

The 8th Policy Plenary Meeting on “The State of the Concept of East Asian Community and Japan’s Strategic Response thereto”

March 23, 2005

The Eighth Plenary Meeting was held in the Conference Room of the Japan Forum on International Relations on March 23, 2005. The meeting was held with the objective of discussing whether or not the final draft of the report compiled by the Task Force (TF) titled, "The Current Status of the Framework of the East Asian Community, Background, and Japan's National Strategy," should be published as a "Policy Report".

Prof. TANAKA Akihiko of the University of Tokyo explained the intent behind the rewriting of the "final draft" on the basis of discussions concerning the original draft held at the Seventh Plenary Meeting. Professor TANAKA made the following comment: "Japan's most important national strategy objective in 30 years from now should be not to be inward looking and dependent solely on economic power. Our national security strategy exists to prevent that worst case scenario from developing and to simultaneously achieve a more positive outcome. Our national strategy will encompass the vision of an East Asian Community."

The Council Members had lively discussions with the following comments being made: "Concerning the realization of the three steps of economic integration, the establishment of a customs union may not be any more necessary. In many countries tariffs are already approaching zero, and, therefore, the customs union in the region could result in harmonizing with the countries of relatively high tariffs." "When discussing the East Asian Community, the roles of NGOs, NPOs, and civil society are important. In Asian countries these things are synonymous with democracy."