



People to people talk enhance mutual understanding

Updated: 2013-03-05 17:47

By Jiao Xiaoli (chinadaily.com.cn)

In January I was invited to take part in The Japan-China Dialogue: Toward Future-Oriented Japan-China Relationship over four days in Tokyo. It was by organized academics trying to pave the way for peace and prosperity in the region. The co-hosts were the World Resources Institute and the Japan Forum for International Relations, and it provided a great platform for discussing energy and environment cooperation, which is crucial for the sustainable development of both nations and beyond.

There were about 100 participants from organizations such as the Global Forum of Japan, the Japan Forum on International Relations, the World Resources Institute, Beijing Normal University, Zhejiang University, American University, the Center for Global Environmental Policy, Qingdao University of Sciences and Technology, Eastern China University of Law and Politics, Beijing Asia-Pacific Consulting Center for Environment and Development, Japan Seikei University, and Japan Institute for Global Environmental Strategies.

The session on environment and energy session was co-chaired by Dr Hu Tao of the World Resources Institute and Professor Ryokichi Hirono of Seikei University in Tokyo. He is also looking to continue cooperation with Dr Hu Tao of the World Resources Institute, pursuing joint research in sustainable cities, trade and investment, and other areas. The two parties will host another round of meetings in Beijing this month.

The Japan Forum on International Relations was founded in 1987, and its connections are extensive. It publishes a bimonthly email magazine that has a circulation of to 10,000 readers worldwide.

When those attending the dialogue were introduced to Dr Kenichi Ito, he greeted us quoting Confucius: "Isn't it so good to welcome friends coming from far away?" which was particularly touching for the Chinese. Ito highlighted the theme of the forum in his welcoming speech: "Japan and China, the world's third and second biggest economy respectively, are economically interdependent. China has been Japan's largest trading partner since 2007 and Japan is China's second largest sources of foreign direct investment, second only to Hong Kong.

"We need each other not only for development but for our very survival. There will be no winner in a trade war, let alone military conflict, between Japan and China. Therefore, it is of fundamental importance for Japan and China to prevent political discord from spilling over into economics and other fields. This points to the importance of our dialogue on topics such as the environment and energy."

In January, Beijing and other Chinese cities suffered from serious air pollution with consequences for health and public transport. Air pollution in Japan is better controlled. Professor Hirono mentioned that Japan had a similar experience with environmental degradation in the 1950s and through to the 70s. It took that long to provide cleaner air, water and soil essential to ensuring public health, he said. That was done by way of economic incentives and regulations as well as public campaigns promoting environmental awareness.

Given the importance now accorded to bodies including environmental NGOs in China, he voiced his optimism about China's pollution problems being resolved in the near future.

Japan, with its experience, could help China, he said. Such help could come through the likes of the Japan Forum for International Relations and the World Resources Institute, which are well positioned to facilitate such non-governmental exchanges, he said.

The dialogue clearly generated positive energy and the extra will to help ease the political standoff. Politicians obviously make their decisions taking heed of the will of the public at large, and creating a positive atmosphere in which decisions can be made – such as through this dialogue in Tokyo – can play a crucial part in that.

The academics present bear the burden of keeping open minds on culture, economics, and social and universal values as a way of promoting a peaceful resolution to conflicts. The challenges are great, but any fruit born of the efforts to solve those challenges will be greater still.

Both sides agreed that working together and keeping the peace was of the utmost importance, and the forum closed with a warm round of applause.

Zhao Qizheng, the founder of Shanghai Pudong area and then Minister of State Council, Information Office, currently holding the title of chairman of Foreign Affairs Commission of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, once said that "as long as there is communication, there is a chance for good things to happen. In that regard, people-to-people talk is of great importance".

As I left Tokyo, thick fog enveloped the airport, but as we departed the land of the rising sun, the sun was doing just that. The low cloud could not compete with this brilliance.....

(Jiao Xiaoli is a senior public relations officer and free lance writer of China Daily.)

[3月5日付『チャイナ・デーリー』電子版より転載]