

**Text of the Welcome Speech by Prof. ITO Kenichi, President of GFJ and JFIR at Welcome Dinner held in Tokyo on 23 February 2011 in honor of the participants of the “Japan-East Asia Dialogue: East Asia in Transition and New Perspectives on Regional Cooperation”**

Prof. Pham Quang MINH, Prof. ITO Go and all other distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, in my capacity as President of The Global Forum of Japan and The Japan Forum on International Relations, I would like to welcome you all to the “Japan-East Asia Dialogue: East Asia in Transition and New Perspectives on Regional Cooperation” to be held under the joint auspices of the Global Forum of Japan and Vietnam National University tomorrow here at the International House of Japan.

It is a commonly shared view that, especially since the global financial crisis of 2008, the recovery of the world economy has substantially depended on the performance of “rising countries” in East Asia such as China, Korea and ASEAN countries, which are identifiable with the member states of “ASEAN plus 3.” It is also noticeable that, in line with the principle of “centrality” of ASEAN, the “ASEAN plus 3” mechanism has been expanded to include India, Australia and New Zealand as well. Emergence of these countries seems to be substantially altering not only economic but political processes of international transactions in the region. Being worthy of special note is the fact that the rise of China is attracting attention of not only the region but of the international community at large.

Against the background of the growth of the importance of the regional cooperation in the name of “ASEAN plus 3” and/or “ASEAN plus 6,” another trend of regional cooperation is coming back to the scenes again. All such concepts of regional cooperation as APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation), FTAAP (Free Trade Agreement Asia Pacific) and/or TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) are not newly told stories, but they are sure to be recognized now as coming back to the scenes again. It should be noted that East Asia as a region is now expected to play an even more responsible role for peace and prosperity of the international community as a whole. In so doing, needless to say, East Asia as a region must embrace the spirit of “open regionalism” instead of that of “closed regionalism,” because with that spirit only we can lead the international community in setting up its rules and norms of the 21st century.

I am confident that this Dialogue, under the intellectual leadership of Prof. Pham Quang MINH and Prof. ITO Go, will successfully achieve its task of exploring ways for us to contribute more to peace and prosperity of the region, as well as of the international community as a whole. Let me look forward to the lively and constructive discussions tomorrow.

Thank you very much.