B, *Post-Kyoto Protocol Period Environmental and Energy Cooperation*, the construction of a mechanism for regional cooperation was stressed as a future direction. The public sector will make efforts in the improvement of the environment in order to encourage investment, licensing of technology, and the export of equipment by the private sector, and the environment for cooperation will improve. Within that, the necessary funds will be provided by the financial sector, and emissions credits will be created. The construction of such a comprehensive mechanism of its own for the Northeast Asian region is necessary in East Asia, in particular, where there are many emissions credits. The momentum for establishing an East Asian community for the conservation of the environment has come into being.
6. In Session C, *International Food-Industry Clusters and Niigata*, the maturation of the conditions for clusters—namely geographical concentration, the presence of innovative entrepreneurs, government support and assistance, the differentiation of products, the establishment of brands, and the establishment of goods distribution routes, etc.—is necessary, and case examples were mentioned from Heilongjiang Province in China, the ROK, Shizuoka and Niigata.

The conditions for the international food-industry clusters to be formed are also being put into place. To that end the establishment of a Northeast Asian network is important.

7. In Session D, *The New Trends in Northeast Asia with the Global Financial Crisis*, the consequences of the financial crisis on each country in Northeast Asia and the mechanisms for overcoming it were stated by the respective countries. China secured growth of 8%, but conversely in Russia they have not been able to escape from negative growth. The differences in each country's environment, system, and policy brought differing results. A glimpse is seen here of the complexity of Northeast Asia.
8. The conference participants obtained a great amount of proposals, knowledge, experience, and leads for ideas from the presentations of the persons making reports. Behind each participant are their respective organizations and groups. I wholeheartedly hope that all the participants will take back the outcomes, report them at government organs and all forms of meetings, and exploiting that, develop matters further. In the process of overcoming the financial crisis, the collaboration of each country and cooperation between government and the private sector in various areas is yet more strongly required. This international conference, as a conference made up of a second track, is a place to continue efforts for strengthening exchange and cooperation in all sectors among the nations of Northeast Asia in the future too.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to all of the interpreters for their hard work toward the success of the conference, and all the persons concerned who cooperated in the progression of the conference.

[Translated by ERINA]