



## **The First Japan-China-Republic of Korea Youth Forum, hosted in Japan, 12-17 September 2010**

### ***Fostering Partnerships for the World***

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Report by Kunugi Tatsuro \*, Board Member, UN Association of Japan

This report<sup>1</sup> presents: Background and purposes of the First Youth Forum; Three components of the program -- Cultural interchange/Model UN Conference/Symposium; Comments by students; and Conclusion

#### **Background and Purposes**

Over recent years, there has been a widely shared expectation about the “Great Shift East,” and in particular about the role of three countries in the Far East, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, to play a constructive role in addressing the continued tendency towards global turmoil, recession and instability.

The Summit meetings of the three countries have lately been held several times. However, for the purpose of further developing and sustaining concerted efforts for the world in the long run, it is particularly important to promote mutual understanding and cultural and intellectual interchange among college students who will bear responsibility for the next generation. It would also seem desirable if the responsibility they assume would be imbued with the spirit of enlightened global leadership for the entire humanity, by transcending nationalism and by enhancing joint efforts for strengthening the United Nations.

It was against this background and relevant thoughts that the Presidents of the UN Associations of our three countries, when they met at the Plenary Assembly of WFUNA (World Federation of UN Associations) held in Seoul during August 2009, discussed and agreed on the desirability of organizing a trilateral youth forum of college students selected from our three countries, hopefully once every year.

As the organization responsible for the first Youth Forum, the UN Association of Japan considered it advisable to set the main theme of the first Forum as “Fostering Partnerships for the World.” In consultation with members of a student secretariat provided by the Japan Model UN Society, it was

decided that the Model UN Conference of the Forum would simulate the UN High-level Plenary Meeting on 10-year Review of MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), scheduled for 20-22 September 2010 at UN Headquarters, New York. It was also decided that the Youth Symposium be titled “Global Peace and Development: The Role of East Asia and the United Nations.” In addition, cultural and intellectual interchange, as well as touristic events were considered important and included in the program.

### **Cultural Interchange and Touristic Events**

The opening ceremony was held at the Urasenke Tea Ceremony Academy in Tokyo on September 12, with the participation of the Presidents and Vice Presidents of UN Associations of China, Japan and Korea and the President of WFUNA.

Dr. Sen Genshitsu, President of UNA-Japan and 15th Grand Master of Urasenke, welcomed some 70 college students and professed himself to be a seeker of international culture and peace of humanity through the way of tea. He said that the root of Japanese culture was originally from China and had extended to Japan via Korea. He regretted that although the culture taught goodwill and respect to people, it has undergone historic vicissitude, and he hoped that the youth forum would greatly contribute to mutual understanding of youths who bear the responsibility for the next generation. Mr. Chen Jian, President of UNA-China, Mr. Sun Joun-Jung, CEO and Vice President of UNA-ROK, and Mr. Park Soo-Gil, President of WFUNA, who were all former Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to the UN, also spoke sharing their enlightening thoughts and advice.

All students experienced the tea ceremony exercise and enjoyed the Japanese garden at the site of the Academy. At the Shonan International Village near Tokyo, where model UN conference was held, evening hours were devoted to a series of national cultural performances, such as singing and dancing, interspersed with quiz programs about hardly known idiosyncrasies and commonalities of the three countries, their culture and people. These inter-cultural communications and interactive dialogues in no time fostered warm friendly feelings and affinity with each other. While visiting the Edo-Tokyo Historical Museum and famous streets and quarters in Tokyo with Japanese students acting as guides, and on various other occasions during the 6 days together, most students were apparently surprised and impressed that all students from our 3 countries not only look alike so much but also think alike so much. Many of them shared the hope that they would remain close friends and they would like to join forces to be good leaders in Asia and in the world.

Towards the end of their 6 days together, however, it appears that some Japanese students were beginning to sense some uneasy feelings with their counterparts from China and Korea due to the fact that they, whether wittingly or not, avoided to touch on questions relating to Japan’s aggressive

past during the first part of the last century. In hindsight, perhaps it would have been better if we included a visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine of which the students took only a glimpse on the way to the airport. Appropriate and balanced introduction to the political controversy surrounding the shrine could have usefully kicked off interactive dialogue among students.

### **Model UN Conference on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

60 college students were selected as follows: 15 students selected by UNA-China and by UNA-ROK respectively and 30 students selected by the Student Secretariat for the Youth Forum provided by Japan Model UN Society.

Shortly after the selection was completed in July, the Student Secretariat communicated the following<sup>2</sup> by email to all those students selected:

- Introductory note on the first trilateral Youth Forum in Japan;
- Information note on selected questions of MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) regarding which the Model UN conference will discuss and adopt a resolution;
- Request for indicating their own 1st and 2nd choices they wish to represent, out of 27 member States and 3 non-state actors (UN Secretary-General, NGO Alliance, including Youth Networks for MDGs, and Business Council for MDGs).

Upon completion of the assignment of 27 member state delegations pairing 2 students of different nationalities and 3 non-state actors, also pairing 2 students of different nationalities, the Student Secretariat asked each pair of students thus formed to exchange views by email on the questions they were particularly interested in and jointly prepare a statement of their position and one or two specific draft proposals for inclusion in the MUN resolution, before they meet in Japan.

This preparatory process and conference management planned in advance by the Student Secretariat effectively contributed to the completion in 2 days of Model UN conference, which deliberated in 3 Round-tables and 2 Plenary sessions, by adopting a resolution, simulating the UN High-level Plenary Meeting on 10-year Review of MDGs, September 20-22, New York. The Resolution incorporated many creative proposals and refreshing new collaborative approaches, reflecting the views of young people from our three countries in the spirit of “Fostering partnerships for the world.”

The text of 8-page excerpts from the Resolution was sent by email with a covering letter from the Student Secretariat to the President of the General Assembly Dr. Joseph Deiss and the Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in time for the beginning of the High-level meeting in New York through the courtesy of Director, UN Information Centre, Tokyo.<sup>3</sup>

The General Assembly President Dr. Deiss subsequently wrote to the student representatives thanking them for informing him about the outcome of the First Japan-China-Republic of Korea Model UN, hosted in Japan. He saluted the initiative of the UN Associations of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea to sponsor the trilateral meeting, and in congratulating the students on the outcome, he said: "It is encouraging to see young people from these three countries engaged in a common endeavour and discussing one of the most important issues on the agenda of the current 65th session of the UN General Assembly. May this be followed by further such meetings."

It is important to note that certain innovations were introduced this time to the traditional working method of the model UN conference. First, the participation of non-state actors in the deliberations was expressly encouraged and was appreciated. Thus a number of proposals made by the representatives of NGOs and Business Council for MDGs concerning their role and contribution for MDGs were included in the Resolution. The Secretary-General played a useful role in steering the conference management by sharing his expertise and by providing, with the assistance of Secretariat members, precise information and excerpts from relevant General Assembly resolutions and declarations. Secondly, departing from the global classroom concept of learning about different issues of the world by focusing on national interests pursued by member States, the reconciliation of national interests with a view to forming a public policy for a higher level global interests became the primary object of the model UN conference dynamics.

When the UN policy space is becoming more open to participation of wider constituencies in a multi-centric multi-stakeholders' world, the model UN exercise should indeed become more innovative.

### **Youth Symposium on Global Peace and Development: The Role of East Asia and the United Nations**

The Youth Symposium open to the public took place on September 16 at Waseda University which cosponsored it. In opening the Symposium, Dr. Kunugi Tatsuro referred to "Fostering Partnerships for the World" as a suitable leitmotiv of the trilateral Youth Forum and emphasized that while our 3 countries in North East Asia sometimes suffer from disagreements on governmental level, we should hold greater expectations on people-to-people rather than governmental approach alone, particularly on dialogue and intellectual exchange of youth.

The Symposium had a couple of features making it the culmination of the Youth Forum. First a report was presented on the highlights of the model UN conference deliberations and its outcome. After 2 keynote speeches, 12 students participated in 2 sessions of Panel Discussions on the role of

the three countries in East Asia and the UN for resolving issues broader than MDGs, namely, “Global Peace and Development.” Those 12 students freely expressed their own frank opinions, not as representatives of member states or non-state actors in the model UN.

The first keynote address was delivered by Mr. Keiichiro Asao, an MP and eminent expert on world economy and security in Asia, and the second was by Professor Kang Sang-jung of Tokyo University, a renowned political philosopher and writer on Asian affairs.

In his speech entitled “Controlling Nationalism in the Era of Globalization and Domestic Economic Instability,” Mr. Asao expressed the view that globalization has certain positive sides but has a tendency to widen domestic disparity in many countries. In coping with this tendency, it is important to control exclusive and extreme nationalism so as to let nationalism usefully serve as a source of national unity and stability. One can learn a lot from the experience of post-war Japan that shared with the world the principles of interdependence and soft power. In his view, world economy as one market place needs regulation and for domestic economy, taxation is crucial.

Professor Kang in his address entitled “Transcending Nationalism – Towards a Regional Integration of the North East Asia,” noted that when a need for cooperation between China, Japan and ROK is becoming increasingly greater, there are several factors that hamper widely shared hope and support for promoting their collaboration. Difficult problems among such factors are nationalism, lack of a shared understanding of the past, territorial disputes, and issues relating to peace and security. For the purpose of transcending some of these difficulties and envisioning a wider regional integration in Asia, he considered it useful to learn from the Eastern Policy of former Germany that avoided imposing “Western Value” and endeavoured to harmonize political forces with economic cooperation.

Dr. Katsuma Yasushi, Professor at Waseda University, and Ms. Yamashita Mari, Director of UN Information Centre in Tokyo moderated two sessions of Panel Discussions – one on “The Role of East Asia in Promoting Human Development towards the MDGs” and the other on “Cooperation of East Asia in the UN for Global Peace and Sustainable Development.”

During the Panel Discussions, many specific, creative and often quite refreshing new proposals were made and debated concerning such important questions as: denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula; transfer of environmental technologies to developing countries; establishment of education funds for teaching students and teacher training with cooperation of the private sector and NGOs. Quick interactive discussions demonstrated passion and forward-looking attitude of the youth. Many students in various ways expressed a positive view of the trilateral Youth Forum as an important first step not only for promoting mutual understanding among the youth of our 3 countries

but also for fostering their partnerships and cooperation with the rest of the world.

In closing Mr. Akashi Yasushi, Vice President of UNA-Japan was pleased to note that students' completely free exchange of views in a positive manner amply demonstrated the practical worth of a youth symposium like the one we had today. He hoped that there would be in future more discussions in depth on the role of regionalism for peace and security and on the essential role that the UN plays in solving global issues. Despite thorny historical problems in Asia, he was certain that should the Youth Forum be progressively developed and continued, it would lead to a new stage of mutual understanding among the younger generations of Asian countries.

### **Comments and Reflections of Students**

Similar comments made by more than one student, whether in writing or during interviews, are summarized below together with the indication of their nationalities in parentheses.

- Certain innovations made this time in the traditional method of Model UN conference (*e.g.* inclusion of 3 non-state actors as participants and the sending of the outcome resolution to the real UN conference that our Model UN conference simulated in advance) were interesting and worthwhile replicating. (C, J)
- Two keynote addresses of the Symposium dealt with nationalism from 2 different angles but both in broad historical perspectives, which greatly contributed to Panel Discussions (K, C, J)
- Not in spite of, but because of the problems concerning the understanding of the past and the territorial disputes, we felt it particularly important to endeavour fostering partnerships of our three countries for the whole Asia and the world as well. (J, C, K)
- As we surprisingly look alike and we share traditions, cultures and customs, many of us have begun to feel well persuaded that it would not be too difficult for our 3 countries to reconcile existing differences for realizing a broad common vision by transcending nationalism. (C)
- The general tone of discussions among the panelists reflected their pride and conviction as future leaders, and the interactive discourse as a whole gave the impression as if our 3 countries were already beginning to exert such global influence. (K)
- During Panel Discussions, we were pleased to note that the panelists made constructive proposals in a mutually reinforcing manner with a view to reaching agreement for the sake of synergistic partnerships. (C, K, J)
- Many of us were pleasantly surprised to find the similarities of thoughts of our colleagues from the 3 countries. However, towards the end of interactive 5 days together, some of Japanese students began to feel somewhat uneasy with their counterparts from China and Korea who apparently avoided to touch on questions having a bearing on Japan's aggressive past vis-à-vis China and Korea. Perhaps it would have been possible to speak our minds on whatever

politically delicate topics if all students had mastered inter-cultural communication skills. (J)

- Generally speaking, Japanese students were most diligent for preparing themselves for Model UN negotiations and Panel discussions, but Chinese and Korean students were more effective in leading discussions and negotiations. Some of us wondered whether this was due to communication skills or for other reasons. (K)
- The special significance of the trilateral Youth Forum starting in the UN “International Year of Youth” needs to be emphasized for the future. Above all, the Youth Forum has demonstrated that the model UN conference and the youth symposium open to the public can provide a useful channel whereby the forward looking voices of youth may eventually be heard and reflected in the policy-making processes of the UN, as well as in those of our three governments which may sometimes have official disagreement. (Secretary-General of the Student Secretariat for the first trilateral Youth Forum)

### **Conclusion – The Way Forward**

The first trilateral Youth Forum was organized by the UN Association of Japan, in cooperation with the UN Associations of China and the Republic of Korea, with the assistance of a Student Secretariat provided by Japan Model UN Society, consisting of 13 capable and devoted students headed by Ms. Ito Yukina.

The program, costing approximately 7 and a half million yen<sup>4</sup>, was supported by contributions from Tokyo Club, Japan Foundation, Rotary International District 2650 and Kamenori Foundation, for which UNA-Japan expresses deep appreciation.

Other support, including publicity and co-sponsorship, was extended by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, UN Information Centre Tokyo, Asahi Newspaper, NHK and Waseda University.

In light of the first-year experience and a widely shared hope for the continuation among those directly concerned, including student participants, there is already a general understanding that our three UN Associations will host the trilateral Youth Forum in rotation. We are pleased to learn that the UNA-China has already started a preliminary planning for this year’s Youth Forum during the second half of September, taking into account suggestions made during a brain storming with students who attended the Forum in Japan.

Last but not least, reflecting on the UNA-Japan’s own experience in organizing the first Forum we should like to share some thoughts and suggestions for the future:

- (1) 3 components, *i.e.* cultural program, model UN, symposium, are almost equally important,

hence preparation and time allocation need to be planned accordingly.

- (2) In order to serve better as a forum for exchange of opinions and as a channel for the voice of youths of 3 countries, greater cooperation of UN Department of Public Information/UN Information Centres, as well as the mass media is highly desirable.
- (3) Simulation of a forthcoming major UN conference (*e.g.* Durban Conference on Climate Change, December 2011) by the model UN with further improvement of its working method will be useful; for optimum impact, the text of resolution/declaration needs to be maximum 3-4 pages in a form appropriate for circulation at the real UN conference.
- (4) One day and a half or two days might be allocated to the symposium at which 3 topics could be taken up at 3 sessions of Panel Discussions with 18 students.
- (5) Students applying for participation in the Forum might be asked to submit a 200-word abstract of their views and proposals on one or two Panel Discussion topics that have been selected by the organizer. Such abstract could be used for selecting 6 panelists from each country and for eventual inclusion in the Report of the Youth Forum

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## Notes

\* Kunugi Tatsuro, Board Member of UN Association of Japan, has been Visiting Professor at UN University Institute of Advanced Studies since 2003. Formerly he was Professor at International Christian University (1990-2004), Assistant Secretary-General of the UN (1984-1990).

1. This is largely based on a report in Japanese on the same subject simultaneously published in *United Nations Journal* of UNA-Japan, March 2011. The author acknowledges assistance extended by the Student Secretariat for the First Youth Forum in writing this report and for providing almost all photos annexed to the report. The present report and photos are placed on HP of Japan Model United Nations (JMUN): <http://jmun.org>

2. For future reference, Introductory note and Information note are also placed on JMUN's HP.

3. The letter of transmission and 8-page excerpts may be found also on the HP of JMUN. The excerpts included the first set of preambular paragraphs but omitted about 4 pages of other sets relating to questions considered by Round-Tables I, V, and VI.

4. This amount does not include the cost of inviting guests for the Opening of the First Youth Forum.