



2016.2.26

People's Efforts Towards the Enhancement of the East Asian Cooperation

Ayako Akiyama, Economist
Institute for International Monetary Affairs

Political relations with other countries and public opinion towards those countries are correlated. For the recent years, the deterioration of political relations between Japanese-Chinese and Japanese-Korean government intensified the anti-China and anti-Korea tension in the Japanese society, and anti-Japan tension in the Chinese and Korean society. As a result, diplomacy between these governments had stagnated. While the governments have begun to improve their relations in 2015, as long as the public's tendency to intensify their hatred towards neighboring countries on the basis of fragmentary knowledge, sooner or later the three countries will be "wasting time" again.

At IIMA's 20th Anniversary Symposium "Cooperative Development of East Asia – Hopes and Challenges" held February 25th, the state of relationship of Japan, China, and Korea was discussed from various angles¹. One of the panelists, Mr. Il Sakong who is the Chairman of the Institute of Global Economics based in Seoul and also former Minister of Finance of Korea, mentioned that for the development of cooperative relationship between the three countries, "to grow out of the unpleasant legacy" is a prerequisite, and insisted that their leaders and people need to make common efforts. He also said that, in this era of globalization, understanding other countries, let alone immediate neighboring countries, is more critical than ever before, and pointed out the necessity for strengthening and expanding the people-to-people exchange programs, including the student exchange programs. The moderator, Mr. Toyoo Gyohten, President of IIMA, also spoke it is important for all the countries of the world to understand one's own history calmly and humbly.

As Mr. Sakong had pointed out, efforts of the people is necessary in developing relationships between the three countries. Living in an era when people, goods, and information move freely and still being trapped in prejudice against other countries can be said as "negligent". Deepening the knowledge of neighboring countries that have many relations in terms of politics, economy, history, culture, and language naturally leads to the deepening the knowledge of their own country. Mutual understanding and respect, encouraged by such process, will become a foundation for a much more stable relation between the 3 countries.

¹ The occasional paper which describes the contents of the lecture and the Q&A at the Symposium will be further announced at IIMA HP, in Japanese and English.