

The 21st Policy Plenary Meeting on “On The Asian Gateway Initiative”

July 11, 2007

The 21st Policy Plenary Meeting was held on July 11, 2007 under the theme of "On the Asia Gateway Initiative," in the Conference Room of the Japan Forum on International Relations. A report was delivered by Prof. ITOH Motoshige, Vice-Chairman of CEAC and Professor of the University of Tokyo, who chaired the Council for the Asian Gateway Initiative. The Asian Gateway Initiative, which was put forward by Prime Minister ABE Shinzo, envisions Japan acting as a bridge between Asia and the world.

After briefly stating his impressions of his experience at the Council, Prof. ITOH went through key issues raised in the Council's Final Report submitted to the Prime Minister on May 16th. Among other things, he argued that the liberalization of aviation services has attracted most media attention. In this respect, enhancement of the integration of Tokyo International Airport (Haneda) and New Tokyo International Airport (Narita) was proposed as a short-term strategic target. As a mid-to-long term strategic target, internationalization of Kansai International Airport and Chubu international Airport through effective utilization of the "Asian Open Sky" was also put forward. Prof. ITOH then gave a brief overview on other issues listed in the final report, including reform of trade procedures and policy for foreign students studying in Japan. In terms of reforming trade procedures, the Council recommended a standardization of a paperwork application system, the establishment of national control over port administration, which is now largely left to local governments, and future collaboration with Singapore and Malaysia. In the field of policy for foreign students, it was suggested that, instead of an old idea of simply increasing the number of foreign students studying in Japan, an increasing effort needs to be made to export the Japanese educational system abroad through increasing collaboration with universities in the region.

In response to the report, the 15 participants present actively discussed the content of the Initiative and its future agendas.