



## **“The Asian Century: The Next Phase of Globalization”**

**Adrian S. Cristobal Jr.**

Chairman, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)

Some people say, “We live in the century of Asia.”

During the past three years, while China has wielded a stronger presence, the United States has become more aggressive, and a lot of problems have arisen in Europe. In such a situation, Asia and its leaders are attracting the world’s attention.

First of all, Asia is growing, and it is important to understand why it is. Next, it is also important to think what the growth of Asia means to the world and how we can take advantage of the opportunity of the growth of Asia to build a healthier and richer society.

From major macro-economy indexes, the economic growth of Asia is apparent. For example, in the real GDP of the world and the regional shares in the number of middle-class consumers, the proportion of Europe and North America has continued to decline, while that of Asia holds the first place and is thought to continue to increase. In addition, Asia is also improving in social indexes such as literacy rate.

Trade of goods and services is also remarkably growing, particularly trade within the Asia region is increasing. Further, while direct overseas investing grows, direct investments within the region are rising. The flow of people within Asia has also become active.

Asia is making progress in terms of knowledge and technological innovation that is an important factor for continuous development and is globally obtaining earnings through knowledge.

As to transportation and distribution, Asia is also becoming an important hub for product transfer and international travel.

In terms of culture, which is an index to measure influence, it is expanding its world-wide share in the fields of publishing, entertainment, etc., and cultural exchange within the region is getting more active.

As discussed above, Asia is growing in goods, capital, people, knowledge, and transportation in the region, and its integration is advancing. These changes and networks are redefining globalization.

Asia has given the answer of regionalization as an antidote to the world inclining

to protectionism and isolationism. While Asia is very diverse economically and culturally, it is mutually complementary and provides very large hubs and networks in “industrialization,” “technological innovation,” and “culture & mobility.”

In the field of tourism that is a theme of this congress, an increasing number of the Chinese go on overseas trips and the number is expected to continue to further rise in the future. Japan is a popular tourist destination and can be said to have great potential. In addition, niche markets in the field of sightseeing have also emerged, such as medical tourism in Thailand and the beauty tourism in Korea.

Integration of Asia has brought in large networks in the fields of “industrialization,” “technological innovation,” and “culture & mobility.” Recession of globalization is observed in many regions, but I think Asia is approaching the next phase of globalization, that is, regionalization.

In this phase, it is important for politicians and others to solve conflicts and problems by strengthening organized collaborative relationships and building reliable structures. Furthermore, it is also important to seek synergistic effects by utilizing mutually complementary characteristics of Asian countries and to enhance the flow of people in the region by promoting the expansion of commerce, capital, and culture.

I believe this East Asia Local and Regional Government Congress will also contribute to strengthening of coordination between regions. Strengthening of coordination will lead to further coordination, contribute to the solution of various problems, as well as promote mutual understanding among people, and produce precious things beyond economy and business.

