

The 29th Policy Plenary Meeting on “Positions of the United States and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in an East Asian Community”

October 15, 2008

The 29th Policy Plenary Meeting of the Council on East Asian Community (CEAC) was held on October 15 at the conference room of the Japan Forum on International Relations to discuss "Positions of the United State and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in an East Asian Community Building." Dr. JIMBO Ken, Member of CEAC and Associate Professor of Keio University, Dr. YAMAZAWA Ippei, Member of CEAC and Professor Emeritus of Hitotsubashi University, made keynote reports respectively, which were followed by an active exchange of views among Members of CEAC.

Dr. JIMBO stated, "In the process of building an East Asian Community, the United States was originally concerned about the rise of China and the delay of democratization of Asian countries. The US strongly denounced the concept of East Asia Economic Caucus which was proposed by then-Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohammad in 1990 as the one dividing the Pacific. However, after the establishment of ASEAN+3 in 1997 and East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005, the US changed its position into a wait-and-see attitude and taken the stance of "neither block nor welcome" towards an East Asian Community. Multilateralism has the two dimensions for the US, multilateralism in a literal sense such as the United Nations, APEC and Six Party Talks, and multilateralism in which bilateral relations with various countries are linked altogether. Now, because of the efforts by Japan and Singapore, the US has started to welcome the progress of regional cooperation in East Asia on the condition that the "openness" of East Asia can be guaranteed. The US has defined itself as a Pacific country and envisaged regional security in which China and India are included as insiders. The US has also presented its concept of institutionalizing the Six Party Talks to a Northeast Asian security mechanism."

Dr. YAMAZAWA stated, "The Unites States has participated in APEC since its

inception in 1989 and been very much interested in the Asian economy. She took an initiative in the trade and investment liberalization in the Asia Pacific region at the first APEC Leaders' Meeting in Seattle in 1993. It developed to the Bogor Declaration in 1994, Osaka Action Agenda in 1995, and Manila Action Plan in 1996, but only a little has been achieved through APEC's Concerted Unilateral Liberalization to the dismay of the United States. Since the Asian financial crisis, bilateral and plurilateral FTAs have mushroomed and movements towards an East Asian Community have been accelerated, while the United States has expressed concerns about the discrimination against the American firms. While APEC itself has turned to a realistic approach focusing on facilitation and economic and technical cooperation, the United States has recently resumed her initiative for the APEC liberalization through her proposal of FTAAP (Asia Pacific FTA) in 2006 and US Trade Representative Suzan Schwab's expression of the intention to start the negotiation for joining P4 (an initiative for making FTA within APEC by four countries, that is, Brunei, Chile, New Zealand, and Singapore) last September. Although it has caused puzzlement in some parts of East Asia, we should welcome it in order to secure the US interest and its engagement in Asia because now the WTO/DDA has got stumbled. It will help building an East Asian Community as well."

In response to the above reports, 17 member of CEAC joined in an active exchange of views on the topic.