

The Changchun Confirmation

Changchun, China, 28 April 2001

Whereas the Northeast Asia Economic Forum was created by the 1991 Changchun Initiative; and whereas, current developments in Northeast Asia confirm the usefulness and even the necessity of this neutral, inclusive, non-governmental Forum in the furtherance of development in Northeast Asia;

The Meeting confirmed the value of the Forum process and urged the Forum to continue its role in organizing discussions, coordinating research, and promoting exchange of information on economic development and cooperation in Northeast Asia, and to facilitate implementation of its various proposals;

To this end, the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Forum considered topics critical to furthering economic cooperation in the region: cooperation in marine, land, and air transportation networks; cooperation in development finance; cooperation in human resource development and poverty reduction; and cooperation in energy.

The Meeting recognized and encouraged the developing marine, land, and air transportation networks in the region. It was clear that there was a diversity of national needs and priorities for transport linkages. In this context, the Meeting suggested that the goal of this effort should be a Northeast Asian community and that efforts should be redoubled to overcome existing constraints to increased efficiency of cross-border linkages. To this end, the Meeting proposed the formation of a consultative working group on transportation infrastructure to explore the interaction of national plans to develop a shared vision of a unified transportation system and to promote cooperation and coordination in its implementation.

The second session focused on the all-important financial issues and mobilization of capital for infrastructure development. In this context, the creation of a Northeast Asian Development Bank (NEADB) was strongly supported. The Meeting pointed out that the required initial government contributions to a Bank would not be so large, if paid-in capital is separated from callable capital and if some capital is drawn from private sources. The Bank would principally finance infrastructure development, without imposing preconditions regarding political, social, and economic structure. The Bank would certainly be located in the Northeast Asian region, and the Forum was pleased to note that the City of Tianjin has already been proposed for the Bank headquarters. An alternative to an NEADB could be a special fund raised through private capital markets. The possibility of this alternative should be explored by the Forum's ad hoc working group on an NEADB.

The Meeting strongly endorsed the UNDP-supported Tumen River Area Development Programme. Indeed, the Meeting agreed that the Tumen Programme can be a model and forerunner for regional cooperation in Northeast Asia more generally. The Meeting acknowledged that the Tumen Region has made some progress toward mutual development, but resource mobilization—in partnership with the private sector—is urgently needed to help finance infrastructure investments that will complete the Tumen transport gateway and link the diverse strengths of the region. In this context, the Meeting strongly encouraged Japan to become an active participant in the Tumen Programme.

The Meeting recognized that international participation is urgently needed in support of social concerns, including human resource development, poverty reduction, and human security. In this context, the Meeting called upon the international community and, in particular, overseas Northeast Asians and all Northeast Asian countries to build upon the new spirit of trust and good will prevailing in the region. National and intraregional training, education, and language instruction should receive high priority. Recognizing the rising issues related to labor markets and migration, the Meeting suggested that a consultative working group be established to examine such issues and suggest cooperative solutions. The Meeting also urged all interested parties to pursue regional cooperation and human resource development in a manner that respects the national sovereignty, economic structure, and culture of each country.

The Meeting recognized the supply and use of energy resources, particularly gas, in Northeast Asia as an excellent opportunity for furthering regional economic cooperation, including mitigation of environmental impacts. In particular, the Meeting recognized the potential for mutual benefit in cooperation in the energy sector. Given the complexity of issues at the national and international levels, the Meeting endorsed the concept of an Asian Energy Community to advance mutual understanding and guide the policy dialogue. The Meeting recalled that, at its Ninth Meeting, the Forum endorsed a study of cooperation in natural gas development and supply. The Meeting was therefore gratified to learn that the World Bank in cooperation with Japan is sponsoring a study to develop a strategic framework for gas trade in the region.

The Meeting expressed its heartfelt gratitude to Jilin Province and the Changchun Municipal Government for their hospitality and efficient organization of the meeting. Looking to the future, the Meeting warmly welcomed the announcement that the Eleventh Meeting of the Forum would be held in Anchorage, Alaska, and encouraged participation by all countries in Northeast Asia.