

NEAT WG Welcome Dinner Speech by ITO Kenichi on 26 July 2012 at Tokyo Club

Prof. OKAZAKI, Director of the NEAT Working Group on “Regional Cooperation on Disaster Management,” Ms. Wan Portiah WAN HAMZAH, Senior Fellow, Institute of Strategic and International Studies from Malaysia, and all other distinguished members of the NEAT Working Group on “Regional Cooperation on Disaster Management,” Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to welcome you all to the second meeting of the Working Group on “Regional Cooperation on Disaster Management in East Asia” to be held full day tomorrow under the initiative of NEAT, the Network of East Asian Think-tanks.

Last year, we organized the first meeting of this Working Group, which yielded many valuable insights. These insights took the shape of a set of policy recommendations. Then it was submitted to and taken note of by, the ASEAN Plus Three Summit meeting held in Indonesia last November. While this first meeting dealt with somewhat broader and more basic concept of

disaster management in this region, the second meeting, for which we are gathering here today, will deal with more detailed and specialized areas of cooperation in disaster management.

To be more specific, in tomorrow's meeting, we will discuss issues of, firstly how to develop and operate a monitoring and warning system against flood and typhoon disasters and secondly how to motivate local communities to invest in building resilient societies against these disasters. Lastly, we will investigate how to ensure commitment from the international societies and the national and local governments to promote disaster reduction in order to mitigate serious human and economic damages. People's survival, dignity, livelihood, and development profits should not be gravely damaged by disasters. Therefore, we strongly believe that all East Asian countries must urgently pursue and achieve a further progress in the regional cooperation to reduce risks and impacts from disasters in the future.

In this context, the Working Group meeting tomorrow will be a small but an important step forward towards the development of regional cooperation on disaster management in East Asia. I am confident that this Working Group under the leadership of Prof. OKAZAKI will be a successful Working Group and will add much to the success not only of the NEAT Annual Conference in August in Beijing, but of both the ASEAN Plus Three Summit and the East Asia Summit.

Now, Ladies and Gentleman, I would like to propose a toast. To the success of the Working Group meeting tomorrow! Cheers! Thank you very much.