

Session A-2: A Joint Strategy for Tourism Development in Northeast Asia

Summary

Professor Hiroshige Sasaki - Faculty of Regional Development Studies, Toyo University - moderated discussions during Session A-2, "a Joint Strategy for Tourism Development in Northeast Asia."

Prof. Sasaki pointed out that there are many cases of economic development leading to development of tourism, but there are also cases of the tourism industry expanding economic development. He also mentioned that although the issue of tourism had been taken up at the conference before, it is a great step that the session meeting for tourism was formally organized at this conference. Tourism has two aspects, one being cultural, seeing the culture of foreign countries, and the other is economic, or 'visitor industries'. He also pointed out that recently a new field has appeared in economics, called cultural economics, which is concerned with the economic effects of tourism. As tourism in Northeast Asia is growing rapidly, he stresses that we need to evaluate tourism in Northeast Asia from this cultural-economic viewpoint.

Prof. Sasaki said that tourism consists of three superstructures; lower, standard and upper. The lower superstructure is comprised of the natural features, culture and historical remains of the area. The standard superstructure is comprised of infrastructure for tourists, hotels, and restaurants, etc. The upper superstructure is comprised of tourism policy and management. Because both the lower and upper superstructures influence the standard superstructure, it is necessary to analyze the lower superstructure and at the same time find a way how to manage the upper superstructure. When you study the upper superstructure, it is a good idea to study it together with cultural economics. He ended his speech by saying that most of the countries in Northeast Asia are at this stage of development and have great potential in tourism, which also influences economic development greatly.

Dr. Zhang Guangrui - Director, Tourism Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences - was introduced as the first speaker. First of all, he described the significance and the possibility for development of tourism in Northeast Asia. This region is now well-known

for its fast economic growth, but it must not be forgotten that there has been so much war and conflict in this region. People in this region understand how important mutual friendly relations among them are. As the economies of this region are complementary to one another and growing in unison, the countries of this region understand clearly that it is critical to build friendly relations in this region. The countries of the region have realized the importance of tourism and they receive tourists from, or send them within the region. It is important to plan tourism development strategy at this stage, and it will become a turning point for stepping forward together in the future.

Dr. Zhang also mentioned that it is important to unify the perceptions of all countries in the region towards regional cooperation in the tourism field. What he means by 'perceptions' are such basic concepts as; that the demand for leisure is growing, that the ideas of cooperation and competition are important, and that a mechanism to manage tourism is needed. Among these perceptions, the most important one is the significance of cooperation on tourism development. What we need to do is to build a platform for information exchange, to build a platform for intergovernmental information exchange, to standardize hotel grading and the like, and to standardize service facilities such as restaurants for inbound tourists. In addition, he suggested that countries in this region should promote joint programs for education and training, joint research on tourism, and removal of barriers to tourism such as visas. Then he proposed seven special projects, which are; cruises, a World Peace Park, sporting events, theme parks, joint promotion, joint tourist offices and joint-staging of events. Moreover, he proposed that a Northeast Asia tourism conference, a forum like IFNAT, be held regularly.

The second speaker was Mr. Lan Bingqing - Vice Director, Tourism Administration, Heilongjiang Province, China. He made a report on the theme of promoting tourism in Northeast Asia via electronic commerce. Firstly, he pointed out that the countries in Northeast Asia are developing economically. Tourism in each country is also developing. There are many web sites for tourism in each

country and the sites are quite large in scale. However, these sites aren't linked to each other and they are not fully functional as sales tools for the tourism industry. It is not clear whether these sites are platforms for electronic administration or for electronic commerce. Electronic commerce in the future will integrate the tourism industry virtually. It will be a very effective tool in the construction of flexible and mutually beneficial relations. Starting from joint development of sites, each country needs to cooperate in the areas of natural resources, human resources and capital. Subsequently each country proceeds to the improvement of transparency of the market, which will attract more tourists. To accelerate the development and spread of web sites for Northeast Asian tourism, we must establish a special organization, collect funds, strengthen advertising and links, and be able to turn a profit.

The third speaker was Mr. D. Lkhagvadaash - Counselor (Economic and Commercial Relations), Embassy of Mongolia in Japan. He first described the present status of tourism in Mongolia. The Mongolian government submitted a basic policy on tourism in 1995, and then submitted a master plan in 1999, and laws regarding tourism came into force in 2000. In the meantime, Mongolia joined the World Travel Organization in 1991, the Mongolian government announced 2003 as "Visit Mongolia Year", 2004 as "Discover Mongolia Year" and 2007 as the 800th anniversary of the foundation of Mongolia. The government made plans to attract tourists from overseas and improve service levels. Problems in the development of tourism in Mongolia are; to rewrite the basic development plan which was made more than ten years ago, stimulate competition, develop services and transportation, and prepare management and legal systems. Lastly, he introduced the sightseeing development plan and several projects in eastern Mongolia.

The fourth speaker was Professor Lee Eung-Jin - Chief, Tourism Department, Daegu University, ROK. He made a report on how to set about a joint strategy for Northeast Asian tourism development. It is necessary to develop urban cultural tourism and rural natural tourism in Northeast Asia. Moreover, transport access needs to be put in order, as do accommodation and leisure facilities. In addition, it is necessary to develop joint sightseeing packages. It is necessary to develop 'experience' tourism from the usual 'observation' tourism. Events need to be

jointly developed. Moreover, youth tourism needs to be stimulated. Meanwhile, it is necessary to prepare a tourism information system as well as establish a Northeast Asian Tourism Development Council, tourist bureaus bringing together industry, government and research organizations, and a Northeast Asia tourism university.

The fifth speaker was Mr. Nobuyuki Sekiyama - Chairman, Northeast Asia Tourism Research Association, Japan. He made a report on the Northeast Asia tourism development master plan. He described the history of the development of the master plan. Next, he explained the details of the plan. The master plan is first to identify special sightseeing spots in each country, then to specify tourism development projects on both the 'hardware' and 'software' sides, and next to specify the projects to call for investment into, and to build networks between industry, governments and researchers. In addition, he proposed making battlefields sightseeing spots, holding sporting events, holding trade fairs at borders, and opening a ferry route across the Japan Sea.

The sixth speaker was Mr. Kuchuk - Adviser to the Governor, Khabarovsk Krai, Russia. As Vitaly Selyukov - Director General, Department of Tourism, Ministry of Economic Development and Foreign Relations of Khabarovsk Krai - was unable to come to Japan, Mr. Kuchuk attended in his stead. He made a presentation on tourism development in the Russian Far East. Firstly, he reported the current situation of tourism in the Russian Far East, and in Khabarovsk Krai in particular. To develop tourism between eastern Russia and Northeast Asian countries, it is essential to simplify the documentation for tourists, to invest in infrastructure for tourism, to regularly exchange information and advertise tourism in Northeast Asian countries, and he ended by stating the need to encourage joint participation towards commercial tours to tour operators and the press, etc.

There were questions from the floor about the possibility of holding the next IFNAT forum in Khabarovsk, and about how to bring about cultural tourism or religious tourism in Northeast Asia. The speaker from Russia replied that people are looking forward to holding the next IFNAT in Khabarovsk.

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