

Introduction to This International Symposium

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My name is Yamashita. Thank you very much for your attendance. In order to prepare for this international symposium we spend a very long time. My initial visit to the Delegation of the European Commission to Japan was in September of two years ago. And I realize that all of the ambassadors and the representatives have gone back to Brussels by now. So, we have been preparing for this symposium for this past two years, and we are very grateful for the great support that we have received from them to realize this symposium.

In this symposium, we are going to think of the regional integration in Asia and learn from the experience in Europe. In general terms, many people say that Asia may have a greater diversity. And things may be more difficult. In Europe there may be the Christian tradition which is something that we do not have in Asia. People in this specialty may not talk about this issue in such ways, but I think that may be the general impression that may be held among the public. Europe itself is quite diverse. I think it may not have been easy even for Europe either to reach the current state. I suppose they have struggled; they have faced many difficulties in order to reach the current state. Surely there might be an Asian identity which is somewhat different from that of European, and so, in that sense, ultimately we will need to find our own approach to regional integration in Asia. Still I believe that it is very much worth trying to learn from Europe.

So in order to take a multi-faceted approach towards this topic, we are taking an interdisciplinary approach. Today we discuss monetary policies and finance, and tomorrow morning this will be followed by international trade, as well as politics and culture in later sessions. So we try to take a multi-faceted approach by covering different disciplines in this three-day international symposium.

As for the speakers, we have mostly academic scholars, but we have also invited politicians, bureaucrats, as well as representatives from the central banks, we have journalists, as well as corporate representatives, so I think we have invited speakers from these different fields, and this nature of our guests is, I think, a special characteristics of this meeting. As a matter of fact, we talk about “the ASEAN+3”, that is 10 countries of ASEAN plus Japan, China, and Korea, as a way to lead to the regional integration in Asia, but unfortunately Japan may not have been so positive or may have been the least positive among all these 13 countries in trying to promote such a framework. But I think that approach needs to be enhanced with greater input from Japan as well. So, throughout this symposium, I think this topic would be

dealt with widely. So, although the time is quite limited, I sincerely hope that this three-day program will be a useful one for all of you, and you would think about this issue seriously, taking this opportunity. Thank you very much for your attention.