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"Japan - ASEAN Dialogue" Should Discuss Not Only "Sea" But "Space"

By MATSUI Akira

On March 14, I was invited to attend the 9th "Japan-ASEAN Dialogue: the Future of ASEAN Integration and Japan's Role" under the co-sponsorship of the Global Forum of Japan and the ASEAN-ISIS. Here, I would like to elaborate my comments, which I could have not fully develop at the "Dialogue" due to the time constraints.

During the discussion at Session II "East Asia Security and Japan-ASEAN Cooperation," reference was made to such issues as freedom of navigation at sea, information sharing/warning system development cooperation of disasters including Tsunamis, marine rescue cooperation, illegal fishing, marine pollution, piracy, crime control cooperation including trans-border arms smuggling and drug trafficking, coast guard cooperation, and peaceful settlement of disputes over sea boundaries, etc. I wondered if such issues as research and information exchange on migrant fish including eels, research and study cooperation on marine resources could be added to the agenda. As a whole, the discussions were seemed to be focused solely on upholding freedom of navigation and maritime security in the region.

However, it is obvious that China is the implicit subject of the "Dialogue" who is expected to become a "responsible stakeholder" in the international community. China is not only strengthening her naval power, but at the same time accelerating development of space satellites and missiles. Besides, North Korea has declared that she will launch a rocket (seen in effect as a military missile) in mid-April, and warned that the first stage of the rocket will fall into somewhere off South Korea, the body will fly over the Sakishima Islands in Okinawa, and the second stage will fall into somewhere off the Philippines. There is a possibility that she would resort to a similar action in the future.

Given the expansion of China in terms of economy, politics and military power, as well as potential military adventurism of North Korea, now taking part only in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) among a host of international frameworks in the region, I would like to propose to step forward to study the possibility of "space" security. To be more specific, this "Japan-ASEAN Dialogue" should also discuss such issues as safety of aircraft navigation (both civilian and

military), airspace incursion by rockets and missiles, etc., promotion of cooperation and information exchange on cyber attacks and terrorism, etc., research and information exchange on the seasonal avian migrations and epidemics carried by them, etc. As for launch of weather-monitoring satellites and GPS (Global Positioning System) satellites, I expect that Japan can contribute more than China or South Korea to cooperation with/among ASEAN member states.

Meanwhile, I was impressed by the presence of the Chinese Embassy staff in the discussions. I would like to suggest inviting such staff from the Embassies of South Korea, India, Australia, Taiwan, as well.

(This is the English translation of an article written by MATSUI Akira, former Ambassador of Japan to Kazakhstan, which originally appeared on the BBS "Giron - Hyakushutsu" of GFJ on March 20, 2012.)