

Japan Should Cooperate with U.S. on APEC

By OKAZAKI Hisahiko

Prior to the APEC summit meeting held in Singapore in November 2009, Kurt Tung, Acting Senior Official for APEC of U.S. Department of State and Wendy S. Cutler, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Japan, Korea and APEC Affairs of Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), testified on the situations of APEC at the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, the Global Environment. The two testimonies provided little concrete details, and remained just a general statement on the past achievement of APEC as arena for useful discussions and proposals on the issues of trade, investment and environment, while they both emphasized that APEC is the only regional summit-level organization in which the U.S. as well as China and Taiwan participate.

Besides, the two testimonies stressed the importance of cooperation between APEC and G20. For instance, Tung stated that, with almost half of the G-20 being APEC members, the U.S. believes that APEC has an important role to play in supporting, reinforcing, and implementing G-20 principles for global economic recovery and future economic growth, and Cutler stated that APEC endorsed the G-20 pledge to extend through 2010 the commitment to refrain from raising new barriers to trade and investment in goods and services.

Referring to Japan as "our friend and ally," the testimonies welcomed the new Hatoyama administration's emphasis on transparency and looked forward to cooperation with Japan on such area as intellectual property protection. They also stated that APEC summit meeting, which Japan and the U.S. will host respectively in coming years, would also provide opportunities to strengthen the U.S. engagement with Japan's new government. In fact, when the U.S. was offended by the China's proposal to establish a regional community in Asia, which was intended to exclude the U.S., Japan was said to have unofficially complained to the U.S. that it had come to give priority to NAFTA over APEC and had ceased to attend the latter, which the U.S. itself had helped to create. Eventually, the U.S. resumed its regular participation in APEC from 2005.

Though APEC has been so inactive that it has yielded little positive results and the testimonies referred only to its cooperation with G-20, the U.S. currently intends to get down seriously to the 2010 and 2011 meetings of APEC and to cooperate with the Government of Japan in making APEC more substantial. Japan should take advantage of this opportunity.

(This is the English translation of an article written by Amb. OKAZAKI Hisahiko, President of the OKAZAKI Institute, which originally appeared on the BBS “Hyakka-Somei” of CEAC on November 9, 2009.)