

# **The 24<sup>th</sup> Policy Plenary Meeting on “ASEAN’s Stance towards an East Asian Community”**

March 31, 2008

The 24th Policy Plenary Meeting of the Council on East Asian Community (CEAC) was held on March 31 at the conference room of the Japan Forum on International Relations to discuss the “ASEAN’s Stance towards an East Asian Community.” Prof. OGASAWARA Takayuki, Member of CEAC and Professor of Yamanashi Gakuin University, made a keynote report.

Prof. OGASAWARA reported that ASEAN was aware of the fact that their position as a driving force for the community building in East Asia was weakening due to the recent improvement of the relationship between Japan and China. Meanwhile, in response to the emergence of the framework of an East Asian community building in East Asia since the Asian financial crisis of 1977, ASEAN has hastened to establish an ASEAN Community, though ASEAN member states have not reached a consensus in the matters of compliance, democratization and human rights. One of the reasons for such delay is that ASEAN has been trying to achieve simultaneously both “expansion” and “deepening” of ASEAN. Prof. OGASAWARA concluded that a better relationship between Japan and China could guide ASEAN in the direction of working for the multi-layered structure of ASEAN+3 (APT) and East Asia Summit (EAS).

Mr. AIKAWA Kazutoshi, Director for Regional Policy Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, commented as follows. ASEAN’s integration in political and security fields is delayed while the same in economic field is significantly advanced. However, Japanese support has contributed to the strengthening of integration in ASEAN of non-traditional security issues, such as avian flu and natural disaster. Although we can expect ASEAN to be strengthened as an organization, whether it can really achieve the integration is another story. ASEAN is expected to be more positive in showing its own future direction.

In response to the above report and comment, 16 members of CEAC joined an active exchange of views on the topic.