

For Closer Regional and District-Based Cooperation and Unified Effort

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As the Tumen River development project makes big strides, the Japan Sea Rim Economic Zone has begun to move steadily toward its realization in the 21st century, with the active participation of the Northeast Asian nations concerned. This development has undoubtedly increased the necessity of closer dialogues and cooperation within the region, and the roles and responsibility of Japan have accordingly grown immensely.

I am honored very much to be able to report to you today on the progress and development of the Japan Sea Rim movement as seen particularly from our domestic and local points of view and based on my own experience.

The Economic Research Institute for the Japan Sea Rim was established 26 years ago in Niigata City, one of the key cities situated approximately in the center of the Japan Sea coast, to promote the actualization of the Japan Sea Rim Economic Zone.

The starting point of this domestic movement was to rectify the discrepancies between the prospering Pacific-side cities like Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukuoka, and the stagnating Japan Sea-side cities.

The so-called Pacific Belt Policies initiated by former Prime Minister Ikeda's cabinet has brought forth a massive landslide-like exodus of the population from the farming villages on the Japan Sea side to the Pacific side cities. This population shift was evidenced vividly by the distinct contrasts between "overpopulation" vs. "underpopulation," "cities vs. farming countries," and "Omoto (Front) Japan vs. Ura (Rear or Back) Japan."

Our naive doubt with regard to this "Front vs. Back Japan" discrimination was what motivated the inception and birth of the Japan Sea Rim movement. Our aim was to correct the gaps between the Front and Back through active economic exchanges with the other nations in the Japan Sea region so that we would be able to change the excessive concentration of people in Tokyo and alter the centralized system of the Meiji Restoration toward a more decentralized system.

This necessitated the unification of the various districts of the Japan Sea coast. Thus, you may be able to understand that the origin of the

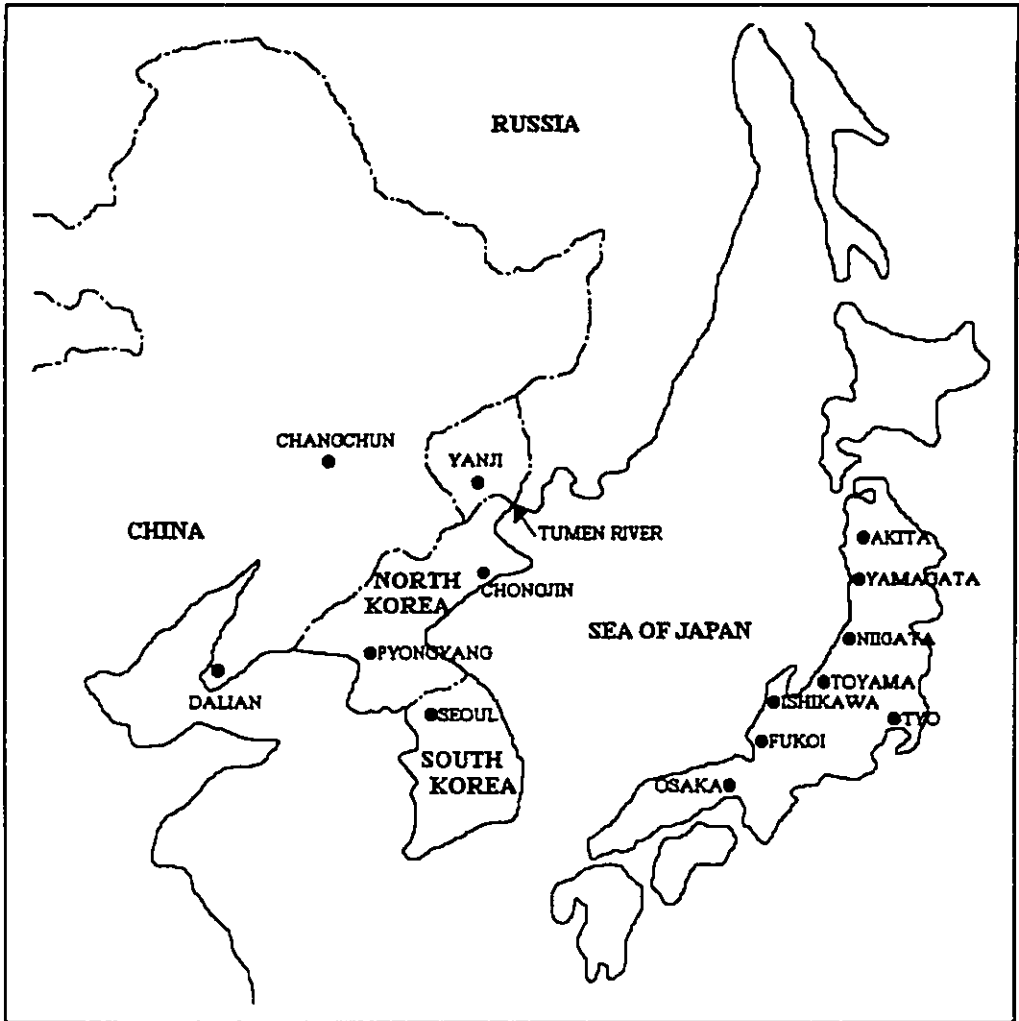
Japan Sea Rim movement in Japan was born out of our earnest aspiration to mobilize efforts of the locations facing the Japan Sea to accelerate their further consolidation. Therefore, it was initially designed to coordinate cooperation and alliance in the Japan Sea area districts so that the conflicts of unfair distribution of resources and unreasonable imbalance could be avoided. They would have ultimately worked against this consolidation endeavor in the Japan Sea area.

Our Institute, which aims at realizing the peaceful and prosperous Japan Sea Rim Economic Zone, has carried out various activities including the monthly seminar named "Nikkaiken Forum" where well-known experts are invited to share their views on the many problems. We have taken up the important question of "The Close Tie-Up and Unification of Our Localities" as one of the central themes and have promoted the positive exchange of ideas with such prefectures as Akita, Yamagata, Ishikawa, and Fukui on the Japan Sea coast and have also discussed the possible formation of our domestic "Japan Sea Union."

As you are well aware, representatives from our local governments, business circles, and the press from Akita, Yamagata, Niigata, Toyama, and Ishikawa have participated in the Yongpyeong Conference here, as well as the Pyongyang and Vladivostok conferences last year as organized by the Northeast Asia Economic Forum, and have engaged in the exchanges.

To promote the tie-ups in the region, all the participants must share their functions and roles. To foster the formation of a consensus, the exchange of ideas and information among the relevant regional and local governments and private organizations is quite imperative. Linkages, such as our "Japan Sea Union" or the proposed "Japan Sea Consolidation Summit," will generate a variety of ideas and proposals for close tie-ups like the joint sponsoring of trade shows and the joint establishment of information clearing houses of the Japan Sea countries.

Our vision for the "Japan Sea Union (Domestic Linkage)" will further support various movements in many localities in Japan and furthermore, will function as the supporting element of the "Tumen River Development Project," which is part of the core of the desired "Japan Sea Rim Economic Sphere."



Map 21.1 Japan Sea rim economic zone