

**Report of the Network of East Asian Think-Tanks (NEAT) Working
Group On
“Establishment of Asian Cultural Archives for the Enhancement of
Cultural Exchange in East Asia’**

”

6~7 July 2012, Seoul, Korea

I. Introduction

1. The future of East Asian community is contingent on mutual understanding of cultural commonality and diversity as well as the coordination of political economic interests. Countries in East Asia have increasingly identified the importance and necessity of cultural exchange in the process of building East Asian Community. The NEAT Working Group on the Enhancement of Cultural Exchange in East Asia is to deal with the issue of establishing ‘Asian Cultural Archives’ in 2012.
2. This Working Group appreciates the spirit of 1998 ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Summit Meeting that made a statement on Asian identity, human exchanges, mutual cultural understanding, and so on. Following this spirit, NEAT recognized the importance of building East Asian socio-cultural community at the 2004 Annual Conference and the necessity of building East Asian identity at the 2005 Annual Conference. To implement such recognition, the NEAT Working Group on the Enhancement of Cultural Exchange in East Asia reached an agreement in 2007 to hold a series of annual meetings for the following 5 years.
3. The first meeting of the NEAT “Working Group on Enhancement of Cultural Exchange” was held on June 8, 2007 in Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do Province in the Republic of Korea. It was sponsored by the Korean Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (KISEAS), the Country Coordinator of NEAT Korea. A total of 18 participants from all 13 ASEAN Plus Three (APT) countries attended the meeting and engaged in an interactive and productive discussion.
4. Since then, the NEAT Working Group on the Enhancement of Cultural Exchange in East Asia has already held four fruitful meetings in Seoul and brought up

diverse and important issues and ideas on ‘the media’ (2008), ‘popular culture and cultural festivities’ (2009), ‘education’ (2010), and people-to-people exchange (2011). In 2012, we proposed to bring together participants of the APT countries to deliberate on the ways to develop and to make use of Asian Cultural Archives.

5. In accordance with the agreed schedule, this year’s priority area of discussion was the Asian Cultural Archives. The meeting (the sixth meeting of the NEAT “Working Group on Enhancement of Cultural Exchange”) was held on July 6-7 2012 in Seoul, in the Republic of Korea. It was sponsored by the Korean Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (KISEAS), the Country Coordinator of NEAT Korea, and MOFAT. A total of 19 participants from 12 ASEAN Plus Three (APT) countries (delegate from Indonesia was absent) attended the meeting and engaged in an interactive and productive discussion. The meeting aimed to bring up diverse and important issues and ideas on the media as follows.

- A. Conditions, experiences, and activities of each country on collecting and preserving evidences of cultural exchanges with other East Asian neighbours**
- B. Case studies on cultural archives and museums focusing on foreign cultural exchanges**
- C. Other ideas and issues related to building cultural archives in East Asia**
- D. Feasible agendas, measures, and programs to enhance cultural exchange in East Asia**

II. Key Issues and Suggestions

1. As a general principle, all the participants in this WG
 - a. Agreed that there is a need for more cooperation and exchange among archival institutions and other relevant institutions in the ASEAN+3 countries to understand diverse regional cultures better and to lay basis for the building of regional identity
 - b. Recognized the importance/necessity of establishing “East Asian Cultural Archives” as a useful and effective way to enhance cultural exchange in East

- Asia and to expedite East Asian community (EAc) Building.
- c. Suggested that “cultural exchange through setting up of East Asian Cultural Archives” should be pursued after and in the ASEAN+3 Cooperation process that enters into phase II with leaders’ endorsement of East Asian Vision Group II Report in coming November 2012.
2. Some participants proposed that we need to answer some questions as follows to jointly set up “East Asian Cultural Archives (EACA).”
- a. What is the definition and scope of cultural archive?
 - Does it encompass official documents, historical sites and relics, fine arts, performing arts, contemporary pop arts etc.?
 - What will be the time period covered by the EACA?
 - Would EACA be based on current geopolitical nationality or cultural identities in the region?
 - b. Considering the purpose, contents, and ways of displaying, who would be the targeted audiences of EACA?
 - c. Who manages and participates in EACA? Does EACA include not only governmental agencies but also private agencies such as companies, private museums, universities, and even individuals?
 - d. Is EACA to promote cultural exchange or to show the evidence of cultural exchange already happened?
 - e. How to deal with technical issues such as translations and uneven development of skills and technologies among the ASEAN+3 countries
3. Some participants expressed their concerns on the lack of material, institutional, and technical bases that national archival entities would face in the process of building EACA.
- a. Lack of financial resources to maintain national archival institutions that house invaluable cultural and historic assets of individual countries.
 - b. Lack of expertise of archival institution’s staffs that are in charge of preserving and displaying the cultural and historic assets as well as new forms of media that connect the assets and general public.
 - c. Lack of coordination and concerted policy effort among archival institutions, within and outside East Asia.

4. Despite the questions and difficulties that EACA would face in the future, the participants in the WG agreed that we need to first take measures of laying basis for setting up EACA as follows.
 - a. Information-sharing of exhibitions related to East Asia among concerned regional institutions.
 - b. Learning best-practices of cultural archives in the region
 - c. Developing instruction and explanation in all East Asian languages to serve audience better

III. Policy Recommendations and Proposals for Specific Measures

Based upon the key issues and suggestions addressed in the meeting, the working group made some policy recommendations and proposals for specific measures and programs as follows.

1. It was proposed that regular meetings in the forms such as forum and workshop among archives and concerned people in the region to share their experience and expertise would be necessary in the near future.
2. A general consensus was made to establish “East Asian Cultural Archives (EACA)” as one of the core programmes for the cultural exchange in the region.
3. Regarding the goals of EACA, the participants in the Working Group meeting agreed that the EACA would be in specific for
 - a. Inculcating cultural pride among people at not only national but also local levels.
 - b. Providing invaluable source of learning and education for students and educators.
 - c. Setting up useful database for research and reference.
 - d. Contributing to capacity building, training and networking for people directly involved in archival institutions at individual national level.

4. To implement EACA, some detailed ideas were also suggested as follows.

- a. Key players in the building EACA can include
 - relevant governmental bodies in individual countries
 - major private sector players in relevant fields
 - national think-tanks, research institutions and private cultural activists and performers
 - community organisations in general.
- b. Some possible forms and contents of EACA are particularly for
 - providing indexes of search engine service and the collection of individual archival institutions in the region
 - focusing on culture specific archives
- c. 'Pilot Program or taskforce for EACA' will decide the key issues such as
 - setting up a coordinating institution and appointing a focal point in each country
 - surveying existing similar archives to avoid duplication and building networks for their mutual communication
 - deciding the country that will host the website, if EACA is web-based cyber archive
 - designing concrete programs such as joint publication (for example, academic information, catalogues, and newsletters for cultural heritage and artefacts), regular seminar and forums, and training courses and so on.

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(In alphabetical order by country)

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