

JAPAN-CHINA-ROK TRILATERAL SUMMIT AND EAST ASIA COOPERATION*

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Introduction

Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit was convened last December 2008 in Japan, in responding to the negative effect of global financial crisis on Japan, China and ROK's economy. It is the first time for the Leaders of Japan, China and ROK to hold an independent meeting, and not under the framework of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

The Trilateral Summit will be held on an annual basis and China as the host for this year Trilateral Summit. Having a regular Trilateral Summit is an interesting phenomenon in light of the existing regional processes leading to the East Asia regional integration.

Trilateral Summit

The Trilateral Summit is expected to contribute significantly to the stability and prosperity of East Asia region and the entire world. The Summit will consolidate cooperation among the three major countries in Northeast Asia by enhancing mutual political trust, increasing trade and economic contacts, and expanding social and cultural exchanges. The close cooperation among the three countries will balance the competitive tendencies of their relations and contribute to peace and stability in the region.

* This paper is presented before Roundtable Discussion on Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit and East Asia Cooperation, Jakarta 3rd April 2009

14320 The close relation among the three countries will have a great impact to the region since all of them are the major power of the world. In term of economy, Japan is the second largest world economy, China is the fourth and ROK is the fourteenth. The combined GDP of the three countries will account for 15.8 % of the world GDP. In term of population the combined population of the three countries will account for 22.46% of the world population.

The development of cooperation among the three countries following the establishment of Trilateral Summit will have a significant impact to the region. Therefore, ASEAN should respond positively to the development of the Trilateral Summit. For many years, ASEAN has constructively engaged with the three Northeast Asian countries participating in Trilateral Summit through various ASEAN-related forums such as ASEAN+1 cooperation, APT, EAS, ARF and APEC. ASEAN should therefore continue to play an active role in the said regional fora to maintain its central role and further strengthen its cooperation with these three countries.

ASEAN believes that the Trilateral Summit will not weaken the existing processes of regional cooperation, but the Summit will complement and mutually reinforce the existing regional cooperation fora. The outcome of that Summit clearly reconfirmed the Leaders' commitment to enhance their cooperation with ASEAN and support ASEAN as the driving force for cooperation in East Asia.

As mentioned previously, the Trilateral Summit was triggered by the negative effect of the global financial crisis on the economy of participating countries, and it is not intended to replace the existing ASEAN-Led fora. The three countries commit that the existing evolving regional architecture in East Asia with ASEAN as the driving force is still needed to create regional prosperity and stability. ASEAN is considered as a neutral party that can bridge the political differences between the three countries.

The dynamic changes in the political and economic constellation in East Asia following the Trilateral Summit should encourage ASEAN Member States to further strengthen cooperation and solidarity among themselves. ASEAN should utilize this momentum to raise ASEAN leverage by actively playing its role in the evolving regional architecture through innovative means of addressing global challenges. By doing so, ASEAN will be able to maintain its central role on the existing the evolving regional architecture.

ASEAN has had the momentum to strengthen its cooperation by the adoption of ASEAN Charter on December 15, 2008 that transformed ASEAN from a loose organization into a rules-based organization. In addition, the

adoption of the Blueprint of three pillars of ASEAN Community namely ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint at the 13th ASEAN Summit on November 2007, ASEAN Political Security Community Blueprint and ASEAN Socio Cultural Community Blueprint at the 14th ASEAN Summit on March 2009 will give a clear guidance on the ASEAN efforts to establish ASEAN Community in 2015.

ASEAN Plus Three (APT)

The establishment of APT was triggered by the Asia financial crisis in 1997. The APT consists of ASEAN member countries, Japan, China, and Republic of Korea. The APT was institutionalized through the adoption of Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation on the third ASEAN Plus Three Summit in Manila, 1999. The East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) was established in 2001 to study the further direction of APT. East Asia Study Group (EASG) was established in 2002 to evaluate EAVG recommendations and to implement the recommendations into concrete cooperation programs.

The 11th ASEAN Plus Three Summit on November 2007 in Singapore adopted Second Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation and ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan 2007-2017. The Second Joint Statement is aimed to support the establishment of ASEAN Community 2015, while the contents of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan 2007-2017 are the priority programs under ASEAN Plus Three cooperation for the next ten years.

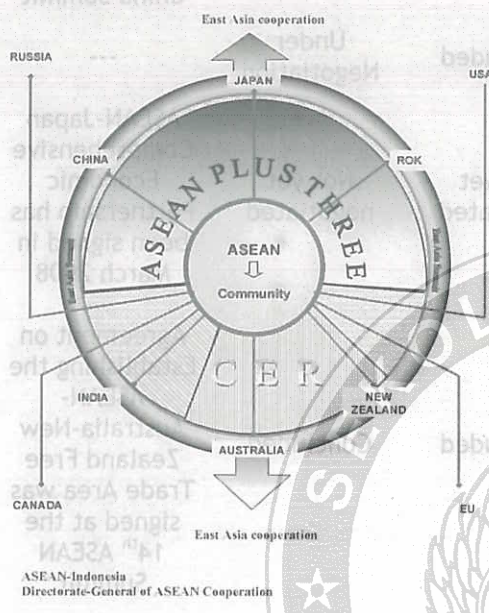
The ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan 2007-2017 gives emphasis on the following cooperation areas: economy and finance, energy, environment, climate change and sustainable development, socio-cultural and strengthening the APT institution and mechanism. Indonesia actively participates to implement the Work Plan 2007-2017 by conducting Indonesian Language Program for the government officials of APT member countries, and conducting ASEAN Plus Three Senior Diplomatic Training Course.

East Asia Summit (EAS)

East Asia Summit (EAS), the other regional mechanism in East Asia region, was established in 2005. EAS is an open, inclusive, transparent and outward-looking leaders led summit forum which is aimed to strengthen the implementation of universal norms and values with ASEAN as a driving force of the forum. EAS consists of 10 ASEAN countries, Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand.

EAS focused its cooperation on five priority areas which are energy, finance, education, *Avian Influenza*, and natural disaster. EAS Summit also discussed thematic issues such as sustainable development, transfer of technology, socio-economy development, good governance, human rights, and democratization.

ASEAN and the Evolving Regional Architecture



APT and EAS are complementary process to strengthen regional cooperation and ASEAN is the driving force of both regional fora. ASEAN is considered as a neutral party that can bridge the political differences between the member countries of APT and EAS, so both APT and EAS acknowledge the ASEAN centrality principle on their mechanism. The ASEAN centrality principle is also in line the ASEAN Charter. The Charter explicitly stipulated ASEAN's purposes, one of them is *"to maintain the centrality and proactive role of ASEAN as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners in a regional architecture that is open, transparent and inclusive"*.

Indonesia is of the view that ASEAN needs to concentrate on our community building efforts in order to realize the ASEAN Community by 2015. We believe that APT and EAS are both equally important process to support the establishment of ASEAN Community.

In the field of economic cooperation with ASEAN dialogue partners in East Asia, ASEAN exerts to engage its economy through the establishment of ASEAN+1 Free Trade Area (FTA). Some FTA negotiations have been on the advanced stage but some negotiation is still on the preliminary stage. This can lead to the establishment of an East Asia free trade area by 2012 or 2015 at the latest with an aggregate population of 3.6 billion.

The status of FTA Agreement negotiation between ASEAN and its dialogue partner in East Asia are as follows:

ASEAN +1 FTA	Trade In Goods	Trade in Service	Investment	Note
ASEAN - China	Concluded	Concluded	Negotiation concluded	Investment Agreement is ready for adoption in the forthcoming 12 th ASEAN- China Summit
ASEAN - ROK	Conclude	Concluded	Under Negotiation	---
ASEAN - Japan	Not yet negotiated	Not yet negotiated	Not yet negotiated	ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership has been signed in March 2008
ASEAN- Australia- New Zealand	Concluded	Concluded	Concluded	Agreement on Establishing the ASEAN- Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area was signed at the 14 th ASEAN Summit
ASEAN - India	Concluded	Not yet negotiated	Not yet negotiated	Trade in Goods Agreement is yet to be adopted

Conclusion

Indonesia noted with interest the convening of the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit last year and this as a positive development that will contribute to stability and add dynamism to the economies of the Asian region.

ASEAN has played a significant role as a bridge builder, encouraging these countries to have more confidence in one another. ASEAN provides frameworks in which they can engage one another. ASEAN's role has been acknowledged in the Trilateral Summit, as their Leaders clearly reconfirmed

their commitment to enhance their cooperation with ASEAN and support ASEAN as the driving force for cooperation in East Asia.

Accordingly, the Trilateral Summit will not weaken the existing regional cooperation processes such as ASEAN Plus Three, the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. The Trilateral Summit, in fact, will complement and reinforce ASEAN's efforts at advancing these regional cooperation frameworks.

The dynamic changes in the political and economic constellation in East Asia following the Trilateral Summit should encourage ASEAN Member States to further strengthen its cohesiveness.

