

China and Tumen Area Cooperation

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The Tumen River Area Development Programme involves the three riparian countries (China, Russia, and North Korea) and two others (South Korea and Mongolia). This project gained the interest and support of the UNDP. According to the basic assumptions articulated by the UNDP and the countries of this area, the ultimate goal in the development of the Tumen River area is to form a “free-trade area” where China, Russia, and North Korea share common borders. The area will take advantage of outstanding ports, a special location and adequate resources, and it will form a new flourishing area in Northeast Asia.

The development of the Tumen River area has become an important part of China’s open economy. The Chinese part of the Tumen River area is 42.7 thousand square kilometers and has a population of 2.18 million. It is part of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region in Jilin Province. This area is the best place for succeeding with an open economy policy because of its proximity to the sea and because it lies along border areas. The governments, including the central government, the provincial government, and the autonomous prefectural government, all pay much attention to the development of the Tumen River area. The State Council has established work committees in the provincial government and autonomous prefectural government. In New York in December 1995, the governments of the five Tumen Programme countries signed two agreements and one memorandum of understanding. The secretariat of the UNDP Tumen Programme was set up in Beijing in June 1996. The leaders of China’s central government have shown great interest in and have high expectations of the development of Tumen River area. The Tumen River area is developing rapidly and widening the degree of its opening. The achievements of the Tumen River Area Development Programme include:

- infrastructure improvements: ports, roads, airports, economic cooperation areas, and the like
- enhanced tourism and trade between parts of Russia, North Korea, Japan, and South Korea.
- attracting foreign business and investment
- using the ports of Russia and North Korean to set up joint overseas transportation routes
- support from the countries involved and from the international community. The development of Tumen River area is characterized by mutual complementarity and competition.

- opportunities opened for Tumen River area development by policies adopted by the Chinese government that accelerate and support the development of Mid-west China
- reforms and opening-up policies of the autonomous prefectural government and the economic growth of this area during the last 20 years, which have provided a good base for future development and opening-up of the Tumen River area.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The UNDP and the member countries should use the present working committees and the Secretariat of the UNDP Tumen River project to discuss the difficulties in cooperation.
2. Persuade Japan to become a member as soon as possible.
3. Set up an “APEC Consultative Committee on the Development of the Tumen River area and Northeast Asia” in APEC.
4. Strengthen official relationships among the countries concerned so that regional economic cooperation may be accelerated. The governments of the region should make more efforts to this effect.
5. Promote social and cultural communication and understanding among the people of the region. This kind of communication can reduce difficulties in cooperation and may bring more business opportunities.
6. Each country concerned should pay more attention to the development of this area. We suggest that the UNDP take the lead in (1) creating a feasible development plan for the Tumen River area, (2) promoting the establishment of the Tumen River Area Development Fund and Bank, (3) encouraging the three riparian countries (China, Russia, North Korea) to sign an agreement on open ports. (4) promoting the establishment of transportation routes of the Tumen River area, and (5) activating tourism and trade.