

The 11th Northeast Asia Economic Forum Meeting in Anchorage, Alaska

During my trip to Anchorage, Alaska, I took part in the 11th meeting of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum chaired by Dr. Lee-Jay Cho. The meeting took place from 6-8 March 2002.¹ It was co-hosted with the local Institute of the North at Alaska-Pacific University. The agenda of the meeting included the following topics:

- Natural gas from remote or stranded sources and energy for stranded consumers
- Financing infrastructure development and the Northeast Asian Development Bank concept
- Environmentally friendly energy use for an

environmentally advanced Northeast Asia and North Pacific

- Information technology and telecommunications: Narrowing the digital divide in Northeast Asia and the Alaskan model.

Several prominent participants attended the meeting, including Steve Cowper, former Governor of Alaska and Chairman of the NEAEF North American Committee, Former Alaska Governor Walter Hickel, Dr. Nahm Duck Woo, former prime minister of the Republic of Korea, Glyn Ford, Member of the European Parliament, parliamentary link to the Japan Mission to the EU, Arlon R. Tussing, Senior Economist, Alaska Pacific University Institute of the North, Kengo Asakura, Vice Secretary General, Northeast Asian Gas and Pipeline Forum, Yasuo Sawai, Vice Executive President, National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA), Peter Hayes, Executive Director, the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development, and others.

As a participant from ERINA, I was invited to present a paper entitled "Russia: A Supplier of Cleaner Energy to Northeast Asia" at the session on Environmentally Friendly Energy Use. The session was chaired by Mitsuho Uchida, Director of the Central Research Institute of the Electric Power Industry. This panel coordinated by NIRA provided a very useful opportunity for participants from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States to discuss the energy-environment dilemma in Northeast Asia.

Diversification in the geography of supplies and fuels makes offshore and inland resources of natural gas and oil in eastern Russia particularly attractive. The development and utilization of these resources is expected to enhance the security of energy supplies, increasing the share of cleaner fuels in the energy mix and reducing energy-related

environmental pressures. In addition to prospects for natural gas exports the paper touched upon such issues as hydropower resources available in Eastern Russia, the potential for the interconnection of power grids and the country's current policy on renewable energy and related technologies.

After the conference, there was also a field trip to the Kenai Peninsula. One group of participants went to see Phillips petroleum refineries. There was also a tour of Agrium petrochemical plant in Kenai. Yet another group went to the Resurrection Bay. It takes about three hours by car to get from Anchorage to these destinations, one of the most beautiful drives in North America.

Resurrection Bay received its name from the Russian traveler and merchant Baranov. Before 1867, Alaska was known as Russian America. Russian sailors discovered this part of North America and Moscow possessed this land for 126 years. Until today, many native people are Orthodox Christians. New Archangel was the first seaport in Western America. This settlement of only one thousand people served as the capital of the Russian territory when the population of San Francisco was only about a hundred. The first steam vessel in the Pacific was build at the shipyard of New Archangel in 1841.

Alaska still represents one the most pristine environments on Earth. The current U.S. energy policy spotlight is on the natural gas and petroleum-rich federal lands in Alaska. The opening of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) for more exploration and development is likely to be a topic debated at the U.S. Congress this year. Congress should take a decision on whether the time is right to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain to leasing.

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¹ East-West Center, National Institute for Research Advancement of Japan (NIRA), Japan Committee for the Promotion of an Asian Energy Community (JCPAEC), Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), Kanamori Committee, U.S. West Coast-Russian Far East Ad Hoc Working Group, Institute for Information Policy at Pennsylvania State University, Korean Committee for the NEAEF, and Chinese Committee for the NEAEF