

R E P O R T

Network of East Asian Think Tanks' (NEAT) Working Group on Concepts, Ideas and Empowering Guidelines for East Asia Held on 26 March 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Introduction

The NEAT Working Group on Concepts, Ideas and Empowering Guidelines, sponsored by NEAT Malaysia and co-sponsored by NEAT Japan, was held on 26 March 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. All 13 NEAT countries were invited to the Working Group meeting and a total of 27 participants from 12 countries attended. Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee, NEAT Country Coordinator for Malaysia, moderated the three sessions. (The Concept Paper for the Working Group, Agenda and List of Participants are attached as Annex 1, 2 and 3 respectively.)

Following adoption of the Agenda, the Moderator asked for permission to conduct the meeting informally and for participants, unless otherwise stated, to speak in their personal capacities so as to have free and full discussions. This was unanimously approved. It was further agreed that the report of the working group meeting would be on a non-attribution basis and identify issues where there is consensus and areas where there is no consensus. The report is to be sent to all NEAT Country Coordinators by April 2005.

The following then are the areas where there was/was not consensus:

Empowering Guidelines for East Asia

Areas where there is consensus

1. East Asian regionalism must promote the welfare and well-being of the people in the region and, accordingly, the East Asian community should one of peace, prosperity and friendship.
2. East Asian regionalism should embrace the principle of regional self-determination and be based on consensual and non-hegemonic practices.
3. East Asian regionalism should also seek full productive engagement with all who can contribute on the basis of openness, equality and high comfort levels.
4. East Asian community building must not be confined to states alone and should embrace all elements of civil society. The sense of ownership must be broadened and the number of stakeholders increased.
5. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation serves as a guide and glue for the creation of the East Asia community.

Areas where there is no consensus

1. There was no agreement as to whether East Asia should adopt three clear and distinct 'pillars' of community building as ASEAN has done, i.e. economic, security and socio-cultural, or, if it should, whether there ought to be any particular order of sequencing.

Practical Modalities for the East Asian Summit

Areas where there is consensus

1. ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three processes should be at the core of East Asian regionalism.
2. The East Asian Summit should be a forum for dialogue rather than an association.
3. ASEAN should chair East Asian Summits, including those held in non-ASEAN countries.
4. East Asian Summits should be held regularly and be back-to-back with the ASEAN Summit.
5. ASEAN Plus Three Summits should continue to be held for the time being and including years when an East Asian Summit is convened.
6. Countries seeking to participate as members in the East Asia Summit should be evaluated on the basis of the following membership criteria, namely, they should:
 - Apply to be a member;
 - Accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation;
 - Commit themselves to the building of an East Asian community by subscribing to an East Asia declaration, if and when one is formulated; and
 - Be accepted by Asean Plus Three members on the basis of consensus.
7. Countries seeking to participate as dialogue partners in an East Asia Summit should be evaluated on the basis of the following dialogue partner criteria, namely, they should:
 - Apply to attend or be invited to attend based on interest or need;
 - Not have any aggressive intent towards any of the ASEAN Plus Three countries; and
 - Be accepted by Asean Plus Three members on the basis of consensus.
8. The first East Asian Summit should be confined to the ASEAN Plus Three countries only and then decisions taken on if and when to widen or deepen participation.

Areas where there is no consensus

1. There was no consensus as to whether East Asian Summits should be held every two, three or five years.
2. There was no consensus as to whether there should be different categories of participation, such as that of 'members' and 'dialogue partners'.
3. There was no agreement as to whether and, if so, when, the East Asia Summit should replace the ASEAN Plus Three Summit.
4. There was no agreement on the rights and privileges of members versus dialogue partners, if such an option were to be decided on.
5. There was also no agreement as to the need for a secretariat.

Content for Draft Declaration

Areas where there is consensus

1. The value and importance of an East Asian Declaration by ASEAN Plus Three countries to express their collective political will was affirmed.
2. The Declaration should set out the vision, principles, areas of cooperation, structures, processes and modalities of the East Asian Summit in a way that make the differences with the ASEAN Plus Three Summit clear.
3. The values that provide the framework for the identity formation of the East Asian community should be included.
4. The recommendations of the East Asian Vision Group and the East Asian Study Group are useful for the East Asian Summit and other community building initiatives.

Conclusion

Based on the frank yet cordial discussions leading to major points of agreement being established, the Working Group felt that there was no need for a second meeting to be held in Tokyo, Japan. Satisfied with the nature and content of the deliberations, the Working Group adjourned early with thanks expressed to NEAT Malaysia for being the host.

Kuala Lumpur
21 April 2005