

# **The 1<sup>st</sup> Policy Plenary Meeting on “The State of the Concept of East Asian Community and its Issues”**

June 24, 2004

The First Policy Plenary Meeting was held in the South Main Conference Room of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on June 24, 2004. Mr. TANAKA Hitoshi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, gave a keynote speech, titled "The State of the Concept of East Asian Community and its Issues". Responding to the question "Why is an East Asian Community necessary?", Mr. TANAKA pointed out three aspects of the need of such a community: "(1) It fits into the mid-and-long term national interest of Japan, (2) It establishes a system to promote cooperation with China, and (3) It leads Japanese nationalism to go in an appropriate direction". Comparing an East Asian Community to the European Union (EU), and considering the different governing systems and cultural diversities in the region, he stated that community building in East Asia is a difficult task, but the current trend is for making the concept a reality by overcoming such difficulties and working towards its realization.

Following the above keynote speech, the Council Members had lively discussions and the following comments were made: "It is important to build a roadmap towards a community with functionalism and institutionalism." "China itself is becoming positive about building of an East Asian Community, and it is high time we go beyond the stage of worrying about China and think seriously as to how to get along with China." "In Japan, the question of how to overcome the history issues remains." "The role played by ASEAN up to the present is significant, and we must keep thinking about the creation of an East Asian Community through 'ASEAN-centered discussion'." "As to the formation of common identity, one important factor is in the realm of contemporary culture, and this aspect should also be looked from the viewpoint of Japan's external policy."