

**Opening Remarks at the 5th NEAT Annual Conference
held on 21 August, 2007 in Singapore
by Prof. ITO Kenichi, NEAT Country Coordinator for Japan and Host of the 3rd
NEAT Annual Conference in Tokyo in 2005**

Distinguished delegates to the 5th NEAT Annual Conference, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having the privilege of being one of those delegates who have attended all the four past NEAT Annual Conferences held respectively in Beijing in 2003, Bangkok in 2004, Tokyo in 2005, and Kuala Lumpur in 2006, let me congratulate ourselves upon the fact that NEAT has grown into a common forum for representatives of think tanks from the ASEAN + 3 countries to meet and discuss the concept of an East Asian community building annually. It should be noted that in the course of these years NEAT could have equipped itself with "The Basic Rules and Frameworks of the NEAT," and organized a set of Working Groups entrusted with the task of drafting a report to the Annual Conference, which in turn was able to produce a memorandum of "Policy Recommendations."

In fact, the 3rd NEAT Annual Conference held in Tokyo in August 2005 could put forward a series of "Guiding Principles of Community Building in East Asia" as an introduction to its "Policy Recommendations." It should be noted that the Chairman's Statement of the 9th ASEAN Plus Three Summit held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005 specifically referred to the "Policy Recommendations" of the 3rd NEAT Annual Conference held in Tokyo and requested the Ministers and Senior Officials of the ASEAN Plus Three nations to study those recommendations and proposals.

It was again quite encouraging for us to see that the Chairman's Statement of the 10th ASEAN Plus Three Summit held in Cebu, Philippines, this January, referred to the "Policy Recommendations" of the NEAT Annual Conference again. Let me quote. Paragraph 15 of the Statement said, "We also noted the Memorandum No.3 on Policy Recommendations on Strengthening the Pillars of East Asian Community Building, prepared by the Network of East Asian Think Tanks (NEAT), which may form part of the stocktaking of APT cooperation."

I think this verifies that our efforts and contributions have now been duly acknowledged in the process of an East Asian community building by the countries concerned in the region. This makes us in NEAT to feel that both our responsibility and influence are growing and that we must be aware of this fact. The year 2007 marks the tenth anniversary of the ASEAN Plus Three Summit. In this memorial year "the Second Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation" is to be adopted by the 11th ASEAN Plus Three Summit. I hope the 5th NEAT Annual Conference opened today in Singapore will become a milestone for our joint efforts towards an East Asian community building, and will play a constructive role in preparing "the Second Joint Statement" to be adopted by the ASEAN Plus Three Summit.

Thank you very much.