

The 36th Policy Plenary Meeting on “The Recent Development and Future Challenges in the Regional Cooperation in the Cultural Exchange”

December 2, 2009

The 36th Policy Plenary Meeting of the Council on East Asian Community (CEAC) was held on December 2 at the conference room of the Japan Forum on International Relations, to discuss “The Recent Development and Future Challenges in the Regional Cooperation in the Cultural Exchange.” Prof. SHIRAISHI Saya, a member of CEAC and Professor of the University of Tokyo, made keynote report, which was followed by an active exchange of views among Members of CEAC. Prof. SHIRAISHI stated as follows:

While it is often argued that cultural diversity in East Asia could be an obstacle in pursuit of regional integration in the region, it is worthy of note that one American cultural anthropologist, stated over half a century ago, that Southeast Asia had been an integrated maritime area as an interaction of several civilizations and cultures, implying that the diversity of the culture is the positive assets for regional integration. On the other hand, in East Asia today, a common identity is being developed at the grass root level. This is the result of influx of foreign cultures such as cartoons, animations, internet and electronic games. In this region, traditional concept of family has since 1990s been superseded by the modern concept of family, composed of a father, a mother and children and with emphasis on privacy. And concurrently, a modern concept of children has become dominant. Underlying this change is the fact that so-called “urban middle class” has gained wide currency and absorbed foreign values through various media such as school education, comic books and animation films. Thus the Japanese popular culture has prevailed in the region quickly, and the common life style has taken roots. This proves that a common identity could emerge out of cultural diversity. Under such circumstances, Japan is expected to establish and utilize infrastructures to promote intra-region cultural exchanges

In response to the above reports, 18 members of CEAC joined in an active exchange

of views on the topic.