

Summary of the Experts' Meeting on Transport, Industrial and Tourism Corridors

Hideo Kayahara (Director General, The Japan Port and Harbor Association Counselor, ERINA) moderated discussions during the Experts' Meeting on Transport, Industrial and Tourism Corridors. Problems relating to transport are a theme that is discussed every year at the Northeast Asia Economic Conference; it should be noted that this year, the topics of industry and tourism were also brought within the ambit of discussions of transport issues. Focusing on the use of corridors, opinions were exchanged concerning transport during the first half of the session and tourism during the second half, with the aim of promoting flows of people and goods.

Firstly, with regard to transport, the paper written by Victor Gorchakov (Governor, Primorsky Territory, Russia) was presented. In 2004, the national transport strategy was approved by the Parliament of the Russian Federation, with the Federal Special Program on International Transport Corridors being incorporated as one section of this strategy. Mr. Gorchakov stated that participation in these international transport corridors will lead to the integration of domestic transport facilities with international transport systems and the improvement of the technological and organizational levels of domestic transport facilities, and he asserted the importance of doing this. He stressed that it is necessary to avoid the folly of allowing complex international relationships to delay the achievement of this goal, depriving it of its economic efficiency. In addition, he informed participants that the administration of Primorsky Territory is working on constructing the Primorye 2 international transport corridor, which links Changchun in China with ports in Japan and the ROK via Zarubino and Posiet ports (the so-called Tumen River Transportation Corridor).

Next, Yehui Zhu (Director, Tumen River Area Development Administration, the People's Government of Jilin Province, China) introduced developments relating to the Tumen River area in 2004. The Chinese government is strengthening its systems in order to promote development in the Tumen River area and Northeastern China as a whole, by such means as establishing the Office of the Leading Group for Revitalizing Northeast China and Other Old Industrial Bases of the State Council; Jilin Province has also consolidated its own systems in response to this. In addition, he informed participants that China is conducting talks with Russia and the DPRK regarding roads, ports, customs arrangements, and industrial zones, and that the UNDP's 7th Inter-Governmental Vice-Ministerial Conference on the Tumen River Area Development Programme has taken place; he also stated that China is reinforcing its external relations. Cargo movements are intensifying, but they are still insufficient in quantitative terms, so China is seeking to boost such movements further by introducing capital from Southern China to the Tumen River area and also through the joint Sino-Russian

operation of Zarubino Port.

Yaroslav Semenikhin (Director-General, Far Eastern Russia Marine Research, Design and Technology Institute) highlighted the fact that the quantity of cargo transported between Asia and Europe grew 150% on the previous year in 2004, and stated that the establishment of a transport network is an important topic, both for the Far East and for Russia as a whole. He stressed that it is vital to ensure that the Northeast Asia Transportation Corridors are truly "international" transport corridors, like the European Transport Corridors, which have an abundance of options and are economic to use, and with regard to which the governments of each country agree, ensuring that the requisite conditions mesh together adequately. Moreover, it is necessary to promote the relaxation of restrictions, the upgrading of appropriate infrastructure, and the provision of adequate services, in order to encourage flows of people.

Tsegmid Tsengel (Member of the Mongolian State Great Hural) stated that transport routes are extremely important in order to make use of Mongolia's abundant resources, particularly the linkage of the section of the Tumen River Transportation Corridor at Mongolia's border with China. In addition, he informed participants that the Mongolian government is devoting its energies to upgrading the domestic East-West route that connects to this corridor.

From the perspective of using transport corridors, Naomi Watanabe (President, Nishifu Meat), whose company produces and processes chicken in Heilongjiang Province and transports it to Japan, discussed problems relating to transport at present and her hopes for the Tumen River Transportation Corridor. The company's current transport route is from Heilongjiang via Dalian and Yingkou; the cargo is discharged at Osaka Port. It takes two days to transport cargo by rail between the production area and the port, or one day by road; marine transport then takes five to six days, so reducing the transport time is the company's biggest challenge. Freshness is the decisive factor for chicken. Currently, the chicken is transported frozen, but Mr. Watanabe expressed his hope that it would become possible to transport it refrigerated if the transport time could be reduced by shipping it to Niigata via Zarubino. It is expected that, if the transport of refrigerated chicken became possible, there would be a dramatic increase in quantity and this development would change history.

After these reports, there was a succession of comments from the floor, such as "We want to export something, but there is no regular shipping route to Russia, so currently we are sending it via Busan. We hope that regular shipping routes to Russia will be revived." and "If a company does not have sufficient container cargo to call at a harbor regularly, might it not be necessary for small-lot cargo owners to cooperate?" The growing hopes for the establishment of shipping routes were palpable.

With regard to tourism, there were reports from Guangrui Zhang (Director & Research Fellow, Tourism Research Centre, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) and Hiroo Ohno (Director, Hokuriku Shin  tsu Bureau of Transport, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport).

Mr. Zhang stated that the Asia-Pacific region is experiencing record growth in the field of tourism and that Northeast Asia is a region with great potential. However, he asserted that, as there are still obstacles and impediments to tourism development, such as political factors and a lack of information, each country of the region must cooperate in striving to remove these barriers, in order to encourage tourism exchange. Listing Northeast Asia   advantages in the field of tourism, such as a vast market, dynamic economic growth, the existence of unique tourism resources, the low costs and short distances involved in tourism within the region, cultures with a high degree of affinity, and the enthusiasm for tourism development, he stated that it is necessary to build networks and frameworks that bring together those involved in tourism, in order to make use of these advantages. In addition, in order to attract tourists from around the world to this region, it is important to develop a unified image for Northeast Asia, so he proposed developing a unified awareness among the countries of the region and standardizing various conditions, in order to achieve this.

Mr. Ohno outlined the Visit Japan Campaign, which the Japanese government has been promoting since 2003, and mentioned the visa issue, which is an obstacle to tourism exchange. In addition, he summarized the current status of tourism exchange between Japan and the countries of continental Northeast Asia, which has been intensifying of late, and spoke of the potential for expanding this in the future. The essence of tourism is interaction and understanding; given that this can dismantle even political obstacles, Niigata should fulfill its function as the gateway to Northeast Asia and make use of its friendly relationship with Heilongjiang Province in working on tourism development that has characteristics not seen in other regions.

Byung-Min Ahn (Head, Trans Asia Railway Project Division, Korea Transportation Institute (KOTI)) described the current status of infrastructure development and exchange between the ROK and the DPRK. The upgrading of infrastructure linking the two countries is progressing and flows of people and goods through overland routes are expanding, mainly due to economic cooperation arising

from such initiatives as the Mount Kumgang tourism project and the construction of the Kaesong industrial zone.

Ikuo Mitsuhashi (Senior Fellow, ERINA) highlighted three initiatives relating to tourism in Northeast Asia: the Northeast Asia International Tourism Forum; the Northeast Asia Tourism Promotion Forum, which was held with the aim of jointly formulating a masterplan for Northeast Asian tourism; and initiatives aimed at the establishment of an international ferry linking Zarubino with Niigata, as one means of transporting travelers.

Comments from the floor included the following: "I have been waiting a long time for tourism to be taken up as a theme"; and "The challenge that we face at present is the fact that there is no contact point for exchanging information about tourism, as well as the fact that there is no network of people discussing this issue." These all demonstrated the high level of interest in tourism exchange in Northeast Asia.

Finally, Mr. Kayahara spoke about transport and transport infrastructure problems, focused mainly on the flow of goods. He stated that infrastructure development had progressed compared with the situation a few years ago and that concrete moves had begun to be seen, so it seems that the discussion stage has already ended. At the same time, in light of the fact that there is growing interest in cooperation amongst the countries of Northeast Asia in the promotion of tourism development that will be highly effective in promoting the economic development of those countries, the time is coming when the issue of Northeast Asian tourism should be taken up, discussions held and a cooperative framework constructed.

Based on discussions at this meeting, the following proposals were made: i) with the aim of making the Northeast Asia Transportation Corridors more competitive and transforming them into true international transport corridors, Subcommittee members will continue to be at the forefront of approaches to the governments of each country and will strive to increase recognition of the Northeast Asia Transportation Corridors; ii) with regard to the Tumen River Transportation Corridor, efforts aimed at establishing marine routes linked to Japan will be sustained; and iii) a forum for the active exchange of information will be established and a network of experts formed, in order to promote flows of people and international tourism in Northeast Asia.

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