

IFTC 2021

Opening Remarks

MICHIGAMI Hisashi (道上 尚史)

H.E. Mr. CHOI Jongmoon, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK,

H.E. Amb. AIBOSHI Koichi, Ambassador of Japan to the ROK,

H.E. Amb. XING Haiming, Ambassador of China to the ROK,

H.E. Mr. BAN Ki-moon, Former UN Secretary General,

Distinguished guests,

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS), it is my great pleasure to welcome our distinguished speakers and participants. My special gratitude goes to the governments of China, Japan and Korea for their trust and support over the past 10 years, and we are truly honored by the congratulatory messages from the three foreign ministers. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the relevant organizations, media partners, and everyone who is joining us online.

(TCS Development for the Past 10 Years)

In 2011, on its first day, the TCS started with only six people. 10 years later today, the TCS has grown into an organization with 32 staff members.

The development of the TCS can be roughly divided into two chapters. The first half of the decade was the period of **organization building** and **quantitative growth**. During this period, the TCS focused on broadening its reach in governmental cooperation schemes. In the second half, the TCS achieved **qualitative growth by making its own contributions** to both governmental and non-governmental sectors. The TCS started to

propose and implement cooperative projects on economy, education, environment, health, and disaster management, just to name a few.

Now, please allow me to share some of my observations as the TCS Secretary-General.

(1. Successful Trilateral Cooperation)

First, I have found that **trilateral cooperation has been active and successful**. Some may consider that trilateral cooperation is slow in progress due to difficulties of bilateral relations, but that is not necessarily the case in reality. Trilateral cooperation has steadily developed over the past 20 years. There are 21 ministerial level meetings being held along with the Trilateral Summit, which is quite a remarkable number. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was even a period when six ministerial meetings were held within six weeks. Although we wish for smooth bilateral relations, it is noteworthy that trilateral cooperation is already functioning well, regardless of the ups and downs of the three bilateral relations.

(2. Human Security Issues – Common Benefit)

Second, the TCS attaches particular importance to **human security**, such as environment, health, and disaster prevention, which are pressing issues in all three countries. For example, **environmental ministers** went beyond simply expressing visions, by actually implementing the common *Action Plans*. Furthermore, they institutionalized platforms for businesses and students, in addition to governments. In the **health sector**, the three ministers have held consultations on aging and infectious diseases. Even under the difficulties of COVID-19, they have continued to meet online to cope with the crisis. The TCS has also organized a webinar on COVID-19 which attracted viewers from 70 countries around the world. As these areas of cooperation are directly connected to the needs and happiness of the people of the three countries, we are delighted and honored to take part in this contribution.

(3. Learning from Each Other)

Third, in various meetings, I have found that the three countries have **mutual respect and willingness to learn from each other**. For example, as Japan has rich experiences in areas such as environment, aging, and disaster prevention, China and Korea are keenly learning from Japan. Meanwhile, Japan is interested in the rapidly strengthened administrative schemes of China and Korea. Such exchanges lead to mutually beneficial cooperation in many fields.

(4. Non-Governmental Cooperation)

Fourth, **cooperation engaging non-governmental sectors** has been one of our major pillars. The TCS has increased its activities in the areas of business, youth, academia, culture, and media. Examples include the Trilateral Entrepreneurs Forum, the CAMPUS Asia Alumni Workshop, the Trilateral Youth Summit, IFTC, and the Journalist Exchange Program. I would like to underline that exchange programs for young people are particularly important, which gives an impetus to future-oriented cooperation.

(Ongoing Cooperation and Activities under the Pandemic)

While COVID-19 has suspended face-to-face meetings and exchanges, the TCS has carried on its endeavors by organizing webinars and promoting publications over the past year. Marking its 10th anniversary, the TCS kicked off projects including an online symposium series and a photo exhibition. Keeping in mind that COVID-19 has caused a setback to the world economy and increased the gap between the rich and the poor, we, together with the three governments, will continue to make the utmost efforts to address the relevant issues.

Distinguished guests,

Trilateral cooperation and the TCS have been developing successfully, but at the same time, we still have a long way to go. Inspired by the

<*Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade*> declared at the 8th Trilateral Summit, the TCS will spare no effort to strengthen future-oriented cooperation. I sincerely seek your continuous support and suggestions for trilateral cooperation as well as the TCS.

I look forward to fruitful discussions by the distinguished participants today.

Thank you.