

2005 Northeast Asia Economic Conference in Niigata Declaration

8th June 2005, Niigata

On 6th – 8th June, the 2005 Northeast Asia Economic Conference in Niigata took place in Niigata's Toki Messe Convention Center. This was the 15th Northeast Asia Economic Conference to be held in Niigata. With momentum for the creation of an East Asian Community increasing, when one considers cooperation in the fields of energy and the environment, which are important political and economic factors, one has to acknowledge the importance of Northeast Asia as a region and the necessity of intra-regional cooperation.

In his keynote address focusing on energy cooperation as a means for Russia to contribute to economic cooperation in Northeast Asia, Dr. Alexei Mastepanov asserted that bilateral and multilateral dialogues are vital to expanding energy cooperation in Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, he clarified that promoting energy cooperation is the most important element in Russia's diplomatic activities.

At the Experts' Meeting on a Northeast Asia Environment Network, measures to counter increasing greenhouse gas emissions in this region were discussed, along with the potential for regional environmental cooperation through the Kyoto Mechanisms. With regard to this latter point, participants discussed the importance of creating the necessary environment to exchange information and conduct discussions on an equal footing, in order to launch specific related projects within the region, including CDM/JI projects. It was agreed to establish an Environment Subcommittee under the auspices of the Northeast Asia Economic Conference Organizing Committee, in order to achieve this.

At the Experts' Meeting on a Northeast Asia Energy Community, participants considered methods of intensifying discussions of energy cooperation in Northeast Asia and making them more practical, in order to achieve regional energy security. It was stated that, in addition to the dialogues that have hitherto taken place between supplier countries and countries on the demand side, collaboration within this region would increase the economic efficiency and practicality of intra-regional energy links. The necessity of cooperation among the consumer countries was also raised.

At the Experts' Meeting on Northeast Asia Transport, Industry and Tourism Corridors, the necessity of establishing shipping routes linking Japan with the Tumen River Transportation Corridor, to which all the countries of Northeast Asia have a connection, was highlighted and methods of translating this pioneering project into reality were discussed. It was affirmed that the relevant Subcommittee would sustain its activities aimed at realizing its vision, taking a leading role in approaches to government representatives in each region and seeking to act as a coordinator between experts and private-sector companies. Moreover, it was recommended that, in addition to flows of goods, which have hitherto been the main subject of discussions, the Subcommittee's focus be extended to encompass flows of people, i.e. the promotion of cross-border tourism in Northeast Asia. In order to promote this initiative, a forum for the exchange of information should be established and a network of experts be formed.

At the Experts' Meeting on the Vision for the Economic Development of Northeast Asia, in addition to providing an overview of the development strategies of each country and region within Northeast Asia, reports were provided concerning bottlenecks in bilateral and multilateral cooperation that were discussed at the other Experts' Meetings. In addition, the necessity of remedying institutional differences that act as an obstacle to promoting cooperation that transcends national borders was discussed. By next year, we will formulate a Vision for Economic Development and Economic Cooperation in Northeast Asia that envisages the measures necessary for central and regional governments to implement in order to facilitate inter-regional cooperation, as well as painting a picture of how Northeast Asia would be transformed, were these measures to be implemented.

The sight of people listening intently to the pronouncements of the speakers, the intense question and answer sessions and exchanges of information, and the breaks during which conversation flourished in every nook and cranny were proof positive that the common goal of developing the Northeast Asia Economic Subregion has tremendous cohesive power. At the close of the conference, we the participants share a sense of how important it is for Japan, the ROK and China – the main actors in the much-discussed East Asian community – to promote Russia's involvement in this concept. In addition, we recognize the need for these actors to cooperate in promoting detente on the Korean

Peninsula, while also establishing the Northeast Asia Economic Subregion. Furthermore, we affirm the importance of overcoming temporary differences of opinion between Japan, the ROK and China and deepening mutual trust, shifting from bilateral to multilateral projects, and continuing activities and projects at the grassroots level, in order to achieve change at the national and international level.

Based on the foregoing awareness, we, the participants in the 2005 Northeast Asia Economic Conference in Niigata hereby declare that we will conduct activities in our own regions in the future, while expanding networks, continuing dialogue, seeking more efficient approaches to mutual cooperation, and achieving our common goal.