

**NEAT Working Group on
Enhancing People to People Connectivity
-Education, Tourism and Cultural Exchange-**

Final Report

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1. Introduction

Through the institutionalization of ASEAN+3 (APT) in 1997 and the East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005, regional cooperation and integration in the East Asia region has been promoted. Especially ASEAN, which has enforced its ASEAN Charter in December 2008 and aimed at community building within ASEAN by 2015 has rapidly increased integration efforts. For ASEAN Community Building, enhancing “connectivity” is the most important task, with ASEAN having adopted “ASEAN Leaders’ Statement on ASEAN Connectivity” in 2009, “Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity” in 2010. Efforts to integration are made based on three pillars: “Physical Connectivity,” which includes transportation, telecommunications and energy networks, “Institutional Connectivity,” which includes trade, investment the liberalization and facilitation of the service sector and “People to People Connectivity,” which includes education, tourism and cultural exchange. Additionally, APT as well as EAS have adopted the “Declaration of the 6th East Asia Summit on ASEAN Connectivity” in 6th EAS in 2011 and the “Leaders’ Statement on ASEAN Plus Three Partnership on Connectivity” in 15th APT in 2012, with both frameworks strongly supporting the enhancing of connectivity within ASEAN. The move towards enhancing connectivity within the East Asia region as a whole is gaining momentum and enhancing people to people connectivity is increasing in importance as a foundation of the improvement of physical and institutional connectivity.

Taking account of the rapidly advancing economic, cultural, and social integration in the 21st century, it is necessary for countries to discuss the issues that they must tackle and share tasks in order for further integration of the region. In addition, to strengthen “people to people connectivity” which is mentioned in the “ASEAN+3 Leaders’ Statement on Connectivity Partnership” policies should be implemented efficiently. Furthermore, as reality changes over time, it is necessary to take into consideration whether or not an emphasis should be put on new matters to accommodate the ever-changing environment.

Given the above mentioned background, this WG in phase 1 on “Enhancing People to People Connectivity -Education, Tourism and Cultural Exchange-” was held in Tokyo, Japan on 31 July 2013, thereby developing concrete and feasible policy recommendations to be submitted to the ASEAN plus Three Summit. This WG made the following policy recommendations last year.

- (1) To expand and support the current higher education network system among ASEAN+3

countries; i.e. Enlargement of Campus Asia Project by Japan, China and South Korea to ASEAN Countries, and partnership enlargement of ASEAN University Network (AUN) to the East Asian countries under ASEAN+3 University Network (ASEAN+3 UNet) with a characteristic of multi-layered system. To transform the existing ASEAN+1 international exchange and cooperation programs into the ASEAN+3 framework.

(2) To promote systematization of regional quality assurance and credit transfer systems of higher education in ASEAN+3 with cooperation of current systems, i.e. ASEAN University Network - Quality Assurance (AUN-QA), ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN), Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS), and Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students (Campus Asia) and so on.

(3) To promote the cultural exchanges for mutual understanding through a regional common project, i.e. to establish the “East Asian Cultural City” which was already launched by China, South Korea and Japan, and to expand this system to ASEAN countries to attractive people’s concern to the Asian culture including popular culture.

(4) To develop cultural exchanges among youth to act together for fostering a sustainable development regional society. The exchanges should include “study tours”, “green tourism” or “rural tourism” which will provide the participants with the opportunities to interact with local community, to be exposed to rich traditions, as well as to enjoy diverse natural environments.

(5) To enhance institutional building and people skills for cultural exchange and tourism, i.e. to establish a regional language training framework and to create knowledge sharing system on culture and tourism of ASEAN + 3 countries.

(6) To develop academic collaborative research on historical artifacts and to promote preservation and protection of cultural assets and cultural heritage, and cultural industry development by making visible systems and capacity building of human resource.

(7) To establish a trans-national collaborative higher education and research institution in East Asia on regional and global issues like "APT Cyber University" that was originally proposed by the NEAT Working Group on the Enhancement of Cultural Exchange in East Asia 2007-2012 to foster

understanding of different cultures and diversity.

(8) To establish a regional financial support system to encourage people's connectivity through educational and cultural exchanges including tourism.

2. Objective

The objective of this Working Group, based on these backgrounds and issues, taking a wide viewpoint from the "track2" position and placing its much emphasis on the importance of the current regional cooperation in East Asia, is to propose a detailed policy recommendations on "the enhancing of people to people connectivity" and to submit it to the ASEAN Plus Three Summit Meeting. In particular, this WG on phase 2 on "Enhancing People to People Connectivity -Education, Tourism and Cultural Exchange" has a following perspective. The concept of "People to People Connectivity" should be considered in a close relationship with key subjects of coexistence in a multicultural society, sustainable development, and social resilience. There are various stakeholders in this modern society, and an individual person has come to take a more important role in a social change instead of a nation. In this process, it has become a more crucial factor how to connect people to people and how to enhance its connectivity.

First, the field of education, especially higher education, has witnessed the emerging trend of standardization along with globalization. Quality assurance is particularly important in standardization. For example, the OECD began the "Feasibility Study" of the "Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO)" in 2011. However, the AHELO tests the attainment of learning on specific subjects as well as general abilities, such as the critical thinking, problem solving, and communication. These abilities do not necessarily sympathize with the culture of the APT member countries which emphasize the "harmonization" to maintain conciliatory and harmonious relationship among people. On the other hand, this harmonizing ability could be crucial one for making innovation in various fields, because innovation can be realized through dialogues among the people of different fields. The global trend for better quality assurance will expectedly accelerate in the future. And, as a practical matter, it is important to note that European and American universities dominate the top world university ranking. Given so, it is necessary to assess the current situation and tasks in setting the standard of educational quality assurance in the APT. Also, along with higher education, elementary and secondary

education has also witnessed similar trend of standardization. For example, the OECD has conducted the triennial “Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)” targeting 15-year-old children since 2003, and 510,000 students from 65 countries (including 34 OECD member countries and 31 non-member countries and areas) participated in the 2012 survey. The PISA also tries to test non-cognitive student achievements such as problem solving skills. In the future, further evaluations will be necessary for the appropriateness of these surveys for the APT member countries. In turn, it will be also necessary to conduct surveys for the Asian version of academic ability, establish the basis for it, and discuss the foundation of a practical common educational institution.

The field of higher education has also witnessed the increasingly active international movement of students. Those from Asia have increased in the proportion to account for more than half of the international students in the world✕. Along with this trend, cross-boundary educational activities for international students have developed on a multilateral basis in East Asia. The ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programme (AIMS), which the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization-Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED) initiated in 2010, has expanded to seven countries including Japan. The ASEAN University Network (AUN) has also developed the ASEAN+3 framework including Japanese, Chinese, and South Korean universities. Important tasks with the international movement of students include the improvement of the credit transfer system. For example, SEAMEO-RIHED has begun modifying the existing system to adjust to the reality and developing the Academic Credit Transfer Framework for Asia (ACTFA). How would the concerned countries cooperate within the APT framework to improve these existing and developing systems? It is necessary to comprehend this current situation as a source of data, to clarify the issues to solve, and to discuss the solutions in the future.

Hence, in the field of education, it is especially important to consider how to improve a concrete means of quality assurance and credit transfer. As in the APT framework, the ASEAN+3 Education Minister Meeting in 2012 adopted the “ASEAN+3 Plan of Action on Education: 2010-2017.” The meeting also initiated the “ASEAN+3 Working Group on Mobility of Higher Education and Ensuring Quality Assurance of Higher Education,” the first meeting of which was held in Tokyo last year.

Another future challenge in the field of education is how to “sophisticate” education in the face of the possible deterioration of higher education’s quality as a result of

the rapidly rising university advancement rate. Other urgent issues that need concrete discussions include how to achieve a balanced human resource development between advanced “researchers” and “professional,” how to define education in the aging society with falling birth rate, how to promote industry-academia cooperation, and how to invigorate rural areas losing youth to urban areas. For the present WG, it is necessary to discuss the means to enhance the connectivity in the field of education based on the existing frameworks, systems, and their accomplishments.

Next, as in the field of tourism, the ASEAN+3 Tourism Ministers Meeting decided to promote various ways of cooperation. Although the number of tourists within the East and Southeast Asian region has grown rapidly partly because of the new development of Low Cost Carrier (LCC), the APT is now facing new challenges. The tourism industry can be vulnerable as it is susceptible to various external shocks, ranging from natural disasters, accidents to international relations and domestic politics. The APT should make utmost effort to enhance the sustainability of tourism development and jointly work to prevent the destruction of the natural environment and the intangible community heritage. Closer People to People Connectivity at the trans-local and trans-national levels can play an important role to contribute to the sustainability. From this perspective, future international cooperation may focus on, for example, “community-based tourism” in which local residents are encouraged to participate in the planning and to actively utilize local resources, including both tangible and intangible heritages. The APT countries may also be more active in identifying the common challenges that they face, and strive to exchange experiences and learn from each other accordingly. For instance all the APT countries are facing growing socio-economic gaps between urban and the rural societies. To promote tourism development as a way to enhance local community revitalization in the countryside has become an important task for all countries.

Last but not least, as in the field of cultural exchanges, related projects is an important factor to enhance the connectivity because they develop and deepen exchanges among people as well as mutual understanding along with such exchanges. Different cultural exchange projects have been already taking places under the Japan-China-South Korea and the APT frameworks. Whereas the successes of these projects are meaningful, they have left room for further cooperation in the future. As such, it is necessary to have a follow-up of those on-going projects and to discuss the preservation of cultural heritages, a missing item of the agenda. A number of well-known tangible heritages are already

registered as world heritages. However, it is a common task for countries concerned to manage the adverse effect of designating a world heritage, such as the rapid increase of tourists at the site. As for intangible heritages, the trend of globalization has rendered it difficult to preserve them in local communities. Given this situation, it is necessary to discuss the means for cooperation to energize each country's intangible heritages in the APT framework. In that sense, 3 category II centers of UNESCO on intangible cultural heritage which are settled in China, Japan and South Korea could be the key institutions for the enrichment of preserving intangible cultural heritage in APT countries.

3. Discussions on People-to-People Connectivity- Education, Tourism and Cultural Exchange

21 experts from ASEAN +3 member countries, the ASEAN SEAMEO- RIHED and the sponsoring organization, the Japan Forum on International Relations (JFIR), took part in the WG meeting. The WG meeting had the following three sessions.

In Session 1, "East Asia's Education Cooperation: how to improve higher education system in East Asia," we discussed the significance of promotion and support of balanced mobility of students and faculty in the ASEAN + 3 framework based on the experience of ASEAN + 3 Working Group on Mobility of Higher Education and Ensuring Quality Assurance of Higher Education like ASEAN University Network, AIMS program and ASEAN Credit Transfer System. We confirmed the importance of establishing a forum where "Asian Academic Standard" beyond borders can be discussed embracing cultural diversity and tradition of harmony in East Asia, and a regional higher education institution to promote East Asian regional cooperation and to tackle shared problems such as aging society, environment issues, political and cultural conflicts. To promote ASEAN + 3 regional collaboration not only in public higher education but also in technical and vocational education and in private higher education to effectively respond to transforming demands of East Asian economies. To sum up, in order to formulate ASEAN + 3 networks of higher education institutions, university presidents, researchers and teachers collaborating with existing global and regional networks to enhance trans-disciplinary approach across human/ social/ natural sciences and Asian studies by Asian researchers to tackle shared problems of the region. Additionally, a regional language cooperation system in ASEAN +3

framework recognizing the efficacy and efficiency of English as a communication tool for Asian regional cooperation while organizational effort should be paid to establish an appropriate leaning system of Asian national and local languages to promote mutual cultural understanding.

In Session 2, "East Asia's Tourism and Cultural Exchange Cooperation: how to cooperate to develop a sustainable tourism and to energize intangible heritages," we discussed the importance of local community involvement and community based tourism as effective implementation of sustainable/responsible tourism. We should pursue quality rather than quantity of the industry in order to prevent the destruction of natural environment and intangible heritage. In order to promote the APT brand of sustainable and responsible tourism we can work together on marketing promotion, for instance by introducing common tourist visa, establishing APT quality standards for tourism destinations to follow by compiling something like the "Michelin Green Guide".

We also discussed how we can utilize pop culture, food, movie, art, fashion and sports to raise young generations' awareness and revitalize intangible cultural heritage. APT regional cooperation is critical in establishing Study Tour for youth to learn the shared facing challenges, such as environmental issues, threat of climate changes natural calamities, energy management, migration to urban areas: widening gap between the cities and rural areas, and to cultivate the shared APT regional identity beyond local and national identity. In addition, ICT can be actively used to provide language training, promote knowledge sharing on tourism, and encourage learning about cultural diversities across the region..

In Session 3, "How to Further Enhancing People to People Connectivity in East Asia?," we discussed the functions of cultural exchange in order to promote people to people connectivity to realize unity in diversity. Taking considerations of current situations of cultural exchange through education and tourism in the Asian region, we can recognize some implications of cultural exchange. They are 1) transferring knowledge and information across national borders, thereby overcoming isolation at home and becoming familiar with different cultures, 2) enabling wider cooperation and promoting mobilization of intellectuals for more effective solutions to national and international social problems, and 3) creating networks and connectivity to cooperate together. Taking these points into consideration, it is important to formulate sustainable networking in the region. On the other hand, there are some issues of networking as medium of communication, cultural

conflicts, political initiative and competition, finance issue to support networking and relationship of internationalization and localization. In spite of these subjects, there are lots of global and regional issues to overcome in our cooperation, and in that case we need to make an academic platform to bring young leaders together beyond national boundaries and consider those issues together about cross-fields issues from the trans-disciplinary approach. We need to coordinate a multi-layered and sustainable networking system with common goals and purposes at regional, governments, institutions, and grass-roots levels.

4. Policy Recommendations

Based on the discussions above, this Working Group on “Enhancing People to People Connectivity -Education, Tourism and Cultural Exchange-”summarized the following policy recommendations;

(1) To establish a forum or a platform with multilayered structure and various learning styles; such as a self-learning system like MOOC as an Asian cyber university, or Asian version of “College of Europe” and "European University Institute" where Asian people can come to learn together while strengthening education network scheme like ASEAN University Network (AUN) and ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) program. There should not be only public higher education but also in technical and vocational education and in private higher education to effectively respond to transforming demands of East Asian economies.

(2) To reorganize a regional meeting in order to make an inter-regional academic networking. There are already IAU as a league of higher education institutions and IAUP as one of presidents in higher education sector and if these world-wide organizations have regional based approach, they can be more functional. APT can be a good initiative in this regional activity including teacher, staff and researchers’ mobility.

(3) To establish a forum or a platform where “Asian Academic Standards” beyond borders can be discussed embracing cultural diversity and tradition of harmony in East Asia. For example, the project of ASEAN Research Cluster through internet by SEAMEO-RIHED can promote intra-regional and inter-regional access to research materials which can activate

student mobility and research cooperation not only within ASEAN but also in the ASEAN + 3 framework and beyond. It can be a platform or an institute to discuss regional and global issues thorough a trans-disciplinary approach cross human/ social/ natural sciences and Asian studies by Asian researchers to tackle shared problems of the region.

(4) To formulate a regional language cooperation system in ASEAN +3 framework recognizing the efficacy and efficiency of English as a communication tool for Asian regional cooperation while organizational efforts should be paid to establish an appropriate leaning system of Asian national and local languages to promote mutual cultural understanding.

(5) To take a transnational approach to choose topics of a learning commons to be shared beyond national boundaries. For example, many Asian countries has been facing change for aging society and environment issue and it is important for Asian countries to cooperate to struggle with them to realize a sustainable society in Asia. In that case, it is important to consider significance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a key concept to be discussed and succeeded.

(6) To look for concrete ways of solving the common issues in Asia. In particular, it is important for us to use technology to respond to social subjects while considering diversity of Asian culture For example, it should be a *nursing care robot* can be regarded as a tool of aging society's process. And a festival or an expo as a cultural activity as well as sports can be a great opportunity for many country's people can share human care skills and technology.

(7) In order to promote regional cooperation in establishing sustainable and responsible tourism new types of tourism such as eco-tourism, volunteer tourism and green tourism should be encouraged. Establishing the quality standards in ensuring local community involvement in tourism sustainable development by compiling popular reference books can be effective. We also need to tackle common challenges of managing possible negative impacts on the environment as well as on the local community' intangible heritage from the increasing number of tourists. Youth's study tours across the region can serve as a productive way to prompt people-to-people connectivity, not only across countries but also

between the rural and urban areas.

(8) To promote to preserve intangible cultural assets and heritage in cooperation of APT. Japan, China and South Korean have already settled UNESCO centers for preserving intangible cultural assets respectively, they can cooperate together to promote cultural heritage succession and to encourage ASEAN countries to involve this activity together in the near future.

[END]

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