

# **The 25<sup>th</sup> Policy Plenary Meeting on “South Korea’s Stance towards an East Asian Community”**

April 25, 2008

The 25th Policy Plenary Meeting of the Council on East Asian Community (CEAC) was held on April 25 at the conference room of the Japan Forum on International Relations to discuss the “South Korea’s Stance towards an East Asian Community.” Prof. FUKAGAWA Yukiko, Member of CEAC and Professor of Waseda University, made a keynote report.

Prof. FUKAGAWA reported that the new Lee Myung-bak administration has strongly committed itself to globalism and turned into practical economic policies, seeking economic growth rather than distribution. Although the regional policy of previous administration in which North Korea was too much emphasized will be changed, the Lee Myung-bak administration is not hard-line anti-North Korea and it has attached importance to the economic cooperation with North Korea. It has also emphasized US-Korea alliance and aimed to revitalize Japan-US-Korea relationship. On the other hand, Koreans are scarcely aware of an East Asian Community and this trend will be further accelerated. As they have feared sandwich situation between Japan and China, they are moving towards US and EU. The re-negotiation of Japan-Korea FTA remains to be strategically important not only for both countries, but also for the region as a whole, for it will initiate explicit integration of Japan, Korea and China. For more flexible re-negotiation, trade liberalization may be enhanced by synchronizing functional cooperation such as logistics to build up confidence and trust.

Mr. AIKAWA Kazutoshi, Director for Regional Policy Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, commented that, while South Korea is one of the leading nations of the ASEAN+3, in recent years South Korea seems to show interest in a single issue in the ASEAN+3 cooperation.

In response to the above report and comment, 18 member of CEAC joined an active

exchange of views on the topic.