

APAP TOKYO FORUM STATEMENT

Towards East Asian Community Building

March 2004

PREAMBLE

The nations of East Asia have been brought together by many factors. The recognition that the region was ill prepared to deal with the financial crisis provided an impetus. Other factors have also contributed to the creation of a regional foundation for peace and prosperity. Leaders of East Asia have embraced the concept of an East Asian Community. The challenge now is to establish a strategy to realize this vision. This need is urgent.

The Steering Committee of the Asia Pacific Agenda Project (APAP) puts forward this statement as a general roadmap towards achieving an East Asian Community in practice.

THE VISION FOR EAST ASIA

The East Asian region faces old and new challenges, from within the region itself as well as from the international environment. The recent outbreak of communicable diseases such as SARS and the avian flu requires countries in the region to cooperate more closely, and more importantly, to create regional mechanisms that can effectively respond. This new challenge has added to the list of ever increasing trans-border issues that the region must address jointly. These include environmental issues, movement of people and a host of other human security issues.

There are strong economic, political and strategic imperatives for the region to cooperate more closely. Economic transactions in the region have greatly intensified, particularly as a result of the spectacular rise of

the Chinese economy. As the waves of Japanese investments in the region have led to the creation of regional production networks, the rise of the Chinese economy further contributes to regional economic interdependence. The emergence of China as a major power will have positive effects for the region and the world if the East Asian nations can channel the great dynamism in a constructive fashion. All East Asian nations share a responsibility for the creation of a regional order.

This is but one aspect of East Asian community building. The vision of an East Asian Community is of an open region. East Asia will interact positively with other regions in the world, and together work for a better world. East Asia can play a critical role in the development of a new global architecture. East Asian community building will be pursued in parallel to and also with the aim of assisting and mutually reinforcing cooperation processes in the ASEAN sub-region and the wider APEC region.

East Asian nations have been interacting constructively with non-regional powers, in particular the United States and the European Union. The economic, political and military presence of the United States in the region has provided a strategic underpinning for regional peace and prosperity. East Asian community building embraces the United States as a close partner, leading to a strong and healthy trans-Pacific relationship.

East Asian community building will be guided by its vision of a region where a system of good governance is promoted, where governments and the peoples work hand in hand, where disputes are solved through peaceful means, where conscious efforts are made to narrow gaps amongst its very diverse members, and where common interests and aspirations, especially of the peoples, as well as shared challenges and shared values are given prominence.

TURNING THE VISION INTO SUSTAINED ACTIONS

To turn this grand vision into action requires political will, leadership, intellectual inputs, material resources, and institution building.

The APAP process over the past nine years has accumulated ideas and a greater understanding of how regional processes can be promoted, taking into account both the economic/strategic imperatives and political feasibility. Creative ideas can help push the envelope for regional institution

building. Experiences in the region have shown that many ideas and initiatives failed to be implemented due to the lack of mechanisms and institutional structures that lead to sustained attention and action.

Our discussions had three key thrusts. First, the process of East Asian community building can best be built on functional cooperation in priority areas. In addition to the traditional areas of trade, investment and finance, this functional approach should also cover energy, environment, communicable diseases and other human and/or non-traditional security issues. Second, this process needs to be supported by mechanisms and institutional structures to effectively implement the various initiatives taken. Third, success requires support beyond government and specialists. The media, parliamentarians, civil society and business leaders have critical roles to play.

East Asian community building cannot be managed through a series of regularized official meetings alone as is often the practice in the region. It requires a new modality to ensure that the community building process is accompanied by consistent intellectual efforts, appropriate institutional designs, and full participation of non-government members of the society. We believe the region needs a permanent institution or institutions to support political leadership in developing and sustaining the functional approach toward regional integration through solid, policy oriented research and analysis and to facilitate systematic and professional efforts to promote and manage cooperation in the various areas of common interests. Such institution or institutions would have a regional perspective rather than national perspectives, would incorporate existing specialist/civil society networks, would be open to participation by outsiders, and would be constructed as public-private partnerships. While having many of the functions of the OECD, it would be compatible with the international institutional culture of our region — compact, flexible, decentralized, open to outsiders, and open to the private sector and NGOs.

Two other ingredients are required: sustained political leadership and financial resources. In addition, peoples in the region should be constantly socialized of the vision of an East Asian Community. With political leadership, financial resources, and permanent institutional structures, we have no doubt that the countries of our region can provide safer, more prosperous, and more just lives for our citizens.

Asia Pacific Agenda Project (APAP)

The Asia Pacific Agenda Project (APAP) was established in 1996 with major funding from the Japanese government and other funding sources to enhance policy-oriented intellectual exchange on the nongovernmental level, with special emphasis on independent research institutions in the region. It consists of four interconnected components: (1) the Asia Pacific Agenda Forum, a gathering of leaders of Asia Pacific policy research institutes to explore the future agenda for collaborative research and dialogue activities related to the development of an Asia Pacific community; (2) an Asia Pacific policy research information network utilizing the Internet; (3) annual multilateral joint research projects on pertinent issues of regional and global importance undertaken in collaboration with major research institutions in the region, featuring a new generation of Asia Pacific leaders who can participate in international intellectual dialogues; and (4) enhancement of intellectual exchange between Asia and Europe through Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation (CAEC) activities..

APAP is managed by an international steering committee composed of nine major research institutions in the region. The Japan Center for International Exchange has served as secretariat since APAP's inception.