

## **Opening Remarks**

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CJK FTA Seminar  
Dongshan Hotel, Weihai, China  
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I'd like to offer cordial welcome and heartfelt appreciation to your participation in this seminar, for your presence here represents the general support to the trilateral cooperation.

Currently the bilateral relations among our three countries are undergoing turbulence. Political tensions, historical and territorial issues, and nationalistic sentiments once again bring in uncertainties. In times of uncertainties, the trilateral cooperation is still going on. I am happy to see that the trilateral environment ministers' meeting in May was a success. There are also trilateral academic seminars actively exploring solutions and visions. Our Secretariat hosted the 1st Trilateral Business Networking Reception in Seoul, initiated the 1st Trilateral Disaster Management Table Top Exercise, and is conducting exchange activities among the three countries' youth.

The trilateral cooperation experienced ups and downs. There used to be low ebb in 2005 and 2006 when no trilateral summit was held. Yet afterwards, leaders of the three countries convened the independent trilateral summit, established tripartite partnership, published cooperation vision 2020, launched the Secretariat and the trilateral cooperation achieved the fastest growth. Looking ahead, we believe that the trilateral cooperation has its resilience to surpass latent obstacles. The three countries share geographical proximity, gigantic common interests and inseparable future. We have no other way but to open up an era of peace and co-prosperity in Northeast Asia. In spite of difficulties, we should plant the seed of friendship, foster the green shoots of cooperation, and in time we may see the blossom of affinity among our three countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The CJK FTA is a testament to the resilience of the trilateral cooperation and we have staunch reasons to work for its promotion.

The first reason is the sheer fact that the three countries are partners in the regional production network. Total imports amongst them amount to over 700 billion US dollars in 2012. Upon their economic interdependency, there is a growing demand for a free, open and rule-based multilateral trading system to boost the economic welfare of the three countries. The CJK FTA will eventually establish a common market of 1.5 billion populations and 15 trillion US dollar worth of GDP. It may usher in the 3rd largest economic bloc in the world.

The second reason is that the CJK FTA is a centrepiece for economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region. We are witnessing a rising trend to establish region-wide FTAs, such as TPP and RCEP, to facilitate free flow of complementary resources and promote common development. As top three economies of the East Asia, China, Japan and the ROK will accumulate consensus on major issues throughout the negotiations for the CJK FTA, and substantially contribute to the regional economic integration.

The last but not the least, there is a realistic hope that the CJK FTA will lay a firm foundation for deepening the trilateral cooperation. The negotiation itself is a process of building a trust mechanism in the pragmatic field of economy that the three countries can count on. It will also provide a framework upon which a wide range of cooperation, such as sustainable development and people-to-people exchange may flourish. Essentially speaking, the CJK FTA has the potential to spearhead a grandeur vision of peace and co-prosperity among the three countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat has achieved success in its founding period for the past one year and nine months. It has lived up to the mandates to support, study and promote the trilateral cooperation. Moreover, it has cultivated new grounds for cooperation by developing concrete and pragmatic programs. Our Secretariat is already a stabilizing mechanism embedded in the trilateral cooperation, and we will continue to prove that it is a worthy organization in fostering cooperation among the three countries.

Our Secretariat has always viewed the CJK FTA as a major pillar of the trilateral cooperation and is in full support of its establishment. Today's seminar represents our efforts in this aspect. We've also prepared an exhibition of the CJK FTA. You can see the posters along the wall. Please take a moment to look at them.

I appreciate that the three governments, especially three negotiating teams, have endowed our Secretariat with much trust and support, without which this timely and meaningful seminar would be impossible. I must also thank the Weihai Municipal Government and China Daily for their partnership. Weihai has harboured a large share of Korean investment in China. I sincerely hope that it may also develop into a bridgehead for the trilateral cooperation.

Lastly, I am looking forward to lively discussion among your distinguished guests, so that this seminar may gather more understanding and support to the CJK FTA, and ultimately add impetus to the win-win-win partnership among our three countries.

Thank you.