

AN EVOLVING TRILATERAL COOPERATION: REALITY AND OUTLOOK



Trilateral
Cooperation
Secretariat

AN EVOLVING TRILATERAL COOPERATION: REALITY AND OUTLOOK



Foreword



I am delighted to bring this report, *An Evolving Trilateral Cooperation: Reality and Outlook*, to all stakeholders, partners and readers who have been long devoted to the Trilateral Cooperation among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Initiated and conducted by the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS), this report embodies the TCS' attempts to further facilitate intergovernmental cooperation as well as to play its due role as a policy advisor, and consolidate its mandate to promulgate the significance of the Trilateral Cooperation to the public, so to fulfill expectations of all walks of life in the three countries and beyond.

With the *Trilateral Cooperation VISION 2020* which was adopted in 2010 at the 3rd Trilateral Summit Meeting in Jeju, ROK, at the outset, this report contains two separate but correlated parts. The main body, *Decade of Progress on Trilateral Cooperation: 2010-2020*, extends a comprehensive review on the progress of 41 specific objectives in five major areas set forth in the *Trilateral Cooperation Vision 2020*. Such a review is synonymous with a holistic study on the achievements and progress of the TCS itself, since the then leaders of the three countries reached consensus in 2010 on the establishment of the TCS in the *Trilateral Cooperation Vision 2020* that led to the birth of the TCS in the following year. In the second part, *In Dialogue with China-Japan-ROK Citizens*, 6 eminent scholar(s), economist(s), editor(s) and young professional(s) from the three countries shared their experiences as well as expectations with the Trilateral Cooperation. Their insights and wisdoms resonate strongly with a push for shaping the future direction of the Trilateral Cooperation. To conclude, by incorporating a “dual-track” modality to this report, the TCS intends, on the one hand, to offer a gateway for the public to grasp a full picture of the Trilateral Cooperation in parallel with a better understanding of its significance and, on the other hand, to provide references to policymakers of the three countries by conveying voices from the civil societies.

Last decade from 2010 to 2020 was in no doubt an important phase in the course of the Trilateral Cooperation. Having gone through a global economic crisis, the Trilateral Cooperation became more vigorous. Not only its scope of cooperation expanded to nearly 30 pragmatic areas, but also the whole Trilateral Cooperation morphed into a genuinely

institutionalized framework, with the Trilateral Summit Meeting as the pivot, the 21 Ministerial Meetings as the pillars, over 70 working-level consultations and dialogues as the foundation, and more than 100 projects as its outcomes. Such successful projects as “CAMPUS Asia” students exchange program and “Culture City of East Asia” local government exchange program, invented at the early stage of the decade, have continuously reshaped our perceptions towards the true meaning of the Trilateral Cooperation: regardless of disparities, there are endless potentials to unleash if it serves the well-being of the people in the three countries. The establishment of the TCS as a permanent secretariat, further ensures a steady development of the Trilateral Cooperation in the context of dynamic changes in regional and international landscapes as well as ups-and-downs in bilateral relations. In terms of regional integration process, the Trilateral Cooperation, which boasts the highest level of institutionalization, broadest coverage of cooperative areas, richest cooperation accomplishments, and strongest endogenous dynamics in Northeast Asia, will continue playing a leading role in regional cooperation. I have every confidence that, with an increased recognition of its importance by the public, the Trilateral Cooperation will better serve the fundamental interests of the people in the three countries in a post-pandemic era.

The significance of the Trilateral Cooperation lays in the inalienable characteristics of geographic proximity, people’s affinity, and cultural similarity of the three neighboring countries. To promote lasting peace, common prosperity and shared culture that will benefit us for generations, I hereby call for your further support to the Trilateral Cooperation.



OU Boqian

Secretary-General
Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AN EVOLVING TRILATERAL COOPERATION: REALITY AND OUTLOOK

Part I. **Decade of Progress on Trilateral Cooperation: 2010–2020**

I. Expansion and Institutionalization of Trilateral Cooperation Mechanisms	07
II. Sustainable Economic Cooperation for Common Prosperity	10
III. Cooperation in Development and Environmental Protection	14
IV. Promotion of Friendly Relations through Expansion of Human and Cultural Exchange and Cooperation	17
V. Joint Efforts on Regional and International Peace and Stability	20
VI. Outlook for Next Decade	22
Appendix. List of Trilateral Summit Meetings and Ministerial Meetings 2011-2020	26

Part II. **In Dialogue with China-Japan-ROK Citizens**

ZHANG Yunling, Academy Member, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	33
MUKUTA Satoshi, Senior Managing Director, Keidanren	37
JEONG Hyung-gon, Senior Research Fellow, Korea Institute for International Economic Policy	42
QIN Zi, Initiator of the Crested Ibis International Forum	47
OKASAKA Kentaro, Seoul Bureau Chief, Kyodo News Agency	53
CHOI Haemin, Assistant Professor, Chodang University	58

Part I.

Decade of Progress on Trilateral Cooperation: 2010–2020



Trilateral Cooperation VISION 2020, issued at the 3rd Trilateral Summit Meeting (Jeju, ROK, May 2010), was the first summit document presenting detailed goals and visions in five major areas with 41 specific objectives to be achieved over an explicit timeline. During the decade-long period, remarkable achievements were accomplished in political, economic, and socio-cultural areas. This study will comprehensively review the abundant progress on Trilateral Cooperation across six chapters: “Expansion and Institutionalization of Trilateral Cooperation Mechanisms,” “Sustainable Economic Cooperation for Common Prosperity,” “Cooperation in Development and Environmental Protection,” “Promotion of Friendly Relations through Expansion of Human and Cultural Exchange and Cooperation,” “Joint Efforts on Regional and International Peace and Stability,” and “Outlook for Next Decade,” with an aim to raise public awareness on the significance of Trilateral Cooperation.

I

Expansion and Institutionalization of Trilateral Cooperation Mechanisms

1. Over the decade following the promulgation of the *Trilateral Cooperation VISION 2020* at the 3rd Trilateral Summit Meeting (Jeju, ROK, May 2010), the effort enjoyed sound development momentum and rapid expansion of spectrum with institutionalization of trilateral mechanisms lifted to new heights. The Trilateral Summit Meeting, considered the core of Trilateral Cooperation, has been held in 2011, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2019. Each meeting has injected continuous political impetus into Trilateral Cooperation from a long-term and strategic perspective. Reaffirming sound bilateral ties as an important foundation for Trilateral Cooperation as well as Trilateral Cooperation’s role in building each bilateral relationship, the three countries concurred on the significance of regularly holding the Summit, and all are committed to creating a positive atmosphere for regularization.

The 4th-9th Trilateral Foreign Ministers’ Meetings were held between 2010 and 2019 and served as the central platform to share progress and consult on the future direction of the Trilateral Cooperation, prepare for the Trilateral Summit Meeting, and discuss regional and international issues. In March 2020, a China-Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Video Teleconference on COVID-19 attended by all three Foreign Ministers convened, during which the three sides reaffirmed their determination to combat COVID-19 in collaboration with the international community.

The Trilateral Agricultural Ministers’ Meeting, Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Water Resources, Trilateral Sports Ministers’ Meeting, and Trilateral Education Ministers’ Meeting all set sail early in the decade and expanded pragmatic tripartite cooperation to nearly 30 priority

areas while increasing trilateral ministerial consultative mechanisms from 17 in 2010 to 21 by the decade's end. The decade also saw significant growth of trilateral dialogues involving Senior Officials, Directors-General, and other levels from 46 to 76 in total. They include a series of new policy consultations such as the Trilateral Counter-Terrorism Meeting, Trilateral Cyber Policy Consultation Dialogue, and Trilateral High-level Dialogue on the Arctic, among others.

2. The establishment of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) in Seoul, ROK, on September 1, 2011, marked a milestone in institutionalization of Trilateral Cooperation. Evolving from the Trilateral Cooperation Cyber Secretariat (TCCS) established by the three governments in 2009, the TCS now serves as the permanent institute to facilitate Trilateral Cooperation. It carries out five functions in line with the *Agreement on the Establishment of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat among the Governments of the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea*: provide support for trilateral consultative mechanisms; explore and facilitate cooperative projects; promote understanding of Trilateral Cooperation; network with other international organizations; and compile database and conduct research.

The TCS made earlier efforts on internal capacity building and external networks with government agencies of the three countries as well as the international community including UN organizations, EU institutions, and the ASEAN Secretariat. Since its inauguration, the TCS has been invited to observe every Trilateral Summit Meeting and ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Summit and has been widely participating in 16 of 21 Trilateral Ministerial Meeting mechanisms. As mandated, the TCS has provided substantial support to a wide range of cooperative areas including foreign affairs, security, economics, sustainable development, and culture affairs through numerous joint and independent projects.

A series of proprietary signature projects have also been developed through TCS' cumulative practice. Nine editions of the International Forum for Trilateral Cooperation were held from 2011 to 2021, which has become a high-level platform for sharing insight on Trilateral Cooperation in political, economic, and social spectrums. To build close ties between younger generations of the three countries, the TCS launched the Young Ambassador Program, Young Professional Research Consortium, CAMPUS Asia Alumni Workshop, and Trilateral Children's Story Exchange Program in consecutive years. In collaboration with linguists from the three countries, the TCS published the *Trilateral Common Vocabulary Dictionary (TCVD)* in 2018.

3. Vigorous cooperation on non-traditional security issues has been empowered by the high-quality institutionalization of Trilateral Cooperation. In the wake of the Great East Japan earthquake and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear incident, leaders of the three countries made special visits to the disaster area right before the 4th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Tokyo, Japan, May 2011). Agreeing on the importance of helping each other especially at times of disaster and adversity, all three countries came together around strong determination on joint efforts on disaster risk reduction and nuclear safety through leveraging existing inter-governmental mechanisms including the

Tripartite Meeting on Earthquake Disaster Mitigation, Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management, and TOP Regulators' Meeting (TRM) on Nuclear Safety.

Following previous practice, two more Tripartite Meetings on Earthquake Disaster Mitigation were held in November 2010 (Jeju, Korea) and January 2013 (Boao, China), respectively, before the Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management became the primary forum for this topic. The meetings consolidated technical cooperation on 12 joint research programs. Three East Asia Earthquake Seminars were organized between 2011 and 2013 to collaborate on earthquake response and address related disasters like volcanoes and tsunamis.

In pursuit of the global roadmap *Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015-2030* (SFDRR), all three countries made sincere cooperation in areas such as joint exercises, enhancing capacity, strengthening coordination and information sharing, and promoting technology under the auspices of consecutive biannual Trilateral Ministerial Meetings on Disaster Management held throughout the decade. The intergovernmental mechanism also launched education and training programs in collaboration with existing institutes and UN regional offices in the three countries. Between 2013 and 2016, the TCS partnered with the three related Ministries and relevant institutes to host four rounds of Trilateral Table-Top Exercises (TTX) on Disaster Management. The three countries' experts also gathered twice for the Trilateral Expert Meeting on Disaster Management during the same period.

The Cooperative Nuclear Safety Initiative adopted by the 4th TRM in November 2011 (Tokyo, Japan) included a list of 10 action items that were vigorously implemented with technical details on an Information Exchange Framework to be in place at the 6th TRM in November 2013 (Hangzhou, China). Since 2014, the launch of technical dialogues and exercises like Top Regulators Meeting on Nuclear Safety Plus (TRM+), Joint Emergency Drill (JED), and Joint Working Groups have continued those efforts. Despite COVID-19, the three regulators maintained exchange on issues of common concern and interest via virtual conferencing. The Trilateral Ministers' Meeting on Disaster Management and the TRM on Nuclear Safety have emerged as major cooperation platforms to enhance human security in the region.

4. The relevant authorities in the three countries maintain smooth communication and cooperation under frameworks like the ASEAN Regional Forum, APT Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, and ASEAN Chiefs of National Police (ASEANAPOL). After officers from the three authorities focusing on international cooperation gathered for their first meeting during the 27th ASEANAPOL Conference in June 2007 (Singapore), an institutionalized Trilateral Consultation among Police Authorities ultimately took shape in 2015. By 2018, four consultations had been held to address pressing transboundary crime issues such as cybercrime, voice phishing, and drug trafficking. Collaboration between police in the three countries has also been made in forensic sciences and fire rescue.

Sustainable Economic Cooperation for Common Prosperity

5. The three countries achieved a remarkable increase in total intra-regional trade volume from US\$129 billion in 1999 to US\$646 billion in 2020. Driven by common understanding of the importance of securing prompt and smooth flow of goods and people throughout the region, the relevant Ministers of the three countries promoted discussion on launching negotiations to establish institutional frameworks to further strengthen the trilateral economic partnership. Such efforts resulted in the *Trilateral Agreement for the Promotion, Facilitation and Protection of Investment* being signed at the 5th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Beijing, China, May 2012) and coming into force in May 2014. The first legal framework among the three countries in the field of economics, the agreement laid the foundation for a free, fair, and transparent trade and investment environment and serves as a precursor for the *Trilateral Free Trade Agreement* (Trilateral FTA).

Emboldened by affirmation that the Trilateral FTA would benefit the three countries and contribute to regional economic integration, the three conducted a Joint Study for a Trilateral FTA which concluded in 2011. The outcome report was submitted to the 5th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Beijing, China, May 2012). Under the auspices of the relevant Ministries of the three countries, 16 rounds of negotiations on a Trilateral FTA were held between 2013 and 2019. To facilitate negotiations and raise public awareness on the potential benefits, the TCS organized five China-Japan-ROK FTA Seminars, two of which were held in conjunction with the negotiations. In a parallel effort to promote the *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement* to lift trade and investment barriers and integrate supply and industrial chains, the three countries reiterated the importance of intensifying the efforts on the Trilateral FTA negotiations in pursuit of a Trilateral FTA with its own value.

6. Continuous and robust efforts in concert with the Trilateral FTA negotiations have promoted supply chain security under the umbrella of the China-Japan-Korea Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics. Collaboration has deepened in pursuit of the three major goals of “Creation of a Seamless Logistics System,” “Establishment of Environmentally Friendly Logistics,” and “Achievement of Balance between Security and Efficiency of Logistics” characterized by 12 Action Plans through 2018. In response to socio-economic changes and the COVID-19 pandemic, the three parties upgraded the central goals with new action plans at the turn of the new decade. One key achievement, the Northeast Asia Logistics Information Service Network (NEAL-NET), was established to share and visualize container status and dynamic container vessel status in real time. As of October 2021, it covered 31 ports in the three countries, significantly improving logistics efficiency and trade flow.

Following the agreement made at the 10th Trilateral Economic and Trade Ministers' Meeting (Seoul, ROK, October 2015), the Joint Project on Trilateral Cooperation for Improvement of Supply Chain Connectivity was launched in 2015. The TCS organized four rounds of the Working Group Meeting in 2016 to promote joint efforts to enhance supply chain performance among the three countries. To ensure the outcomes of the Working Group Meetings resulted in concrete measures including more practical factors related to logistics, the 11th Meeting in October 2016 (Tokyo, Japan) reached further consensus on establishment of a Trilateral Dialogue for Improvement of Supply Chain Connectivity, which was coordinated by the TCS in 2017. In collaboration with transport and logistics related ministries in the three countries, the TCS developed an Official Website for Trilateral Transport and Logistics Cooperation in 2021 which now serves as a gateway for the public to access valuable information on trilateral transport and logistics cooperation, and an online platform ensuring smooth coordination and policy exchange among relevant Ministries in the three countries.

7. Thanks to consensus that enhanced cooperation on customs affairs can serve as a catalyst for fostering trade facilitation in the region, the three customs authorities have continued efforts to discuss common challenges and substantive measures through the framework of the Tripartite Customs Heads' Meeting. The *Joint Statement on Customs Cooperation on Trade Facilitation* adopted at the 7th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Seoul, ROK, November 2015) reaffirmed the significance of the role of customs authorities in creating an attractive environment for trade and fostering development of cross border movement. The 6th Tripartite Customs Heads' Meeting (Tokyo, Japan, November 2017) adopted a newly revised version of the *Action Plan for the Tripartite Customs Cooperation* to clarify the guiding principles of mid-to-long-term tripartite customs cooperation. A concrete and technical agenda for cooperation was developed through activities carried out by Working Groups established to address matters of Intellectual Property Rights, Customs Enforcement and Intelligence, Authorized Economic Operators, and Customs Procedures.
8. Recognizing that innovative technology development and industrial competitiveness are essential for economic growth, the three countries explored the possibility of expanding support for research capacity-building and policy consultations in new industries of high added-value. With a shared view that a region-wide digital single market would benefit all three countries in the generation of new economic value, the 11th Trilateral Economic and Trade Ministers' Meeting (Tokyo, Japan, October 2016) launched a Joint Study on E-Commerce, and, as tasked, the TCS facilitated three working group meetings in 2017. The *Final Report of Joint Study "Trilateral Cooperation on E-Commerce"* was submitted to the 12th Trilateral Economic and Trade Ministers' Meeting (Beijing, China, December 2019). Based on that report, the three authorities enacted further cooperative action to establish Public-Private Dialogue on Trilateral Cooperation on E-Commerce.

Driven by the Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation, cooperation on science and technology was further deepened based on a shared understanding that science and innovation drive economic development. Under the auspices of the inter-governmental mechanism, collaboration has expanded thanks to the work of the Trilateral Science and Technology Policy Seminar and the Trilateral Young Scientists Workshop, among other programs. The Joint Research Collaboration Program, born out of the Ministerial Meeting, has played a key role in promoting scientific and technological progress and innovation as well as resolving regional and global issues. Eight joint projects on different topics like climate change, energy saving, disaster prevention, and water cycles have been implemented. The A3 Foresight Program, a joint research initiative in the private spectrum spearheaded by the Heads of Research Council in Asia Meeting (A-HORCs), has made fruitful achievements through constant and vigorous efforts on 30 joint projects covering a variety of frontier scientific themes ranging from IoT and AI to nuclear physics and emerging materials innovation.

9. The three countries share the view that cooperation in agriculture is essential not only for food security, but also for agricultural industrialization, biomass energy development, rural revitalization, green agricultural development, animal and plant disease control, livestock industries, and international agricultural cooperation. With this in mind, the Trilateral Agriculture Ministers' Meeting kicked off in 2012 and convened three times until 2018. The three countries have cooperated in various agricultural practices including the Forum for Agricultural Policy Research in Northeast Asia which had its 14th event in 2019.

The 5th-11th Trilateral Fisheries Institutes' Head Meetings took place between 2011 and 2019 to strengthen future cooperation on researching the effect of climate change on the ocean environment and fishery resources, fishery resources and sustainability, and safety of aquatic products. Recent developments in Trilateral Cooperation in fishery also include the 16th Trilateral International Jellyfish Workshop (2019), and the China-Japan-Korea Nongovernmental Fisheries Agreement Meeting (2019).

10. The fact that the three countries account for more than half of all of the world's patent applications signifies the importance of Trilateral Cooperation in the field of intellectual property rights protection. As the core of trilateral IP cooperation, the annual TRIPO (Trilateral IP Offices) Heads Meeting was held consecutively throughout the decades. The three IP Offices held the 20th TRIPO Heads Meeting in December 2020 (Online) and commemorated the 20th anniversary of trilateral IP cooperation. An effort to promote the latest developments of IP policies and laws for users, the TRIPO User Symposium was held annually as a side event during the TRIPO Heads meeting. The three IP offices have also engaged in various consultation meetings including the TRIPO Trademark Experts Meeting, Joint Experts Group for Trial and Appeal, Design Forum, and IP International Symposium on Academics. Meetings on human resources development attended by affiliated training institutes of the three IP offices were also held regularly.

11. The three countries have promoted discussions on boosting trade through joint development and adopting international standards under the frameworks of the Trilateral Standing Committee on Standards Cooperation and the Northeast Asia Standards Cooperation Forum (NEAS Forum). An important platform for reviewing the progress of ongoing cooperation and presenting proposals for new cooperative items, 10th-18th NEAS Forums were held consecutively from 2011 to 2019 and attended by experts from public and private sectors. Various joint working group researches have empowered the three authorities to continue work on developing joint standards in areas involving cultural homogeneity, industries with non-tariff barriers, and areas that require new infrastructure.

12. In support of a free, open, and rule-based multilateral trading system, the three countries have reaffirmed coordination among financial authorities to strengthen cooperation in East Asia and international finance mechanisms. Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of China, Japan, and Korea celebrated their 20th trilateral meeting in September 2020 (Online). It has served as an effective platform for enhanced policy dialogue on global and regional economic developments. At the meeting in May 2021 (Online), the three Ministers and Governors reiterated their commitments to uphold an open and rules-based multilateral trade and investment system and to continue demonstrating their leadership in the ASEAN+3 Finance Process. In this regard, they commended the significant progress made by ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) on enhancing regional macroeconomic surveillance capacity, supporting implementation of the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM), and providing technical assistance to ASEAN+3 members. Recognizing that China, Japan, and Korea are important member economies of AMRO, TCS and AMRO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2019 on promoting cooperation and collaboration in matters of common interest, enhance capacity building to better fulfill each organization's respective mandates, and substantially contribute together to regional economic and financial cooperation and stability. With the shared view that the three countries should enhance trade and investment cooperative level to boost regional economic integration and sustainable development, the three Ministers of Economy and Trade have also reiterated their agreement on strengthening cooperation under multilateral frameworks such as APEC, G20, WTO, and others.

Cooperation in Development and Environmental Protection

13. Trilateral environmental cooperation radiating from the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM) consists of multi-layered consultative mechanisms involving the government, research institutes, and civil society. The most time-honored and one of the most institutionalized mechanisms among 21 trilateral ministerial meetings, the TEMM was successfully established as a venue for regular dialogue among the three countries. Concrete cooperation activities were driven by the *Tripartite Joint Action Plan (TJAP) on Environmental Cooperation*, which was first adopted in 2010 and renewed every five years thereafter. Each *TJAP* listed 8-10 priority areas such as climate change, biodiversity, circular economy, and environmental education and awareness, under which activities were conducted in various forms.

Considering that environmental issues are of global interest, Trilateral Cooperation on environmental protection has made considerable progress in the context of major international frameworks as well as in conjunction with cooperative programs at the regional level. Across the decade, the three countries actively participated in discussions on strengthening multilateralism to achieve green recovery, biodiversity conservation, sustainable development goals, and, most recently, carbon neutrality.

14. Climate change has been a priority area of cooperation identified in the *TJAP*. The urgency of responding to climate change has been recognized in recent years, and it was discussed in the broader and cross-cutting context of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, and relevant regional initiatives. This reflects the three countries' shared recognition that climate change goals and the Sustainable Development Goals are interlinked. Amidst the pandemic, the three countries announced goals to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 (China) and 2050 (Japan and ROK) and updated their Nationally Determined Contributions.

Since the early stages, the three countries have remained committed to working together on effective implementation of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* and the *Paris Agreement* and leveraged the Conference of the Parties (COP) as the important platform for multilateral engagement. As encouraged by the 21st TEMM (Kitakyushu, Japan, November 2019), the outcome of the Joint Research Project on Cities towards Decarbonization and Sustainable Development was shared with the global community at COP25. At the trilateral level, numerous policy dialogues, seminars, and joint research projects have contributed to regular exchange, knowledge sharing, and capacity building at both government and expert levels under the TEMM framework. Efforts were made to promote climate change mitigation and adaptation, a shared benefits approach, green growth, and market mechanisms within and beyond the region.

15. Recognizing the serious impact of climate change on ecosystems in the region, the three countries have attached great importance to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity through collaborative frameworks and initiatives in international and regional platforms including the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and its *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020* in particular as well as the Satoyama Initiative, the Asia-Pacific Biodiversity Observation Network (AP-BON), the East and Southeast Asia Biodiversity Information Initiative (ESABII), and the Bio-Bridge Initiative (BBI). Working together to generate successful outcomes on these initiatives, the three Environmental Ministries established the Tripartite Policy Dialogue on Biodiversity to enhance information sharing and partnership. Six sessions of the Dialogue have been organized since its inauguration in 2013 in Incheon, ROK, highlighting the necessity of cooperation on access and benefit sharing, invasive alien species, and continued contribution to the international frameworks.
16. Shared recognition that pursuing the transition to a circular economy and sound material-cycle society in the region would significantly contribute to achieving the SDGs at global level, has driven the three countries to continue to promote relevant activities by organizing the Sound Material Cycle Society/Circular Economy/3R and Transboundary Movement of E-waste Seminar. The Seminar served as a venue to exchange information on waste management policies in the three countries and consider the request from the international community concerning transboundary movement of waste and international trends on 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). The three countries explored concrete action to promote circular economies and plastic waste reduction and management, which would support the progress of other relevant international and regional initiatives including the TEMM-Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) Joint Workshop on Marine Litter Management and International Coastal Cleanup Activities. The workshop enabled the three countries to exchange information and research results on marine litter and microplastics management, empowering efforts in marine environment cooperation in the Northwest Pacific region at large.
17. To reach the wider general public, the three countries carried out a wide range of activities under the theme “Environmental Education, Public Awareness, and Engagement,” targeting different groups of participants including education experts and practitioners, youth, government officials, NGO representatives, and corporations. The Tripartite Environmental Education Network, active throughout the decade, provided a combination of diverse activities to facilitate exchange of knowledge on environmental education, promote mutual learning of good practices, and to engage all relevant stakeholders. Held back-to-back with the TEMM, the TEMM Youth Forum has become an important medium to cultivate responsibility in environmental protection among future generations. The event has been attended by over 100 youth representatives since 2011. To secure more involvement from the business community, the Tripartite Roundtable on Environmental Industry/Business has been held annually and touched on topics such as environment-related technologies, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable cities. The three countries also provide annual Environmental Training for Officials consisting of thematic lectures, discussion,

and site visits. The three parties agree on the important role of teachers in environmental education, especially for elementary and middle school students, so the TCS organized the 1st and 2nd Trilateral Environmental Teacher's Exchange Program in 2017 and 2019 respectively. The TCS also published a brochure titled *20th Anniversary of Tripartite Environmental Cooperation (1999-2018)* during the 20th TEMM (Suzhou, China, June 2018).

18. To address the regional challenge of dust and sandstorms (DSS), trilateral endeavors at different levels, including DSS Directors-General Meeting, DSS Steering Committee Meeting, Working Group I (WGI) on monitoring, forecast and early warning, Working Group II (WGII) on prevention and control, and Joint Workshop between the two Working Groups were organized to enhance exchange and cooperation in DSS monitoring and assessment technology. A total of 14 WGI and 13 WGII have been held, and both working groups have set Mid-term Action Plan for 2020-2024. The DSS online portal was also launched for information and data sharing. At the 8th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Chengdu, China, December 2019), the three leaders approved the *Early Harvest Projects of Trilateral + X Cooperation*, with Trilateral + Mongolia in sandstorm prevention and control as one project.
19. Thirteen seminars on Sound Material-Cycle Society/Circular Economy/3R and Transboundary Movement of E-Waste had been held by 2019. Notable progress has been made in alignment of circular economy policies, transboundary movement of e-waste, disaster waste management, and city waste recycling. A hotline liaison mechanism for e-waste transfer has been set up and played an important role in facilitating information exchange and cooperation on transboundary movement of e-waste. Relevant agencies in the three countries also jointly organized the Basel Forum for Asia to forge a unified research network for research institutions in the Asia-Pacific region.

IV

Promotion of Friendly Relations through Expansion of Human and Cultural Exchange and Cooperation

20. Capturing the spirit of “friendship and amity” outlined in the *Trilateral Cooperation Vision 2020* through upscaling people-to-people exchange among the three countries, the *Joint Statement of the 5th Trilateral Tourism Ministers’ Meeting* (TTMM; Hangzhou, China, August 2010) specified consensus on further enriching trilateral tourism cooperation “to inject new vigor into East Asia’s harmony, stability, and development and bring fruitful benefits.” The Joint Statements in the following TTMMs further incorporated specific plans to assure creditworthy tourism, elevate service quality and travel convenience, facilitate security management, and protect the environment. A joint tourism project dubbed the “Visit East Asia Campaign” was launched in 2015 to attract visitors from the regions beyond Asia upon agreement at the 7th TTMM (Tokyo, Japan, April 2015). The Symposium on Educational Travel, which was incorporated into the TTMM framework in 2016, provided an additional effective platform to boost youth exchange in education and tourism and attracted an average of 200-300 participants from the three countries. In 2018, the total volume of exchange visits among the three countries surpassed 30 million, achieving the goal set in the *Joint Declaration for Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia* during the 6th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Seoul, ROK, November 2015) two years ahead of schedule. The 9th TTMM (Incheon, ROK, September 2019) reiterated the common commitment to promoting peace, realizing inclusive growth, and leading the future of the Northeast Asian region through tourism exchange.
21. Trilateral cultural friendship exchange at the local government level has enjoyed sound momentum under the auspices of the Trilateral Culture Ministers’ Meeting (TCMM) which was regularized in 2011. Based on the principle of “Peaceful Friendship, Equal Reciprocity, Strengthened Cooperation, and Joint Development,” the *Shanghai Action Plan (2012-2014)* launched a series of far-reaching joint projects such as the Culture City of East Asia (CCEA), Trilateral Arts Festival, Trilateral Cultural Content Industry Forum, and the Trilateral Culture Arts Education Forum. Launched in 2014, the CCEA seeks to facilitate exchange and cultural development cooperation between culture-rich cities in the three countries. It has become a signature platform to mutually promote understanding among the three peoples. It has also reached beyond the region by interacting with ASEAN Cities of Culture and European Capitals of Culture as agreed on at the 6th ASEAN+3 Culture Ministers’ Meeting (Hue, Viet Nam, April 2014). Local governments in the three countries also strengthened ties through multi-layered initiatives and frameworks such as the Trilateral Local Government Exchange Conference, Organization for the East Asia Economic Development, Yellow Sea Rim Economic and Technological Conference, and the Korea-Japan-China Trilateral Cooperation Workshop for Public Officials. To optimally contribute, the TCS has vigorously

engaged in local trilateral government cooperation by co-hosting the Crested Ibis International Forum and publishing the *Research Report on China-Japan-Korea Local City Exchange*.

At the same time, the Trilateral Cultural Exchange Forum has firmly contributed to enhancing exchange among cultural intellectuals and figures in the three countries. The TCS has been making efforts to enhance people's recognition of Chinese characters as a shared common culture by publishing and updating the *Trilateral Common Vocabulary Dictionary* (TCVD) since 2018. The TCS has also been contributing to advancing cooperation and people-to-people exchanges in the field of cultural industry by supporting the China-Japan-Korea TV Producers' Forum and hosting the Asia International Youth Film Festival (AIYFF) in cooperation with cultural institutions in the three countries.

22. The 6th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Seoul, ROK, November 2015) started the Trilateral Education Ministers' Meeting (TEDMM), and it has been convened three times by 2020. Reaffirmation of the continuation of the CAMPUS Asia program, a university level exchange program involving the three countries launched in 2012, has remained consistent throughout all three TEDMM statements. The China-Japan-ROK Committee for Promoting Exchange and Cooperation among Universities, an intergovernmental expert committee dating back to 2009, continued to hold regular conferences throughout the decade to promote dialogue between Educational Ministries, national higher education quality assurance organizations, CAMPUS Asia universities, and the private sector. In 2016, the three countries welcomed the inaugural hosting of the Trilateral Rector's Forum aiming to facilitate communication between heads of CAMPUS Asia Universities. TCS has continued to support such efforts by developing the CAMPUS Asia Alumni Network.

Youth exchange beyond the classroom has also witnessed steady growth. The TEDMM has continuously rendered support to youth exchange programs such as the China-Japan-ROK Children's Story Exchange Program and the China-Japan-ROK College Students Exchange Program. The TCS has played an active role in this field by implementing its own projects such as the annual Young Ambassador Program to bring emerging youth leaders from the three countries together. Over the decade, the TCS has also increased its involvement in existing programs such as the Asia International Youth Film Festival (AIYFF) and the Trilateral Youth Summit while creating new partnerships with other organizations to further strengthen these programs. The TCS has publicized the findings and results of youth exchange programs such as the CJK Youth Dialogue via various publications.

23. Through 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics, and 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the three countries enhanced trilateral sports cooperation. The Trilateral Sports Ministers' Meeting (TSMM) was newly launched in 2016 and hosted by the governments of the ROK, Japan, and China consecutively by 2020. As reiterated in the TSMM outcomes the *Pyeongchang Declaration*, *Tokyo Action Plan*, and *Beijing Action Plan*, the three countries

carried out concrete action to enhance the Olympic and Paralympic legacy, develop the sports industry, and revitalize sports tourism through joint efforts. Existing cooperative ties among the three countries in athletics were strengthened throughout the decade. The Trilateral Junior Sports Exchange Meet continued to be hosted annually on a rotational basis by each of the three countries to deepen mutual understanding among younger generations through sports exchange. Around 1000 high school students from the three countries participated in competitive games and various cultural tour events. As a follow-up to the 7th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Tokyo, Japan, May 2018), the TCS organized the Korea-Japan-China Olympic Road Photo Exhibition and Talk Concert Forum and invited Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

24. Increased focus on human security has lifted health cooperation to an especially significant area of Trilateral Cooperation. The three countries have been significantly enhancing policy dialogue, experience sharing, and personnel exchange in areas of communicable diseases, clinical research, health emergency preparedness and response, food safety, non-communicable diseases, aging populations, and application of information technology in the healthcare sector through various forms of cooperative consultation including the Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting (THMM), Trilateral Forum on Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, Trilateral Symposium on Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, Trilateral Population Policy Forum, and others. During the pandemic, the Special Video Conference of THMM on the COVID-19 Response and the 13th THMM were held in May and December respectively, reiterating joint efforts on effective COVID-19 prevention and control, diagnosis, treatment, and vaccination. With firm support from the Ministries, the TCS published the *10th Anniversary Booklet on Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting* in 2017 to commemorate the sustainable development and invaluable outcomes of the THMM. The TCS also hosted a webinar "Managing the COVID-19 Pandemic – Experiences & Best Practices of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea" in July 2020, bringing together leading experts from the three countries working on the frontlines of COVID-19 response to share best practices and experience accumulated in curbing and preventing the spread of the virus.
25. The three countries have been making efforts to cooperate in public personnel administration and human capital management and development. Three rounds of the Heads Meeting of Personnel Authorities and seven rounds of the Symposium on Personnel Administration were held throughout the Decade to discuss and share relevant policies and practices. Furthermore, nine rounds of the Joint Training Program for Young/Middle-Level Public Employees were held to promote mutual understanding and friendship among public employees in the three countries.

Joint Efforts on Regional and International Peace and Stability

26. Peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula as well as in Northeast Asia are the common interest and shared responsibility of the three countries. The three countries have been maintaining close communications on the Northeast Asia situation and remain devoted to safeguarding regional peace and stability through multiple level dialogues and consultations. The view that a denuclearized Korean Peninsula would greatly contribute to enduring peace, security, and economic prosperity in this region is shared by all three countries. Despite the prolonged pause of the Six-Party Talks since 2007, the three countries have invested greatly in achieving substantial progress in denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner, implementing international obligations and commitments under relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and firmly preventing any provocative action that could cause tension on the Korean Peninsula. In May 2018, a special outcome of the 7th Trilateral Summit Meeting was leaders of the three countries issuing a *Joint Statement on the 2018 Inter-Korean Summit* and welcoming the *Panmunjeom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula* agreed upon by President Moon Jae-in and Chairman Kim Jong Un at the historic 2018 Inter-Korean Summit. Such efforts have demonstrated that further efforts by relevant parties will contribute to comprehensive resolution of concerns of the parties in the name of peace and stability in the region.
27. Recognizing that malicious cyber activities, terrorism, and violent extremism pose grave threats to international security, the three countries have endeavored to formulate a joint response by strengthening trilateral policy consultation on cyber affairs including countering cybercrime as well as on countering terrorism and violent extremism. Reaffirming the importance of collectively addressing security issues related to the use of ICTs, the three countries are committed to ensuring a secure ICT environment in which all sectors are able to enjoy its benefits. Under the auspices of the 3rd Trilateral Summit Meeting (Jeju, ROK, May 2010), four Counter-Terrorism Consultations were held between 2011 and 2016 with the three Foreign Ministries hosting on a rotational basis. These meetings have touched on pressing issues around the anti-terrorism situation in vulnerable regions, cooperation to fight piracy, joint response to cyber security, and measures to counter/prevent violent extremism. Trilateral Cyber Policy Consultation Dialogues were also held from 2013 to 2020, through which the three sides exchanged views on cyber policy, regional and international issues and future cooperation in the context of trilateral partnership.
28. As part of the global process to address long-standing international and transboundary issues such as drug-related crimes, food security, poverty and hunger, infectious diseases, and animal diseases, the three countries have made joint efforts by leveraging Trilateral Cooperation mechanisms and expanding the cooperative spectrum to include the Trilateral Counter-Terrorism Meeting,

Trilateral Consultation among Police Authorities, Tripartite Customs Heads' Meeting, Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting, Trilateral Agricultural Ministers' Meeting, and others.

29. Alongside multilayered tripartite cooperation, the three countries have maintained smooth communications and collaborations under important regional frameworks including ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS), and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Firmly supporting ASEAN centrality in East Asia cooperation, the three countries have been making endeavors for supporting the development of an ASEAN Community.

As important global powers, each of the three countries have also been working together on global challenges and on creating an open world economy by coordinating with each other in international fora such as the United Nations (UN), Group of Twenty (G20) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The three countries share the view that the role of the UN should be further strengthened and that efforts to reform the UN should be strengthened to enhance its authority, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Accepting major responsibility to safeguard world peace and prosperity, the three countries have expressed willingness to work with others to pursue a nuclear-weapon-free world that promotes international stability under the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* and share the view that strengthening Trilateral Cooperation on non-proliferation is necessary for regional and international peace and security. In this vein, the three countries shared the idea to establish a Trilateral Consultation on Non-Proliferation and have been committed to continuing to work together to improve nuclear security including cooperation between their Centers of Excellence on nuclear security at the 6th Trilateral Summit Meeting (Seoul, ROK, November 2015).

Outlook for the Next Decade

30. To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Trilateral Cooperation at the end of the decade, leaders of the three held the 8th Trilateral Summit meeting in Chengdu, China, in December 2019, during which they adopted the new 10-year blueprint *Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade* (the Document), setting out the direction and priorities of Trilateral Cooperation with perspectives like “work together to improve trilateral cooperation,” “maintain durable peace and security,” “advocate open and win-win cooperation,” “lead the scientific and technological revolution,” “enhance regional connectivity and infrastructure cooperation,” “reaffirm commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” “promote mutual learning in fields of culture and people-to-people exchange,” and “achieve overall revitalization and common development.”

Sharing the view that the next decade will bring profound changes in the international community, emergence of new global growth drivers, and rapid advance of the scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, leaders used the document to reaffirm plans to engage in Trilateral Cooperation from a long-term and strategic perspective and develop a future-oriented cooperation model featuring peace, friendship, and mutual benefits that serves as a platform for peace, stability, and regional cooperation as well as an important force for world development and prosperity.

The Document outlined the three countries’ efforts to enhance communication on strategic issues and political mutual trust in the spirit of mutual respect, managing differences, and developing long-term relations featuring peace and friendship. Reaffirming common interest and responsibility for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula as well as in Northeast Asia, the three countries have continued endeavors towards complete denuclearization and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula through international cooperation including dialogue and diplomacy seeking comprehensive resolution to satisfy the concerns of all parties in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

Upholding the spirit of free trade and multilateralism to enforce existing international rules and ensure a level playing field to foster an enabling business environment, the Document reaffirmed the three countries’ support for the necessary reform of the World Trade Organization to improve its function and accelerating negotiations on a Trilateral FTA to realize a comprehensive, high-quality, and mutually beneficial Trilateral FTA with major value. It also encourages more tripartite cooperation among local governments as well as enterprises through existing mechanisms.

Seizing the historical moment of the Olympic and Paralympic Games held successively in the three countries in East Asia each with unique cultural traditions, the Document reaffirmed commitment to exchange activities that promote people-to-people engagement in fields of sports, culture, education, and tourism to enhance understanding and trust among peoples and lay a stable, healthy, and friendly social foundation for Trilateral Cooperation. The Document noted the importance of science and innovation such as the digital economy and telecommunication in addressing common regional and global issues and suggested enhancing regional connectivity and infrastructure cooperation, including transport and logistics areas, to achieve sustainable growth and development. “Trilateral+X” cooperation will be advanced by jointly making plans and taking collective action of the three countries to expand cooperation with other countries and help narrow regional development gaps.

31. Trilateral Cooperation has progressed amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The 8th China-Japan-Korea Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics (June 2020), the 21st TRIPO Heads Meeting (November 2021), the 13th Top Regulators’ Meeting on Nuclear Safety (November 2021), the 9th Consultative Meeting on Consumer Policy (December 2021), and the 22nd Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM; December 2021), were all held remotely in the second half of 2021, renewing direction and plans for tripartite pragmatic cooperation in each field.

To address the impact of the pandemic on international logistics specifically, the 8th China-Japan-Korea Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics set “Promotion of a Resilient Logistics Network” as a new major goal to replace “Achievement of Balance between Security and Efficiency of Logistics,” and rearranged the Action Plans accordingly.

The 22nd TEMM adopted *Tripartite Joint Action Plan* for the period from 2021 to 2025, through which the three sides agreed to promote joint activities to improve linkage of Priority Areas and promote interdependence across the goals and targets of SDGs in a way that maximizes synergy. The 22nd TEMM emphasized strengthening collaboration in broader multilateral environmental processes and expanding Trilateral Cooperation by exploring the possibility of “Trilateral+X” cooperation. The three Ministers agreed to encourage close cooperation among the three countries in the context of the UN Environment Assembly, Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD/COP), and Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Implemented in five-year modes, the CAMPUS Asia program successfully completed its second session in 2020 involving 39 universities and 17 different programs. The year 2021 marked a new chapter for the CAMPUS Asia program. In its third mode which runs until 2025, the program expanded to include ASEAN universities. Going forward, the CAMPUS Asia program will further live up to its name by promoting university exchange among 67 universities and 20 different programs spanning both Northeast and Southeast Asia.

Parallel efforts to conclude the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which entered into force in 2022 helped set a milestone for the regional economic integration of China, Japan, and Korea with ASEAN member states, Australia, and New Zealand. The RCEP is expected to lift trilateral economic cooperation to a new level by significantly reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers, strengthening supply chains, and enhancing mutual exchange. As highlighted in the Document, the three countries remain resolute in their commitments described in the *2019 Joint Leader's Statement on RCEP* and expect RCEP to boost business confidence, benefit consumers, reinforce the RCEP region's contribution to global growth, deepen regional economic integration, and promote equitable economic development for all participating countries.

32. The 6th TCS Consultative Board consisting of a Secretary-General and two Deputy Secretaries-General was formed in September 2021 when the new decade had just arrived and TCS had just entered its 2nd decade of development. Against the backdrop of the “New Normal” brought by the pandemic as well as the dynamics of the regional and international landscape, the TCS has been rethinking its role in the context of the trilateral relationship and readjusting and planning in short- and long-term perspectives under the banner of “lasting peace, common prosperity, and shared future.” In the future, the TCS will do all it can to meet its mandates to support intergovernmental dialogues and consultations and enhance mutual understanding and perceptions across the three countries to contribute to the formulation of a friendly and future-oriented trilateral relationship and lasting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Appendix.

List of Trilateral Summit Meetings and Ministerial Meetings 2011-2020



2011

Date	Title	Venue
1/14	5 th Trilateral ICT Ministerial Meeting	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
1/18~20	3 rd Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Nara, Japan
3/19	5 th Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting	Kyoto, Japan
4/24	8 th Trilateral Economy and Trade Ministers' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
4/28~29	13 th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting	Busan, ROK
5/4	11 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' Meeting	Hanoi, Vietnam
5/22	4th Trilateral Summit Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
5/28~31	6 th Trilateral Tourism Ministers' Meeting	Pyeongchang, ROK
7/29	3 rd Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Jeju, ROK
9/1	14 th Meeting of the Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions	Istanbul, Turkey
10/28	2 nd Trilateral Heads of Government Agency Meeting on Disaster Management	Beijing, China
11/11	4 th Tripartite Customs Heads' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
11/13	5 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Qingdao, China
12/16	11 th Trilateral Policy Dialogue Meeting of Intellectual Property Offices	Gyeongju, ROK

2012

Date	Title	Venue
2/1	15 th Trilateral Meeting of the Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions	Jaipur, India
3/13	1 st Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Water Resources	Marseille, France
4/8	6 th Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting	Ningbo, China
4/14~15	1 st Trilateral Agricultural Ministers' Meeting	Jeju, ROK
4/28	3 rd Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation	Shanghai, China
5/3	12 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting	Manila, the Philippines
5/3~4	14 th Tripartite Environment Ministers' Meeting	Beijing, China
5/4~6	4 th Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Shanghai, China
5/12	9 th Trilateral Economy and Trade Ministers' Meeting	Beijing, China
5/13	5th Trilateral Summit Meeting	Beijing, China
7/16	4 th China-Japan-Korea Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics	Busan, ROK
8/1	4 th Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Dalian, China
11/7	12 th Trilateral Policy Dialogue Meeting of Intellectual Property Offices	Wuxi, China

2013

Date	Title	Venue
5/5~6	15 th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting	Kitakyushu, Japan
6/23	5 th Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Basel, Switzerland
9/27~28	5 th Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Gwangju, ROK
10/30	3 rd Trilateral Heads of Government Agency Meeting on Disaster Management	Seoul, ROK
11/14	13 th Trilateral Policy Dialogue Meeting of Intellectual Property Offices	Sapporo, Japan
11/24	6 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Seoul, ROK

2014

Date	Title	Venue
4/28~29	16 th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting	Daegu, ROK
6/29	6 th Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Basel, Switzerland
8/24	5 th China-Japan-Korea Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics	Yokohama, Japan
9/19	13 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting	Cairns, Australia
9/1	16 th Trilateral Meeting of the Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions	Moscow, Russia
11/10	14 th Trilateral Policy Dialogue Meeting of Intellectual Property Offices	Seoul, ROK
11/23	7 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Beijing, China
11/29~30	6 th Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Yokohama, Japan

2015

Date	Title	Venue
2/1	17 th Trilateral Meeting of the Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
3/21	7 th Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting	Seoul, ROK
4/11~12	7 th Trilateral Tourism Ministers' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
4/13	2 nd Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Water Resources	Gyeongju, ROK
4/29~30	17 th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting	Shanghai, China
5/3	14 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting	Baku, Azerbaijan
9/1	7 th Heads Meeting of Personnel Authorities	Seoul, ROK
9/4	7 th Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Ankara, Turkey
9/12~13	2 nd Trilateral Agricultural Ministers' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
10/8	15 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting	Lima, Peru
10/28	4 th Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management	Tokyo, Japan
10/30	10 th Trilateral Economy and Trade Ministers' Meeting	Seoul, ROK
10/31	5 th Tripartite Customs Heads' Meeting	Seoul, ROK
11/1	6th Trilateral Summit Meeting	Seoul, ROK
11/17	15 th Trilateral Policy Dialogue Meeting of Intellectual Property Offices	Guangzhou, China
11/29	8 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Kyoto, Japan
12/19~20	7 th Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Qingdao, China

2016

Date	Title	Venue
1/30	1 st Trilateral Education Ministers' Meeting	Seoul, ROK
4/26~27	18 th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting	Shizuoka, Japan
5/3	16 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting	Frankfurt, Germany
7/28	6 th China-Japan-Korea Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics	Hangzhou, China
8/24	8 th Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
8/27~28	8 th Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Jeju, ROK
9/22~23	1 st Trilateral Sports Ministers' Meeting	Pyeongchang, ROK
10/11	8 th Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Tokyo, Japan
10/29	11 th Trilateral Economy and Trade Ministers' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
12/4	9 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Busan, ROK
12/8	16 th Trilateral Policy Dialogue Meeting of Intellectual Property Offices	Kanagawa, Japan

2017

Date	Title	Venue
5/5	17 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Governors' Meeting	Yokohama, Japan
8/24~25	19 th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting	Suwon, ROK
8/25~26	9 th Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Kyoto, Japan
9/7	5 th Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management	Tangshan, China
9/13~14	9 th Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Incheon, Korea
11/11~12	10 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Jinan, China
11/30	6 th Tripartite Customs Heads' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
12/6	17 th TRIPO Heads Meeting among KIPO, SIPO and JPO	Jeju, ROK

2018

Date	Title	Venue
3/19	3 rd Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Water Resources	Brasilia, Brazil
3/21	2 nd Trilateral Education Ministers' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
5/4	18 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting	Manila, the Philippines
5/9	7th Trilateral Summit Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
5/28	6 th Trilateral ICT Ministerial Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
6/23-24	20 th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting	Suzhou, China
6/18	7 th China-Japan-Korea Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics	Seoul, ROK
8/30	10 th Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Harbin, China
9/13	2 nd Trilateral Sports Ministers' Meeting	Tokyo, Japan
9/18	18 th Trilateral Meeting of the Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions	Hanoi, Vietnam
10/26~27	8 th Trilateral Tourism Ministers' Meeting	Suzhou, China
11/10	3 rd Trilateral Agricultural Ministers' Meeting	Beijing, China
11/24	10 th Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Tianjin, China
11/24-25	11 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Kumamoto, Japan
12/13	18 th TRIPO Heads Meeting	Wuhan, China

2019

Date	Title	Venue
5/2	19 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting	Nadi, Fiji
6/10	11 th Tripartite Governors' Meeting among the Central Banks	Fukuoka, Japan
8/21	9 th Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting	Beijing, China
8/30	11 th Trilateral Culture Ministers' Meeting	Incheon, ROK
8/30	9 th Trilateral Tourism Ministers' Meeting	Incheon, ROK
9/5	8 th Heads Meeting of Personnel Authorities	Sapporo, Japan
9/26	19 th Trilateral Meeting of the Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions	Moscow, Russia
11/23-24	21 st Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting	Kitakyushu, Japan
12/4	19 th TRIPO Heads Meeting	Kobe, Japan
12/5	6 th Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management	Seoul, ROK
12/14-15	12 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Seoul, ROK
12/22	12 th Trilateral Economic and Trade Ministers' Meeting	Beijing, China
12/24	8th Trilateral Summit Meeting	Chengdu, China
12/26	4 th Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation	Seoul, ROK

2020

Date	Title	Venue
1/10	3 rd Trilateral Education Ministers' Meeting	Beijing, China
3/20	China-Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Video Teleconference on COVID-19	Online
5/15	Special Video Conference of Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Response	Online
6/29	Special Session of the 8 th China-Japan-Korea Ministerial Conference on Transport and Logistics	Online
9/18	20 th Trilateral Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting	Online
12/1	20 th TRIPO Heads Meeting	Online
12/11	13 th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting	Online
12/24	3 rd Trilateral Sports Ministers' Meeting	Online

Part II.

In Dialogue with China-Japan-ROK Citizens



ZHANG Yunling



- Academy Member of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
 - Chair Professor, Shandong University
 - Director of Institute of International Studies, Shandong University
 - Chairman, Academic Committee of School of Northeast Asia Studies, Shandong University
-

This interview was originally given in written form in Chinese, and translated into English.

TCS

How did you become familiar with the Trilateral Cooperation?

ZHANG Yunling

I have long been studying and participating in the process of East Asian cooperation and have been following the progress of Northeast Asian cooperation closely, from the national leaders' trilateral breakfast meeting to the launch of the cooperation agenda for separate meetings among the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea; from the release of the joint statement on Trilateral Cooperation to the subsequent cooperation process. I was involved in the feasibility study on the China-Japan-ROK Free Trade Zone. I also published numerous papers and monographs on Trilateral Cooperation.

TCS

What impressed you most as you were engaged in the process of Trilateral Cooperation?

ZHANG Yunling

The three countries in Northeast Asia are the economic powerhouses of East Asia. The close economic ties they have developed among them have enhanced mutual understanding and laid the foundation for their common interests. However, given the complicated history and realities of the three countries, the timing and specific conditions are essential to government-led cooperation. The Asian financial crisis in 1997 brought China, Japan, and Korea into joint participation in a regional framework in the form of "ASEAN+3" which has provided motivation for the three countries to strengthen cooperation. From breakfast meetings to the separate meetings under the framework of "ASEAN+3" and to cooperation meetings held among the three countries, Trilateral Cooperation is gradually taking form and solidifying. The first cooperation declaration issued by the three countries turned the page of a new chapter in the relationship and brought a new light to the Northeast Asian region. The cooperation-oriented tripartite dialogue is highly significant. Dialogue and cooperation on an equal footing is the most significant change in the relations among the three countries, which will help foster a new order in Northeast Asia for the future. However,

the process of tripartite dialogue and cooperation has been interrupted occasionally by strains in bilateral relations and has not been resumed at the moment. Improvement of bilateral relations is a precondition for deepening cooperation among the three countries. For complex reasons, solid bilateral relations have not yet emerged from the shadow of history. While the three countries have reached considerable cooperative consensus and formulated various cooperation plans, political relations have impeded the implementation with many difficulties. Uneased confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, intensified strategic competition between the United States and China, and the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine crisis have all brought new challenges for the Trilateral Cooperation. The trilateral summit meeting has been suspended for two years. There is a lack of motivation for boosting cooperation on multiple issues. The three countries are now facing urgent issues as whether and how to make Trilateral Cooperation sustainable and continue to achieve fruitful results. If we do not forge ahead, we will fall back. Preventing the loss of hard-earned results of cooperation requires political wisdom and determination from the governments of all three countries, especially their leaders.

TCS

What do you think makes the Trilateral Cooperation significant to China, Japan and Korea as well as to the region and the world at large?

ZHANG Yunling

China, Japan and Korea have endured painful times in modern history. The historical pains are hard to heal despite the passing of times. We therefore need to look at the future, enhance mutual understanding and increase common interests through cooperation. An amicable relationship among the three countries is a prerequisite for the stability of Northeast Asia. Only cooperation among the three countries will foster sustainable peace and development in Northeast Asia. Northeast Asia is both the center of the world economy and a region full of instability and potential conflicts and danger. As the world is undergoing tremendous changes, the stability of China-Japan-ROK relations and the cooperation among them are vital for Northeast Asia, East Asia, and the world at large.

The biggest issue facing Northeast Asia is peace and development, and peace is the key. The world today is not at peace. The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine crisis reminds us that peace in Northeast Asia, especially on the Korean Peninsula, is highly fragile. Cooperation among China, Japan and Korea is vitally important, as it can be a catalyst for better cooperation in the whole region of Northeast Asia. Therefore regional peace effort needs to be prioritized in the cooperation among China, Japan and Korea. The premise is that the three countries need to build bilateral and trilateral relations based on trust. Only through cooperation can the dynamism of development of the three countries be ensured. And peace can only be maintained through cooperation.

China, Japan and Korea all have different national interests and different foreign relations. However, since they want to cooperate, they must seek common ground while respecting each

other's differences and remember that cooperation is the way and the overall goal. The historical burden on China, Japan and Korea is heavy and that can only be relieved gradually and through cooperation. Some disputes may not be completely resolved in the near future, but they should never become the reason for a breakdown of relations or even conflict.

The biggest challenge is how Japan and Korea can balance their alliance with the United States and their close ties with China as a neighbor while the United States is engaging in all-out strategic competition with China. The rise of China is a reality, now and in the future. Getting along with a strong China is crucial for Japan and Korea, and building a relationship featuring co-existence and win-win results through cooperation is a common goal of all three countries. Maybe we can think about it in another way: improve bilateral relations through Trilateral Cooperation, instead of waiting to start Trilateral Cooperation only after bilateral relations have improved.

TCS

In which areas do you think the Trilateral Cooperation should be strengthened in the coming decade to further benefit the people of the three countries and beyond?

ZHANG Yunling

1. China, Japan and Korea have shared interests, the basis of which is common peace and development. Peace is the key factor. To achieve it we must avoid conflict and build a peace mechanism. We should reach consensus and issue a peace statement for the 21st century. Cooperation and development serve as the foundation. Current and future development depends on the evolution of new technologies. The three countries should strengthen cooperation in new technologies and overcome the adverse impact of U.S. strategic competition with China. Efforts are needed to build a motivation mechanism for a Northeast Asia economic zone centered on Trilateral Cooperation as well as a new technology cooperative network to make Northeast Asia a source of vitality for the economic development of East Asia and the Asia-Pacific. The economic relationship among China, Japan and Korea is transforming while new technology-oriented economic links and supply chain networks will hold a key position. Therefore, the three countries need to give strong support to enterprises.
2. Accelerate negotiations on the China-Japan-ROK FTA and reach a consensus on signing a high-level open and cooperative FTA document based on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). RCEP serves as a foundation for the three countries to accelerate negotiations on the FTA. If a high-level free trade area agreement is achieved, it would help RCEP further increase openness and cooperation.
3. Strengthen the development of functional cooperative mechanisms to make cooperation sustainable and ensure that the cooperation process is not weakened or interrupted by conflicts that arise. Apart from economic cooperation, cooperation in public health, socio-cultural affairs, and education should also be strengthened, and a permanent cooperation mechanism should

be established. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen exchange and mutual understanding between citizens of the three countries, enhance mutual recognition, and promote friendly relations among the people of the three countries.

4. Northeast Asia is facing severe security challenges. The Korean Peninsula is still mired in dangerous confrontation. Summit Meetings among the leaders of the three countries should focus on political relations and security cooperation with a view to reaching consensus and promoting common security.
5. Freight transport among China, Japan, and Korea is mainly by sea. To realize interconnectivity, efforts should be made to develop port networks, facilitate customs clearance certification, and build green channels and electronic systems for customs clearance, quarantine, and certification of place of origin. Cooperation should be strengthened to promote connectivity in Northeast Asia. For this purpose and especially from a long-term perspective, it is necessary to push for and facilitate an agenda on connectivity cooperation in Northeast Asia.

TCS

From your perspective, what more should be done (by both governmental and non-governmental sectors) to further improve the Trilateral Cooperation?

ZHANG Yunling

1. The most important thing is to ensure that Summit Meetings will not be interrupted and will resume as soon as possible. Political consensus is the most important guarantee for Trilateral Cooperation, and should not come to a halt due to changes in leadership. Now that both Japan and Korea have new national leaders, we need to seize the opportunity to resume the summit meeting.
2. Efforts should be made to improve mutual perception among the general public of the three countries. The present low recognition is not conducive to the development of relations among the three countries. When the epidemic is over, multiple measures need to be taken to expand exchange and cooperation among the three countries.
3. The functions of the TCS especially in agenda setting and project planning, should be strengthened to provide greater intellectual support for Trilateral Cooperation.
4. Educational cooperation among the three countries should be strengthened through several efforts: Set up China-Japan-ROK youth and student exchange programs to expand the scale of student exchange, establish a China-Japan-ROK mechanism for exchange of middle school students, and promote exchange and cooperation between university laboratories.

MUKUTA Satoshi



- Senior Managing Director, Keidanren

This interview was originally given in written form in Japanese, and translated into English.

TCS

How did you become familiar with the Trilateral Cooperation?

MUKUTA Satoshi

The Japan Federation of Economic Organizations (Keidanren) deploys activities for enhancing economic ties with overseas countries and regions, through dialogues with the governments, economic organizations and international organizations. Specifically, we have established regional and bilateral committees and have been promoting civil economic diplomacy, including dispatching mission teams, holding joint committees, and meeting with senior government officials.

For example, with regards to China, we collaborate with the China Center for International Economic Exchanges (CCIEE) to annually organize the “Japan-China CEO and Former Senior Officials’ Dialogue (Japan-China CEO Summit) since 2015, in order to foster interaction and cooperation between the business communities of the two countries. With Korea, we host Business Summit with the Federation of Korean Industries and exchange opinions for deepening and enhancing our economic relationship.

In light of such developments, in October 2009, Keidanren convened the 1st Trilateral Business Summit with the Chinese and Korean economic organizations, with the presence of the leaders of the three countries, so as to contribute to the promotion of interaction through the framework of Trilateral Cooperation.

As the Executive Director of Keidanren in charge of Asia Pacific Region, I have participated in various ways in the Trilateral Cooperation frameworks, including the 2015 Trilateral Business Networking Reception in April 2015, where I had an opportunity to make a speech titled “Towards the Conclusion of Trilateral FTA”.

TCS

What impressed you most as you were engaged in the process of Trilateral Cooperation?

MUKUTA Satoshi

As mentioned previously, the economic organizations of Japan, China and Korea hosted the Trilateral Business Summits, in alignment with the schedule of the Trilateral Summit Meetings, and invited the leaders of the three countries to interact with the business communities. From the 1st Summit held in 2009, the Business Summits were held every year at the timing of the Trilateral Summit Meetings until the 4th Business Summit in 2012. Since then, somewhat due to the political and diplomatic atmosphere among the three countries, we had some intervals before the 5th Summit held in 2015 and the 6th in 2018. The last Summit, the 7th, was in 2019.

For myself, the 6th Trilateral Business Summit, hosted by Keidanren in Tokyo in 2018, was the most impressive experience. As we were inviting the leaders of the three countries, who had met for the first time in 3 years, we were determined to “demonstrate the strong ties between the Japanese, Chinese and Korean business communities to the leaders, and turn this opportunity into the development of a stable and future-oriented political and diplomatic relationship among the three countries”. In a strain where you can’t afford to fail, the Heads of the business communities of the three countries handed the outcome document of the Trilateral Business Summit to the leaders, and the participants were able to share the fruit of the meeting with smiles on their face. I can easily recall, as if it were yesterday, that I was filled with relief and the sense of accomplishment to see the scene.

TCS

What do you think makes the Trilateral Cooperation significant to China, Japan and Korea as well as to the region and the world at large?

MUKUTA Satoshi

In addition to their geographic proximity, Japan, China and Korea have deemed each other as important neighbors and expanded interchanges in a wide range of areas, including politics, diplomacy, economy, and culture, developing a close and mutually beneficial relationship over time. Particularly in the field of economy, the countries form a complementary framework, and through intensive exchange in trade and investment as well as cooperation in third-country markets, they have become irreplaceable partners for each other. They are essential players and contributors for the global market that constitute an advanced supply chain. As such, the world counts on the three countries, as powerful Asian countries with remarkable growth, to lead the continuous global growth and share the outcome with other countries universally. Also, as beneficiaries from the global trade and investment, the three countries are expected to play a leading role in the maintenance and enhancement of a free and open international economic order.

This year, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement, which aims to achieve the liberalization of trade and investment in the Asia Pacific region, has come into effect. This is the first time that Japan, China and Korea participate together in such initiative. The Agreement has profound significance for the enhancement of the relationship among the three

countries, and also may largely contribute to the development of the global economy. On the other hand, a number of issues on a global scale, such as global warming, spread of infectious diseases including the COVID-19, securing resources and energies, and the response to natural disasters, are emerging in recent years. Those are problems that a country alone cannot cope with. I believe the world counts on the three countries to cooperate to resolve such issues through consistent innovation.

Beside the governments, the private sectors can also play an important role in the Trilateral Cooperation. I strongly believe that, as the governments and companies of the three countries combine their prominent technologies, talents, and insight/experience and collaborate across industries, we will be able to resolve issues and create new business opportunities.

The 21st Century is said to be the era of Asia. I believe that the three countries are expected to cooperate with ASEAN etc., to drive the development of the region.

TCS

In which areas do you think the Trilateral Cooperation should be strengthened in the coming decade to further benefit the people of the three countries and beyond?

MUKUTA Satoshi

I think there are diverse areas for potential collaboration/cooperation for Japan, China and Korea to address economic and social issues in both domestic and international spheres.

Today, the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which consists of 17 global goals and 169 targets, has become a key issue for the international society. For example, the national strategies such as the “Society 5.0” driven by Japan, the Chinese “Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation” and “Internet Plus”, and the “Plan for the Fourth Industrial Revolution” implemented by Korea, will together lead a continuous economic growth through the digital revolution, address global challenges, and contribute to the achievement of SDGs. We, the business community, will pursue effective ways to cooperate in a wide range of areas, including the digital revolution.

Environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity and marine pollution are global issues that impact multiple countries and regions and cannot be addressed by a single country or region. Especially on the climate change issues, I believe that Japan, China and Korea are strongly expected to put their efforts together, align with necessary and appropriate measures and plans, and take swift actions. Regarding the carbon neutrality, Japan and Korea have committed to their achievements by 2050, whereas China pledged the achievement by 2060. The three countries need to establish a long-term collaboration/cooperation with a forward-looking approach. Needless to say, it is essential that the business, public and academic sectors of the three countries share

their knowledge and insight on issues such as promoting low-carbon, environmental-friendly and circular production and lifestyle, and work toward a sustainable development.

In addition, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the society has made a shift to on-line working and communication, which resulted in an increasing global focus on the vast potential of technologies, including non-contact technology. Japan, China and Korea are major innovative countries, and the innovation will be the driving force for the improvement of the quality and efficiency of economy, transformation of the economic growth patterns, efficient use of resources and energies, and positive changes in the environment.

Also, Japan, China and Korea are facing the low birth rate and aging population, ahead of the rest of the world. The world expects the three countries to collaborate/cooperate to be the pioneers in developing solutions for this challenge. As the three countries share their best practices and carry out specific cooperation initiatives among enterprises regarding medical/healthcare products and services, I believe we will make a substantial progress towards resolving the issue.

TCS

From your perspective, what more should be done (by both governmental and non-governmental sectors) to further improve the Trilateral Cooperation?

MUKUTA Satoshi

Japan, China and Korea will need to maintain communication in every sector and layer, in private sectors as well as in governmental level.

At the governmental level, high-level exchanges that include country leaders, such as the Trilateral Summit Meeting will be critical. I expect that such close, periodical and continuous communication between governments will lead to a further enhancement of the good and stable trilateral political/diplomatic relationship. I would like to reiterate here that solid political/diplomatic ties are fundamental for accelerating the economic cooperation in the private sectors.

Once again, the economic organizations of Japan, China, and Korea have organized Trilateral Business Summits in line with the Trilateral Summit Meeting schedule and issued joint statements, in order to encourage the cooperation of the three countries for the achievement of a consistent growth. I believe that such continuous efforts will firmly support the consistent future development of the three countries. Keidanren will keep working for the further progress of the three countries by, for example, cooperating for holding the Trilateral Business Summit.

Keidanren makes recommendations for resolving domestic/international issues and achieving sustained growth. We have proposed a concept named “Society 5.0 for SDGs”, which aims to achieve SDGs by making full use of innovative technologies and balancing the economic development and social issues. Meanwhile, in November 2020, we published “The New Growth

Strategy”, aiming at establishing a sustainable capitalism through the Society 5.0. As for issues on international relations, we have been expressing our view that countries should explore ways to collaborate, based on a competition-and-cooperation approach.

Nowadays, due to the COVID-19, international travels are under significant constraints. Japan, China and Korea, as three East-Asian countries, have successfully hosted a series of festivals of peace and sports, namely, 2018 Pyeoungchang, 2020 Tokyo, and 2022 Beijing Olympics and Paralympics. Unfortunately, the Tokyo and Beijing Olympics could not welcome spectators from abroad. Before the COVID-19, people of the three countries visited each other, and backed by the recent enthusiasm for learning foreign languages, the tourist sites of the respective countries were filled with people speaking Japanese, Chinese and Korean. I truly hope that Japanese, Chinese and Korean people can resume visiting each other’s country, and their world-class tourist sites recover their energetic atmosphere.

To conclude, there are various possibilities and potentials in the field of Trilateral Cooperation. The role of the TCS, which has launched a number of cooperation projects in diverse areas, including economy, culture, personal exchanges, public health and environmental protection and supported the development of the trilateral cooperative relationship, will become increasingly important. Keidanren will make every effort for the further development of the three countries.

JEONG Hyung-gon



- Senior Research Fellow, Korea Institute for International Economic Policy

This interview was originally given in written form in Korean, and translated into English.

TCS

How did you become familiar with the Trilateral Cooperation?

JEONG Hyung-gon

I began my research on Trilateral Cooperation in January 2006, when I started my post at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), after working at the National Security Council. I was working at the Northeast Asia Cooperation Center of KIEP at that time, and I have explored various aspects of economic collaboration on the trilateral landscape ever since. My research areas included trilateral trade, investment, industrial value chains and the supply chains connecting the three countries, as well as the field of Korea-Japan-China trilateral FTA and wider economic integration in East Asia. Since joining KIEP in 2006, I participated in the joint study among Korea, Japan and China which was conducted annually, following the agreement made by the leaders of the three countries. In this joint study, KIEP from Korea, Institute of Developing Economies at the Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO) from Japan, and the Development Research Center (DRC) of the State Council of China participated every year. They undertook joint research on promoting the trilateral economic cooperation and reported the outcomes to the leaders of the three countries. While conducting such research for 10 years, I had the opportunity to study various topics for trilateral economic cooperation.

TCS

What impressed you most as you were engaged in the process of Trilateral Cooperation?

JEONG Hyung-gon

I think it would be the trilateral joint study I mentioned earlier. Every year, I worked with my Japanese and Chinese colleagues on the research task together, and in the meantime, we were also able to build friendship. For several years, we studied on how a Korea-Japan-China FTA would work in each field of subject. Afterwards, we presented proposals to commence a trilateral joint study bringing industry, government and academia together under one umbrella, which was

accepted by the three governments. As far as I remember, it was two years after the joint study of industry, government and academia began, when the governments launched their negotiations on a trilateral FTA. Unfortunately, these efforts haven't brought much tangible progress thus far, but it was truly rewarding for me at that time. The joint study was conducted mainly by government officials of the three countries, and I remember Japanese officials participated the most in the study, while also being the ones with the most opinions. There have often been heated debates among the officials during the study, which remains a memorable part of the experience for me. Meanwhile, the location of the joint study was decided on a rotational basis among the cities of Korea, Japan, and China, which allowed us chances to visit many beautiful cities in our three countries. I believe this motivated me during what could be an arduous process at times. I would love to take part again in such a joint project, if there's another chance. It is my hope that the leaders of the three countries would reach an agreement to resume the joint study on trilateral economic cooperation, through which the three countries can explore various ways to further advance economic cooperation.

TCS

What do you think makes the Trilateral Cooperation significant to China, Japan and Korea as well as to the region and the world at large?

JEONG Hyung-gon

Trilateral Cooperation is vital for both the economy and maintaining stability in Northeast Asia. Since all three countries have a strong ripple effect to each other in terms of production; if one country enjoys increase of global export, that flow naturally raises import from the other two. As you can see, this connectivity of mutual value chain has been strengthening, and competition is also rising along with such vertical and horizontal division of labor. It is true that certain issues, namely COVID-19, the U.S.-China conflict, and diplomatic wrangles among the three countries are acting as a barrier for further cooperation. However, from the economic perspective, it would be extremely challenging to form a new global value chain that could replace each other with a third party. It would be very difficult to make drastic changes to the current supply chain, which was formed through a longtime cooperation between the companies of the three countries. Not to mention, they all have a high level of economic dependency on one another. For these reasons, Trilateral Cooperation is crucial not only in bringing economic benefit to each country but also in sustaining a reasonable division of labor in the East Asian region. Based on this understanding, Korea, Japan and China need to develop a more cooperative alliance.

Trilateral Cooperation in the East Asia Region is also important. The role of the three countries in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a form of East Asian economic union, is most vital. Korea, Japan and China must take the lead in establishing standards of economic collaboration, and in expanding the level and quality of cooperation. These three countries must steer the RCEP to facilitate cooperation and opening of markets comparable to that of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP);

otherwise, majority of RCEP members will restructure around CPTPP. Seven RCEP member states are already members of CPTPP, and more countries wish to join as well. Hence, the role of Japan, a dual member of both partnerships, is particularly important here. RCEP can only work as a proper economic union for East Asia when Trilateral Cooperation is strengthened.

TCS

In which areas do you think the Trilateral Cooperation should be strengthened in the coming decade to further benefit the people of the three countries and beyond?

JEONG Hyung-gon

Korea, Japan and China account for around 20% of world GDP and that number is only set to rise moving forward. Despite the current power struggle and dispute between the US and China, the economic growth outlook for China and its neighboring countries are higher than any other region in the world. The people of three countries must find opportunities for mutual growth and demonstrate their respective competitive advantage through vitalizing economic cooperation. This would require us to further consolidate and systemize the on-going trilateral joint projects.

As such, the role of the TCS is essential in vitalizing economic cooperation and promoting Northeast Asia's economic integration in the long run. I believe that the roles and functions of the TCS should be equivalent to the European Commission, which led the integration of Europe. Therefore, the authority of TCS should be secured to manage cooperation projects through its enhanced authority and structure.

Despite the security threats within European nations in the 1950s, the European Union was able to organize the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) and the European Economic Community (EEC) thanks to their political leadership. This paved the way for granting transnational authority to these organizations which boosted implementation of joint projects and ultimately achieved the levels of integration we see today. The key point is how EU was granted transnational authority; this greatly differentiates them from other cooperative secretariats like APEC or ASEAN. This underscores why TCS also needs to bolster its execution capabilities by being delegated some transnational authority. The work of TCS should not be restricted to mere management of discussions at the Trilateral Summit Meeting, but having active control over the execution of projects. Through these measures, TCS could find a solution for any economic or non-economic barriers and further upgrade Trilateral Cooperation.

TCS

From your perspective, what more should be done (by both governmental and nongovernmental sectors) to further improve the Trilateral Cooperation?

JEONG Hyung-gon

In order to invigorate Trilateral Cooperation, TCS' roles and functions for institutionalizing cooperation should be empowered. For this objective, I would like to make the following ten suggestions.

First, the objectives of TCS needs to be more specific and future-oriented, and it should be forged at Trilateral Summit Meetings in the form of an agreement or treaty. Of course, reaching a consensus could be challenging, due to ongoing diplomatic and security issues among the three countries. However, TCS' authority for setting clear goals and improving implementation capability must be guaranteed, in order to build a more advanced form of Trilateral Cooperation. A foundation such as this is necessary for TCS to push forward or recommend corrections to projects, just as the EU Commission does in Europe. I hope, in due course, TCS' role is expanded from Secretariat to Commission, with enhanced roles and functions.

Second, the TCS must act as a catalyst for trilateral integration by taking initiative in driving and managing ongoing as well as future cooperation projects.

Third, the role of the TCS should focus more on institutionalizing trilateral economic cooperation. From ROK's position, government-level institutionalization to expand trilateral economic cooperation, such as intellectual property protection and various policies to ease non-tariff barriers, should be made since the share of exports to China and Japan is continuously increasing. Undertaking joint research that could enhance trilateral economic cooperation is also a feasible idea. Since TCS is not able to conduct independent research, a joint research task can be assigned to research institutes from the three countries, who can provide policy proposals to TCS. TCS must make further efforts to implement the findings through an official consultation procedure, such as Trilateral Summit Meetings.

Fourth, TCS needs diverse policy proposals and new cooperation programs that can help overcoming economic and non-economic challenges caused by limited collaboration between the countries. For instance, the issue of trilateral nuclear power cooperation, given its significance and associated risk, necessitates the establishment of a 'Northeast Asia Nuclear Mechanism', equivalent to EURATOM in Europe, to develop as a consultative body for joint management and technology development for nuclear power plants.

Fifth, in order to resume Trilateral Summit Meetings and facilitate smooth operation of cooperation projects, the source of conflict that negatively affect trilateral collaboration needs to be minimized. Along with depoliticizing their projects, TCS needs to organize and manage various cultural exchange programs to build a sense of community for the people of the three countries. For us to reinforce mutual cooperation, we need more common grounds and no ideological conflict. To attain such goals, I recommend that TCS develops various new programs.

Sixth, it is crucial to publish Security Environment Assessment reports as part of initiatives to advance mutual understanding on security between Korea, Japan and China. There are certain hurdles in current circumstances, but such aspiration can be put in place, and efforts should be made for its realization over the long-term.

Seventh, trilateral dialogues on diplomatic and security issues are needed in the form of a 1.5 Track. With these dialogues, there is a need to widen the scope of awareness on mutual security threats, and also seek future-oriented ideas.

Eighth, effort is needed to stimulate multilateral security cooperation within Northeast Asia. For the three countries' work to pursue true integration beyond mere cooperation, it is imperative to devise an institutionalized multilateral security cooperative where they all take part in. This may seem unfeasible at the moment, yet it must nevertheless be on the agenda for mid to long term.

Ninth, there is a need for development and operation of programs that promote common values and identities among the three countries. I recommend TCS to explore projects that discover and promote Common East Asian Heritages. One such project would be the designating of airport lanes solely for Korean, Japanese and Chinese passengers.

Tenth, to push for greater progress with Trilateral Cooperation, projects that enable transnational authority should be developed in mid-long term. For example, environmental and climate change projects would be included in these criteria. These works can boost the quality of cooperation and implementation. With the expansion of projects like these, the landscape of economic cooperation for Korea, Japan and China can begin a new chapter.

QIN Zi



- Initiator of the Crested Ibis International Forum
 - Honorary Ambassador of the Association of Northeast Asia Regional Governments (NEAR)
 - Member of the Shaanxi Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries
 - Honorary Citizen of Changnyeong-gun, Republic of Korea
 - Editor-in-Chief of the News Portal Sina Shaanxi
-

This interview was originally given in written form in Chinese, and translated into English.

TCS

How did you become familiar with the Trilateral Cooperation?

QIN Zi

I started learning about the Trilateral Cooperation over a decade ago. For starters, I have always been interested in the history of friendly exchange among China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK). I was particularly inspired by the Japanese missions to China during the Tang dynasty (618-907) that epitomize the pinnacle of their past friendship. For years, I've been following the progress of communication and cooperation among the three countries. Secondly, I've been to Japan and the ROK several times. During my visits, I witnessed the fruits of friendly exchange made by past generations. I heard real stories of the Trilateral Cooperation and learned of local people's strong aspirations for more exchange and cooperation. Finally, and most importantly, early in my career, I had the honor to meet with and be influenced by a few high-ranking Japanese and ROK officials who are friendly to China including Tomiichi Murayama, former Japanese Prime Minister, Hirayama Ikuo, the then chairman of the Japan-China Friendship Association, and Kim Ha-joong, the then ROK ambassador to China. I had in-depth conversations with them and understood the importance and urgency of Trilateral Cooperation.

I began to learn of the Trilateral Cooperation mechanism thanks to contact with Ambassador Yang Houlan, the then Secretary-General of the TCS. I still remember meeting Ambassador Yang on July 28, 2017. It was also the first time I visited the TCS. In his office, Ambassador Yang reviewed the history of cooperation among the three countries and introduced the TCS as a comprehensive, wide-ranging, and multi-tiered cooperation scheme underpinned by the Trilateral Summit Meetings, trilateral ministerial meetings, and dozens of working-level mechanisms. He bestowed me a deep understanding of the mission of the TCS and the ongoing cooperation among the three countries. I hence became more determined and confident to devote my time and energy to the cause.

Since then, I have organized several trilateral cultural exchange events themed around the crested ibis. In particular, I have made efforts to promote trilateral youth exchange and local government cooperation and gained strong support from the TCS. I also visited the TCS many more times and had the honor to meet with its three successive Secretaries-General—Ambassador Yang Houlan, Secretary-General Lee Jong-heon, and Secretary-General MICHIGAMI Hisashi, as well as several Deputy Secretaries-General.

TCS

What impressed you most as you were engaged in the process of Trilateral Cooperation?

QIN Zi

First of all, please allow me to note the work I have done over the past few years. From 2017 to 2019, I devoted great efforts to promote trilateral people-to-people and cultural exchange and local government cooperation themed around the crested ibis. I spearheaded the first Crested Ibis International Forum, co-organized with the TCS international conferences and symposiums themed crested ibis, and Crested Ibis International Forum in Seoul. I organized a crested ibis culture exhibition at the G20 Osaka Summit. All these initiatives have received great support and participation from the TCS.

During these years, I also organized quite a few delegations to visit Japan and the ROK. They included a delegation representing the tea industry in Shaanxi province, a youth exchange group, a local government delegation from the hometown of the crested ibis, a delegation from the Ankang municipal government, and a Taoist culture exchange group. I helped establish a sister city relationship between the city of Ankang in Shaanxi, China, and Makinohara, Japan, and worked on letters of intent on sister city relationships between Yangxian county in Shaanxi, China, and Sado, Japan, and between Ankang and Buan-gun, the ROK. In 2019, I organized the first Trilateral Taoist Culture Dialogue in Tokyo. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, unfortunately, our international exchange and cooperation work has slowed.

What impressed me most during my work of the past few years is that a bottom-up approach, although challenging, ultimately boosts future cooperation among China, Japan, and Korea. High-level interactions and inter-governmental exchange among the three countries are indeed important. We need political leadership and government promotion at the top level; however, the more solid foundation and more long-lasting cooperation are based on a bottom-up approach from the people, the grassroots level, enterprises, and society. This bottom-up approach will kindle a strong driver for top-level trilateral relations and make cooperation among the three countries more sustainable, effective, and solid.

TCS

What do you think makes the Trilateral Cooperation significant to China, Japan and Korea as well as to the region and the world at large?

QIN Zi

I believe that cooperation among China, Japan, and Korea should be viewed through a lens of regional and world development and from the perspective of building a global community of shared future. I characterize our cooperation as an important component and a source of power for regional cooperation in East Asia, a ballast stone and a stalwart for regional and world peace, and an important driver and a powerful engine for economic development in Asia and the world.

Over 20 years have passed since China, Japan, and Korea started formally cooperating. The ups and downs we've endured, the experiences gained, the lessons learned, and the gains made are also an asset for the world to share. History has shown that cooperation builds on ever-increasing mutual trust. It is driven by deep integration of interests and is safeguarded by the connection of people's hearts and minds and the proper handling of differences. We all know that triangles form the most stable structures. China, Japan, and Korea have already laid solid foundations for cooperation. Cooperation leads to win-win results and fighting leads to injury. The three countries compete but also cooperate. This is the ideal state of their relationships.

I'm convinced that the most beautiful flower of friendship will bloom in East Asia. Undoubtedly, the core driving force of East Asia's development originates in China, Japan, and Korea. At present, the combined GDP of China, Japan, and Korea accounts for 24% of the global total, up from 17%. The three are the most dynamic economies in Asia, and their economic aggregate has surpassed that of the European Union. Considering the size of their economies, the depth of their cultures, and the vitality of their development, now is not the time for them to keep a low profile. They cooperate not merely to improve the well-being of the people in the three countries or promote mutual benefit and win-win results, but also to promote regional and world economic growth and regional integration and assume greater responsibility over fostering regional and world peace and development.

TCS

In which areas do you think the Trilateral Cooperation should be strengthened in the coming decade to further benefit the people of the three countries and beyond?

QIN Zi

China, Japan, and Korea are important neighbors and the world's second, third, and tenth largest economies, respectively. They share important and substantial common interests which continue to grow. This development is irrevocable and conforms with the trend of the times. China, Japan, and Korea still have room for growth in many fields, and I have seen many potential areas for cooperation that could lead to broad prospects and great prosperity. In the next ten years, I'd like to see more cooperation in the following areas:

1. Working together to stabilize and restore the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic and improve regional economic cooperation in the post-COVID-19 era

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the global economy, and the damage is far from over. China, Japan, and Korea have already supported and collaborated with each other on COVID-19 prevention and control, which set a good example for the world. How the three countries continue to deepen cooperation, end the pandemic, revive the economy, and revitalize the economic vitality in East Asia remains to be seen.

2. Vigorously promoting media exchange and cooperation

This is one area that has not been effectively addressed for a long time. I've worked in the media industry for over 20 years, and I know firsthand how entrenched the problem is. First, media outlets in the three countries lack in-depth understanding of each other and of other countries and cultures. Second, we don't have an institutionalized mechanism for regular communication. Third, we have few institutions and platforms for cooperation and exchange. Lack of understanding and communication begets misunderstanding and prejudice, and distortion and damage created by the media can easily lead to poor judgment, reduce mutual trust and goodwill, and damage public opinion and trust that underpin cooperation among the three countries.

3. Tapping the potential of people-to-people and cultural exchange

As the Chinese saying goes, friendship between peoples is key to sound state-to-state relations, and heart-to-heart communication contributes to deeper friendship. People-to-people and cultural exchange is all about forging ties and bonds. The three countries should tap the potential of people-to-people and cultural exchange, deepen existing areas of cooperation, intensify people-to-people and cultural exchange, and build more friendly ties. We should focus in particular on friendly exchange among young people and start more "Youth Plus" initiatives to empower and engage them. Over the years, I have been acutely aware that older folks who harbor good feelings for each other may have passed away or lost mobilization in their later years before the younger generation grow into pillars that can promote mutual trust among the three countries. There is a fault line in the middle. It takes a lot of work and time to bridge this gap.

To continue fostering more people-to-people and cultural exchange, I will focus on my work with the crested ibis which involves the ecology, youth, and local governments, push for modern-day versions of "goodwill envoy" (e.g., youth and culture), and launch more initiatives featuring Taoism (e.g., Taoist culture and ideas), tea (e.g., tea culture, tea industry, and local governments), and local government exchange (e.g., sister cities and industrial cooperation). I hope to get more people and local governments involved in China-Japan-ROK cultural exchange.

TCS

From your perspective, what more should be done (by both governmental and non-governmental sectors) to further improve the Trilateral Cooperation?

QIN Zi

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the ROK and the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan. At this important juncture, the three countries should uphold their original aspirations of establishing diplomatic relations, deepen friendly cooperation, and build a trilateral relationship that meets the requirements of the new era. It's fair to say that Trilateral Cooperation among China, Japan, and Korea starts on a higher ground than that of any other countries in the world. If the Japanese missions to China in the Tang dynasty represented the first dialogue and cooperation among the three countries, then their cooperation today will herald a second dialogue across time, space, and history. We have every reason to believe that with today's information technology and transportation advances, this dialogue will produce greater results than the one more than 1,000 years ago, and will exert a positive impact on all parties, on the region, and on the world.

I think more efforts are needed in the following areas:

1. Enhancing political mutual trust

China, Japan, and Korea still have historical wounds and legacy issues from the Cold War. Due to geopolitics and major power factors, lack of trust is and has always been a bottleneck for Trilateral Cooperation.

2. Building media goodwill

The media is a mirror for the peoples of the three countries to understand each other, but the mirror often gathers dust and produces distorted images of each other. We should continue to deepen routine media exchange and communication among the three countries, restore goodwill, and help the media become a bridge and platform of friendship to discover each other's beauty and boost mutual communication, exchange, and cooperation.

3. Promoting people-to-people connectivity

The "hard differences" in our viewpoints can be resolved through "soft" people-to-people and cultural exchange. The core of people-to-people and cultural exchange is heart-to-heart communication. Once our "hearts and minds" are connected, many things become clear and much can be done easily.

4. Fostering pragmatic cooperation

Exchange and cooperation will foster blooming of the friendship flower and reap worthy fruits of cooperation. These achievements will also provide a stronger driving force for deepening exchange and cooperation.

5. Strengthening the mechanism

The establishment of the TCS, for instance, is a major step towards mechanism innovation. We hope that the three countries cherish this hard-won achievement and continue to help it flourish.

Meanwhile, the TCS still has room for development and innovation in terms of raising its international influence, promoting cooperation and coordination among the three countries, and nurturing more projects. I have every reason to believe that the TCS will not only foster dialogue, but also create more marvels and miracles.

OKASAKA Kentaro



- Seoul Bureau Chief, Kyodo News Agency

This interview was originally given in written form in Japanese, and translated into English.

TCS

How did you become familiar with the Trilateral Cooperation?

OKASAKA Kentaro

I got to know about the TCS initiatives through a book titled “Trilateral Common Vocabulary Dictionary (TCVD)”. The book contained vocabularies in Kanji (Chinese characters in Japanese) used commonly in China, Japan, and Korea. This book reminded me that the three countries belong to a common cultural sphere.

I recalled the time I first visited China when I was a student. I was on a train, seating in front of two young Chinese. I wanted to communicate with them, but I couldn’t speak Chinese. However, when they noticed that I could write Kanji, we started to communicate in written form, and we got along quite well. After I came back to Japan, I received a letter from them with a photo of myself sleeping in the seat. I couldn’t help laughing as I realized that we also have a common sense of humor.

Prior to my placement, I studied in a language course for a year in Seoul. My classmates were mainly Chinese, Japanese, and Western young people. It was impressive that when we proceeded to the advanced level, where a number of Kanji words appeared, Japanese and Chinese students were outstanding in picking up the lesson. Hanja (Chinese characters in Korean) is rarely used in South Korea nowadays, but when you look into the vocabulary book, you will clearly see that Hanja forms the basis of the Korean language. I heard that experts and linguists from the three countries collaborated in the compilation process. In addition to the TCVD, I am looking forward to learning other topics of comparative cultures common to the three countries, such as Buddhism or cuisine.

TCS

What impressed you most as you were engaged in the process of Trilateral Cooperation?

OKASAKA Kentaro

I clearly remember the emotion I felt when I saw 40 crested ibises released into the wild in May, 2019 in Changnyeong, Gyeongsangnam-do, Southeastern area of South Korea. Like Japan, the crested ibis is designated as a National Natural Monument in South Korea, but they have been deemed extinct after being last observed near the demilitarized zone with North Korea (DMZ) in 1979. Korea then succeeded in breeding the crested ibises given from China in 2008 as a token of friendship. After more than 10 years, they were released into the wild on the occasion of the International Day of Biological Diversity. In my twenties, I worked at the Bureau of Niigata, the prefecture in which Sado, the habitat of crested ibis, is located. Therefore, I was interested in crested ibis and decided to cover stories on the birds. Representatives from Sado City and China were present at the ceremony. I was touched and sympathized with the statement of the then South Korean Minister of Environment, Mr. Cho Myung-rae, who stated, “I hope that the crested ibises become a symbol of the regional peace and the ecological restoration as they travel among China, Japan and the South and the North of the Korean Peninsula.” The local government officials expressed their expectations for further enhanced people-to-people exchanges in relation to the crested ibis. Two months later, the “Crested Ibis International Forum” was convened in Seoul. I still recall that the children from China, Japan and Korea, hand in hand, sang together the traditional Korean children’s songs about the crested ibis in chorus.

TCS

What do you think makes the Trilateral Cooperation significant to China, Japan and Korea as well as the region and the world at large?

OKASAKA Kentaro

In light of the lessons from the two world wars, Europe created the European Union (EU), and African countries have the African Union (AU). However, we have no regional unions in East Asia - a long-standing issue for us. Lack of mutual understanding and trust, stemming from the differences in political schemes among the three countries and the historical issues, may be the underlying cause of the situation. There were times that the idea of an East Asian Community drew attention. However, unfortunately, the Japan-Korea relationship has deteriorated recently, and anti-China sentiment has become visible in Korea. Thus, it is difficult to assume that we are currently in a mood for enhancing Trilateral Cooperation.

When I was working at the New York Bureau in charge of the United Nations, I witnessed some occasions in which Japan and Korea, or Japan and China, criticized each other at international conferences. All the disputes were related to historical issues. The western diplomats observing the scenes may have thought that East Asia is a region of frequent confrontations among neighboring countries, which often fight each other in public.

In such a situation, it is of great significance that the three countries cooperate wherever possible, dispel the mutual distrust, and foster trustful relationship. Trilateral Cooperation has been in place in various

forms until now. The establishment of the TCS is itself the fruit of collaborated efforts of the respective governments. A broad range of face-to-face dialogues have been held in various levels through the “Youth Ambassador Program”, “CAMPUS Asia”, and exchange meetings between local governments. I hope that, by accumulating such successful experiences, the three countries can build up the foundation of Trilateral Cooperation, and eventually proceed to a more advanced collaboration.

Mr. Lee O-young, the first Minister of Culture and the ex-President of the “Institute of Korea-China-Japan Comparative Culture Studies”, who passed away in February 2022, said in an interview by the Kyodo News in 2008; “If the three countries truly understand their own interests, they will be able to compete as well as cooperate, and merge their powers to form a strong triangular relationship.” He also pointed out that the best form would be an “interdependent” relationship, in which no country becomes No.1. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), in which the three countries as well as the ASEAN member states participate, has come into effect recently, raising expectations for the expansion of trade. Deepening the mutual trust among the three countries will help alleviate the tensions in East Asia and prevent accidental military confrontations. By demonstrating friendship and collaboration as neighboring countries to the international society, we may also set an example and convey positive messages to other regions where neighboring countries are in confrontations or military conflicts.

TCS

In which areas do you think the Trilateral Cooperation should be strengthened in the coming decade to further benefit the people of the three countries and beyond?

OKASAKA Kentaro

I believe that joint efforts to address global cross-border issues are at the heart of Trilateral Cooperation. Especially, contributing to the global actions against pressing issues such as climate crisis, air pollution, and healthcare issues including COVID-19 by sharing their insights will improve the presence of the three countries in the global community. I hope the three countries will also work hand in hand to achieve a low-carbon society and UN SDGs (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals), so as to inherit a better world for children all over the globe.

Japan, China, and Korea had been recipients of assistance in the past. Since then, we have grown into a large economy, and today, the combined GDP of the three economies accounts for a quarter of the global economy. Given this situation, I would like to suggest that the three countries may be able to offer joint assistance packages to developing countries through Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Even a project that cannot be afforded by a single country due to financial conditions may become viable if the three countries combine their efforts. ODA is generally considered as a “tool” that serves for the country’s diplomacy, but it can also be treated as a tool for improving the image of the three countries. The Korean model, which achieved democratization and rapid development called “The miracle of the Han River”, may be inspiring for developing countries.

In the United Nations Peace Keeping Operations (PKO), China and Japan rank 2nd and 3rd, respectively, in terms of the share of financial contributions. However, recently, assaults on PKO troops have become frequent in Africa. My suggestion is that the three countries may also cooperate in providing equipment and technical support for further enhanced safety.

The three countries also should learn from each other's efforts on common social issues such as the low birth rate and aging population as well as the depopulation in the rural areas. I have recently conducted an interview with Korean young people who relocated to a rural area and launched a successful coffee shop business using an old house. The interview was highly suggestive, covering various topics including governmental support for entrepreneurs, use of Instagram and the concept of “local creators” that work for the revitalization of rural areas.

Lastly, I would like to refer to the cooperation for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. At the 2019 Summit, the leaders of Japan, China, and Korea reconfirmed that the maintenance of peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia is the common interest and responsibility of the three countries. North Korea has been increasingly isolated from the international community by pursuing nuclear and missiles development. China as the permanent member of the UN Security Council, Japan as the country hit by atomic bombs, and South Korea as the party to the Korean Peninsula situation should now cooperate to draw North Korea into the table for denuclearization dialogue.

TCS

From your perspective, what more should be done (by both governmental and nongovernmental sectors) to further improve the Trilateral Cooperation?

OKASAKA Kentaro

The activation of exchanges in the private sector is the key. In the current situation, where mutual distrust is prevalent, it is difficult to raise public expectations for better bilateral or Trilateral Cooperation. It is unfortunate that one dislikes another country only by impressions, without visiting the country or communicating directly with its people. Especially, young people should have opportunities to directly interact with each other and know who they really are.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the 2002 Soccer World Cup, jointly hosted by Japan and Korea. It's also the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic normalization between Japan and China, and the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Republic of Korea. Such occasions may be leveraged for promoting exchanges among the three countries. In February, I conducted interviews at a speech contest hosted by the TCS for the first time. Young participants from the three countries gave unique and interesting speeches on selected topics about the culture of the three countries, including cuisine, music, funerals, and folk monsters. A university student from Korea, who won the 1st prize in the trilingual (Japanese-Chinese-Korean) speech category, commented that she was able to learn from the participants from other countries, and “she hopes to

show the western people that we, the peoples of the three countries, have good relationship.”

The “Japan-Korea share house” was one of the interviews that impressed me. It was a project implemented last summer, in which 7 Japanese and Korean students lived together for two months. While the students spend their time happily together, they sometimes discussed historical issues. The participants told me; “Even though we did not fully understand each other, it helped us reduce our knowledge gap and misunderstandings. The willingness to understand each other enabled us to reach here”. I felt this attitude was something we should learn from them. It was a private sector initiative, but if we can increase such opportunities with public support and expand its scope to three countries, it will provide a priceless experience for the youth of the three countries.

The attitudes of the political leaders are also important. Disputes regarding historical issues and territorial rights lie between the three countries and cause tense interactions in diplomacy once in a while. However, even in such situation, I believe that the politicians should actively deliver a decisive message that the people-to-people exchange should continue, and foster an atmosphere in which the people of the three countries can promote interchanges without being intimidated. Since the Trilateral Summit Meeting in December 2019 held in Chengdu, China which I also conducted a coverage, no Summit has been held. I believe, especially in a situation like now in which the relationships among the countries are derailing, it is essential that the leaders of the three countries meet and demonstrate their will to overcome the challenge. I hope that the inauguration of the new administration in Korea will provide a good opportunity for the leaders to meet at an early point, even for just a meet-and-greet.

CHOI Haemin



- Assistant Professor, Chodang University
- CAMPUS Asia Alumni

This interview was originally given in written form in Korean, and translated into English.

TCS

How did you become familiar with the Trilateral Cooperation?

CHOI Haemin

I left Korea for the U.S. when I was in sixth grade and remained there until I graduated from college. Majoring in international politics certainly ignited my interest in relations between my home nation and its neighbors. I returned to Korea to further my education, taking East Asia Relations at Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University. Just before completing my Master's degree, I came across a post from the CAMPUS Asia program, announcing that applications for their first session were open. I decided to defer my MA, applied to the program and eventually got the opportunity to study one semester as an exchange student at Beijing University, China, and another year as a dual degree student at Tokyo University, Japan. These programs were my very first in-person experiences of Trilateral Cooperation. It broadened my perspective and transformed my stereotypical ideas and even my whole life. It also launched my career working on trilateral exchange programs from the outset at my very first job.

TCS

What impressed you the most as you were engaged in the process of Trilateral Cooperation?

CHOI Haemin

For CAMPUS Asia programs, the Korean and Chinese Ministries of Education, as well as Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology jointly choose those universities that participate in the student exchange program, with their shared goal of promoting close student exchange. The students spend a minimum of one semester and a maximum of one year on the program. Most of these voluntary applicants to the program have open-minded views and share thoughts on general social issues, as well as the three countries' common issues from diverse perspectives. Trilateral issues have made an indelible mark of these nations' shared history, politics and culture, so conflicting opinions may come across as offensive to each other. However, this was

not so in my experience in CAMPUS Asia program. The program participants left only positive impressions on me as they respected each other's opinions and ideas. We have been very good friends since then and will remain so.

TCS

What do you think makes the Trilateral Cooperation significant to China, Japan and Korea as well as to the region and the world at large?

CHOI Haemin

During the late 1990s, when the Asian Financial Crisis hit, specific discussions to formalize Trilateral Cooperation had begun. The TCS was established in 2011 by the agreement of the three governments. Since then, TCS's efforts have continued to enhance trilateral relations across various fields like politics, the economy, society, and culture. At times, each nation has different directions to pursue, so there are still some parts to supplement in the current Trilateral Cooperation.

In the past, developments affecting the global landscape mostly stemmed from the West, but attention is currently shifting toward East Asia. In particular, economy is one area where the importance of Trilateral Cooperation is more apparent. From the start of the 21st century, the global influence of these combined economies has been expanding, as they now rank as key players in world economies alongside North America and Western Europe. Intensified exchange of material resources as well as people-to-people exchange among the three nations has brought a high level of fiscal multiplier effect in the economic field. Not only that, their social presence in the wider world is also growing. The economy of the three countries will continue to expand and have a greater share in the world going forward.

TCS

In which areas do you think the Trilateral Cooperation should be strengthened in the coming decade to further benefit the people of the three countries and beyond?

CHOI Haemin

As I've already touched on the three nations' influence in global economy and its importance, I'd like to answer this question based on personal experiences.

The three countries often call each other "Close, but distant country." It signifies how there remains a gap in understanding despite their geographical proximity. Everybody has stereotypes. When I was young, I would often think, "Oh, China would probably be like that", or "Japan would be that way." However, these stereotypical views were eroded by my experiences on the CAMPUS Asia program. I developed a fresh outlook on others in the course of many discussions with the fellow program participants. I can confidently say that now I can understand Trilateral Cooperation in a much deeper and broader manner. My story is by no means unique in that regard, whenever program alumni gather for reunions, we all still retain an interest in Trilateral Cooperation even after ten years.

To strengthen Trilateral Cooperation, I believe that there should be more active exchange among the youths of China, Japan, and Korea, to help break down stereotypes about one another and build mutual understanding through candid talks. The CAMPUS Asia has ten years of history, including its pilot period. Many former program participants are now actively working as economists, cultural specialists and diplomats, areas where they can make concrete contributions to cooperative efforts. If we can continue to foster great experiences through youth exchange programs, in ten or twenty years we will see the fruits of it not just economically but in other areas where collaboration has been restricted.

TCS

From your perspective, what more should be done (by both governmental and non-governmental sectors) to further improve the Trilateral Cooperation?

CHOI Haemin

Further invigoration of Trilateral Cooperation will require efforts of both the governments and private sectors, for just one party's efforts will not suffice. First, the governments should focus on finding future-oriented solutions to resolve historical, territorial and cultural disputes based on the interests of young generation of each country, instead of exploiting such issues for domestic political power plays. I'm not saying that we should leave issues of conflicts behind to go forward. Rather, I think we need to explore long-term, implementable plans, along with peaceful measures that endure regardless of regime changes to untangle such conflicts.

In tandem, private sector input is pivotal. In this era of the 4th industrial revolution, we have easy access to a wealth of information online. Whenever disputes arise between nations, widespread negative commentary is spewed on the internet, but when it is resolved later, the tune changes suddenly and more positive reporting floods the media. In times of on-going conflict, baseless, fake news makes for splashy headlines and misguided people believe that they are true. As the media wields such strong influence over people's perception of other countries, news must not be distributed with deliberately distortive and provocative wording.

Recently, the word "hate" has been more frequently used by citizens of the three countries to describe one another. The general public has also become familiar with this term, through media coverage by the three countries. I believe such negative commentary can be subdued when positive trilateral relations among the governments become more highlighted by media. In addition, collaboration will also be further energized when people build mutual understanding through diverse cooperative programs, instead of gaining information about each other via provocative news.

Pursuant to the “Agreement on the Establishment of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS)” signed by the governments of the People’s Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea in December 2010, the TCS was established as an international organization in September 2011 in Seoul. The TCS aims to serve as a hub for Trilateral Cooperation that encompasses a broad spectrum of sectors and actors.

AN EVOLVING TRILATERAL COOPERATION: REALITY AND OUTLOOK



Trilateral
Cooperation
Secretariat

Published in June 2022

Address S-Tower 20th FL, 82 Saemunan-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul
03185 Republic of Korea

Phone +82-2-733-4700

Fax +82-2-733-2525

Website www.tcs-asia.org

E-mail tcs@tcs-asia.org

Design Samyoung D&P

Copyright © 2022 Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior permission of the TCS.

**AN EVOLVING
TRILATERAL
COOPERATION:
REALITY AND
OUTLOOK**



Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat

S-Tower, 20th FL., 82 Saemunan-ro, Jongro-gu, Seoul, ROK
Tel : +82.2.733.4700 / Fax : +82.2.733.2525 / E-mail : tcs@tcs-asia.org
Web: <http://www.tcs-asia.org>

Follow us on :
<https://www.facebook.com/TrilateralCooperationSecretariat>
https://www.twitter.com/TCS_tweet
<https://weibo.com/tcsasia>

