

The Content of the "Cooperation and Development Planning Outline of the Tumen River Area of China" and an Evaluation thereof

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Summary

In November 2009 the Chinese government announced the approval of the "Cooperation and Development Planning Outline of the Tumen River Area of China: Setting Changjitu [Changchun-Jilin-Tumen] as the Development and Opening-up Pilot Area" (hereinafter the "Planning Outline"), and revealed to the world its intent to press on with cooperation in and development of the Tumen River Area.

Affected by the global financial crisis beginning in the second half of 2008, China's economy switched from export-led economic growth to economic growth via the promotion of exports and the expansion of domestic demand, and the adjustment of the structure of the economy, such as the rectification of regional imbalances in development, has also come to be stressed. In the three provinces of China's Northeast, in order for Jilin Province—where the economic base is the weakest—to strive for economic growth, the pushing forward of cooperation in and development of the Tumen River Area, situated at the center of the Northeast Asian region, will be the best option.

Since the beginning of the 21st century China has furthered cooperation with neighboring countries, a China-ASEAN FTA has already commenced, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has deepened mutual cooperation, yet regarding multilateral cooperation with the countries of the Northeast Asian region there remains a blank. Therefore it is necessary that China orient its focus for diplomatic strategy toward the Northeast Asian region.

The Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture is making good use of its multiethnic character, geographical advantage and social stability, and as a window for China to push forward Northeast Asian regional cooperation is moreover playing a role in construction as a lead area and model area for opening-up and development in border minority areas. It is thought the Chinese government announced the "Planning Outline" against such a backdrop.

The "Planning Outline," being a long-term matter, stretching from 2009 to 2020, includes cooperation with Liaoning Province, Heilongjiang Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and neighboring countries, which are participating in international cooperation in the Tumen River Area, centered on a region that mainly includes parts of the cities of Changchun and Jilin and the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province. The content is made up of six parts, including: the significance of development; the overall requirements; the acceleration of the construction of the Changjitu [Changchun-Jilin-Tumen] Development and Opening-up Pilot Area; the promotion of coordination and cooperation between the Changchun-Jilin-Tumen area and other regions within China; the pressing ahead with the participation of the Changchun-Jilin-Tumen area in Tumen River international regional cooperation; and the guaranteeing of the implementation of the plan.

The "Planning Outline" considers thoroughly the various domestic and external factors, and is practical and realistic. From a strategic perspective which takes aim at regional imbalances in development and the long-term stability and prosperity of the border minority areas—forming a pole for new economic growth in the hinterland of China's Northeast—the intent of the Chinese government, which is actively attempting to tackle the development of the Changchun-Jilin-Tumen area as a major stage for China to participate in Northeast Asian regional cooperation, has been clearly shown.

Via the implementation of the "Planning Outline," the potential is emerging for the development of the Tumen River Area to launch into motion. In order to carry forward development, however, problems such as the establishment of bilateral or multilateral cooperation frameworks and the development and upgrading of international distribution routes in the Tumen River Area have to be solved. Therefore, active cooperation with the neighboring countries concerned will be necessary.

[Translated by ERINA]