

Make Better Use of APEC for Building East Asian Community

By YAMAZAWA Ippei

Recently an East Asian Community has been discussed at conferences and symposia and appeared frequently in the title of newly published books. In the 1990s, APEC was the focus of regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. A paradigm has shifted from APEC to an East Asian Community. Media has lost interest in APEC and young scholars know little about it. Nevertheless, APEC is still alive. Presidents and Prime Ministers of the United States, China, Russia, Japan, Australia, and ASEAN member countries gather every year at APEC Economic Leaders Meeting as well as have a close conversation with business leaders of APEC Business Advisory Council. Government officials and private sector experts of member economies meet regularly to implement steady measures of trade and investment facilitation and economic and technical cooperation in the region.

East Asian Community cannot be achieved easily. ASEAN plus Three members have a solid base for building an economic community but they face big challenges to realizing it. There still remain conflicts among themselves over political and security issues, which inevitably prevent their economic integration. It is not clear yet how they manage their relations with North America and Oceania. APEC is equipped with those elements which are missing in the process of East Asian Community building. We had better make better use of APEC for building an East Asian Community, rather than abandoning it as a relic of the past.

APEC is scheduled to be hosted by Singapore in 2009, by Japan in 2010, and by the United States in 2011. We wish to see APEC proceed further to complement East Asian Community building under the leadership of these competent hosts.

(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr.YAMAZAWA Ippei, Professor Emeritus of Hitotsubashi University, which originally appeared on the BBS "Hyakka-Somei" of CEAC on May 1, 2008.)