

## **Summary of the Plenary Meeting**

The Plenary Meeting consisted of two parts. In the first part, the moderators of each session reported on the main points that were discussed. Summaries of these can be found in the summaries for each session. In the second part, one panelist from each of Russia, China, Mongolia, the ROK and Japan made some concluding remarks. Drawing upon the content of the discussions over the previous day and a half, each panelist highlighted issues that they consider important in Northeast Asia today and pointed out themes and issues that should be tackled in the future. At the end of the second part, the conference declaration was adopted. The following is a summary of the content of the second part.

Victor Ishaev, Governor of Russia's Khabarovsk Territory, focused his remarks on energy cooperation, which was the subject of one of the sessions at this conference. Given that energy demand in Northeast Asia is forecast to increase and that the Russian Far East has an abundance of energy resources, Governor Ishaev has an optimistic perspective on the development of energy cooperation in Northeast Asia. As a result of the development of energy infrastructure, such as pipelines, users will be able to secure a stable supply of energy and Russia will be able to secure access to rapidly expanding energy markets in Asia. Accordingly, there are advantages for both sides. He pointed out that even estimates of resource reserves published recently by experts could be lower than the actual scale of resources. He noted the existence of promising coal mines in the Russian Far East, such as the Elyga coalfield, which was not discussed during the energy panel session, and highlighted the fact that there are oil and gas reserves that look hopeful from a long-term perspective, located under the sea off Khabarovsk, Magadan and Western Kamchatka. In addition, he outlined the potential of the Russian Far East's hydropower resources and resources on the Sakhalin continental shelf, in addition to informing those present of the various ideas for a cross-border "energy bridge" of power transmission lines.

Ping Zou, Vice-Chairman of China's Asia Pacific Institute, noted that the Chinese government is emphasizing trade and economic cooperation with the countries of Northeast Asia. In addition, the Chinese government last year announced a policy of developing the country's northeastern region, giving rise to the prospect that hundreds of billions of won will rain down on the region over the next few years. He expressed his expectation that this move will promote economic cooperation with the countries of Northeast Asia and inject fresh vitality into the region.

Otgonbayar, Foreign Policy Advisor to the Mongolian Prime Minister, stated that

Mongolia is prepared to play an active role in economic cooperation in Northeast Asia. Arousing greater interest in Mongolia, he stated that, in pursuing greater regional integration, Northeast Asia should focus on cooperation rather than exclusion. In addition, he recommended that tourism be the first field in which cooperation is undertaken in Northeast Asia. He observed that China has a long history, Mongolia has its unique herder culture, the DPRK and the ROK have superb natural scenery, while Japan's post-industrial society and traditional culture are linked in a unique manner. Furthermore, he proposed the promotion of eco-tourism and the development of tours that harness the cultural resources of the region. In connection with this, he made more specific proposals, calling for the establishment of a training center for the tourism industry in Northeast Asia, which would also function as a provider of information concerning investment in the tourism sector. He pointed out that the streamlining of visa and customs procedures would be effective in attracting tourists and reported that the Mongolian government is making progress in its deliberations with regard to measures that would streamline such procedures.

Soo-Byung Choi, former president of the Korea Electric Power Corporation, asserted that it is necessary to reinforce the strategy for the formation of the Northeast Asia Economic Subregion. With regard to the Northeast Asian Development Bank, he expressed his opinion that it is necessary to strive to obtain the understanding of the people of each country, in addition to further promoting discussion. Moreover, he pointed out the importance of forming a transport network that would include air and sea transport. Finally, he told those present that the next meeting of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum would take place in the ROK on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September 2004 and called for the participation of a broad range of people.

The Japanese panelist at the Plenary Meeting was Ikuo Hirayama, Governor of Niigata Prefecture and one of the organizers of this conference. At the beginning of his remarks he noted that this was the 14<sup>th</sup> Northeast Asia Economic Conference and the second time that it had been held in conjunction with the Northeast Asia Economic Forum, the first time being nine years previously. Looking back on this period, Governor Hirayama presented his own analysis; he noted that the external environment surrounding the conference is changing, with the economies of each country in the region experiencing development, and observed that the attitude of conference participants is also changing, moving towards aspiring to problem-solving based on a common awareness of problems. In this regard, he expressed his hope that the Northeast Asia Economic Conference Organizing Committee would become a forum for in-depth discussion aimed at realizing the proposals that arose from discussions at the

Economic Conference. He also stated his wish for deeper discussion of the Grand Design for Northeast Asia to take place at the Northeast Asia Economic Conference Special Symposium, which is due to be held in Niigata later this year.

Finally, those present heard comments from Hisao Kanamori and Lee-Jay Cho, the co-chairs of the session. Mr. Kanamori pointed out the degree to which discussions had improved by the time this conference was held, citing the fact that discussions at the first Northeast Asia Economic Forum focused mainly on the Tumen River Development Programme, with hardly any discussion of economic cooperation involving Northeast Asia as a whole. Dr. Cho shared this view and stated that great progress has been seen of late, compared with around 15 years ago, when the first Northeast Asia Economic Conference and Northeast Asia Economic Forum meetings were held. He expressed his opinion that, although not every endeavor will necessarily prove to be fruitful, it is necessary to prepare a variety of scenarios and plans that will allow us to respond to future changes in the regional situation.

All of the panelists at the Plenary Meeting referred to the importance of economic cooperation in Northeast Asia. This may seem extremely obvious, but when interests diverge during discussions about individual projects, this kind of “natural assumption” tends to be forgotten. The Plenary Meeting offers a forum in which all participants can reaffirm their basic understanding of the broader issues involved, in order to prevent the occurrence of such a situation. However, this alone will not suffice. In his concluding remarks, both Governor Ishaev and Mr. Otgonbayar ventured their opinions on more in-depth issues relating to the themes of energy and tourism. This can be cited as proof that the participants are arriving at a common perception that the concluding session, not to mention the panel discussions on individual themes, should not be preoccupied with discussion of generalized issues but should serve as a forum for discussions that will lead to concrete solutions for specific problems.

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