

The Tumen River Area Development Programme and Economic Cooperation in Northeast Asia

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The TRADP has played an important role in the historic evolution of the Northeast Economic Forum, as well as in the promotion of Northeast Asian regional economic cooperation. Development and economic cooperation in the Tumen River area has expanded from an economic development project between the three neighboring countries (China, Russia and DPRK) to broader Northeast Asia, and eventually it became a program of UNDP that has resulted in extensive international interest. The TRADP was first advocated and promoted by academic and business circles. Just as TRADP has received the active support and participation of government, it also has the possibility of obtaining further support from relevant international institutions. The Tumen River Area Development Programme can already be regarded as one of the largest economic cooperation programs in the world. Research institutions have carried out extensive work on the development of the Tumen River Area from different viewpoints and put forward a series of plans and frameworks for development, including the industrial structure, transportation and communication infrastructure, protection of the environment, and energy supply. All these provide a firm foundation for decision making for the governments in this program.

The UNDP TRADP office served as a catalyst for research and discussion about TRADP, and resulted in an advantageous environment for government support. On behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the experts and entrepreneurs who are promoting TRADP for their hard and fruitful work, especially Dr. Lee-Jay Cho. As a representative of a member state of TRADP, I urge continuation of economic cooperation through the Northeast Asia Economic Forum.

Economic cooperation should have sustainable development as the fundamental strategic goal. The development of the Tumen River area should be connected to the total economic growth of the world. Regional economic cooperation in Northeast Asia should take advantage of the information technology revolution, high technology, and the restructuring of traditional industries. It should also make full use of its geographic location, abundant natural resources and economic complementarities among member countries.

The Chinese government, Chinese academics, and Chinese enterprises have fully recognized that TRADP is a good opportunity. For this reason, high-ranking leaders of the Chinese government have visited the Tumen River area many times in recent years. Hunchun has been declared a border economic development zone and has been given advantageous policies to motivate entrepreneurs and intellectuals to participate in the development of the economic development zone. Taking Hunchun as an example, in 1994, its GNP was 1.4 times that of 1991 and investment in fixed assets had grown 7 times. The total international input/output had increased by 4.8 times and fiscal income by 86.9%. By 1994, the area had about 600 joint ventures, and total investment contracts worth nearly 700 million U.S. dollars. In 1995, through a conference on investment promotion held in Yanji city, contract investment has reached a total of nearly 800 million U.S. dollars. These figures indicate that international economic cooperation in the Tumen River area has made definite progress.

Experts from API China think that the key point to preserving the healthy trends of TRADP lies in concrete actions for mutual benefit to ensure the positive growth of NEA regional economic cooperation. In this sense, TRADP is an important force for Northeast Asia regional economic cooperation. Thank you.