

Presentation

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It is my great pleasure to have the opportunity to make some comments on the opening keynote addresses by Ambassador Yushita and Dr. Shirai. I wish to thank Mr. Yushita and Dr. Shirai.

As we are acutely aware, countries in the Asia Pacific region are still agonizing in the wake of the financial crisis that started in 1997. The region, which had been acclaimed as the economic growth center of the world moving into the 21st century, was thrown into dire economic straits by the crisis. The region's brilliant economic performance over the past two decades was reversed all of a sudden. Dark clouds are now hanging over the region's economic prospects, dashing people's hopes for a better life in the region.

However, difficult times will not persist forever. As a matter of fact, we are beginning to see some signs of recovery. I firmly believe that the Asia Pacific region will get back on its path to prosperity by the time we enter the second millennium.

At this turning point, what we have make clear to ourselves is that we must, this time, ensure that the economic growth in the region becomes "sustainable." That is, in reality, the most significant lesson we have learned from the region's rapid economic growth in the 1980's and 1990's which led to that abrupt setback.

In order for us to achieve stable and sustainable development of the economies and societies in this region, we have to solve a number of fundamental problems. The solution of such fundamental problems, such as those related to the natural environment, natural resources, population, and food, will become all the more pressing in the near future. Equally important will be the maintenance of peace and stability in the region, and the establishment of political and socio-economic systems to ensure this. In particular, the Asian economic crisis has highlighted the need for us to work out modern economic and financial systems that can keep pace with the globalization of the world economy. We have also recognized the acute need to develop new technologies of our own and to enhance our competence for industrial innovation. The most profound challenge we face, in order for us to resolve such problems and meet such needs, is to develop human resources, or to develop people who will carry out those tremendous tasks. We can never over-emphasize the importance and urgency of developing people who are capable of resolving global issues from global perspectives, rising above the interests of individual nations or regions. The key to achieving sustainable growth in the Asia Pacific region will be the development of such leaders for, as we might say, "global governance."

The primary responsibility for producing leaders for global governance, in the

sense I have just explained, rests, obviously, with the universities. The universities in the Asia Pacific region, including ours, are expected to fulfil that responsibility. In this respect, we have to clearly recognize that the development of this new type of leaders cannot be realized within the confines of individual universities. As you all know, most universities in the Asia Pacific region have embarked on various types of reform programs. More and more universities are freeing themselves from the shackles of tradition, implementing many forms of international exchange programs for students and faculty members. Up-to-date information and communication technologies are coming into play to a greater extent, expediting distance learning and joint research activities. There is no doubt that such a development of international co-operation on a bilateral basis is a very effective means to develop human resources within a global perspective. However, we need to develop multi-lateral systems so that international cooperation can be put into practice with more effectiveness and with greater efficiency.

Specifically, I would like to take this opportunity to propose the formation of a "University Consortium in the Asia Pacific Region," which would play a role like that of APEC in the field of the economy. The recent advancement in information and telecommunications technology will very significantly facilitate the ongoing daily management of such a consortium. What I would like to express is the urgent need for universities in the Asia Pacific region to reinforce mutual links with a view to fulfilling our common task – that is to develop human resources for the future of the region.

In Japan, a new generation of international universities and graduate schools is being established with the primary objective of producing leaders who are capable of global governance. Waseda University, as represented by Dr. Shirai, whose participation in this session is very much appreciated, has already started a Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies. We at Ritsumeikan are planning to open a new international university, the first of its kind in Japan, to be known as Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, here in Beppu in April 2000. One of its main features is that one half of all its students will be accepted from overseas. In a similar way, half of its faculty members will be employed from overseas, with a broad range of academic and professional backgrounds. For example, they represent as many as seventeen nationalities. In order to remove the most serious barrier for students coming from overseas, that is the barrier of the Japanese language, basically the courses will be taught both in English and Japanese. Our APU will start with two undergraduate colleges: the College of Asia Pacific Studies and the College of Asia Pacific Management. The College of Asia Pacific Studies, will draw on sociology as the basic discipline and will provide courses in Information and Media, Urban Planning and the Environment, and Tourism – which are all major concerns in the Asia Pacific region. The College of Asia Pacific Management, will draw on management and economics as basic disciplines. The focus of this College will be on major corporate and managerial issues in the Asia Pacific region. In both Colleges, pragmatic and holistic approaches will be encouraged. Graduate schools will be added in four years' time.

The mission of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University is to develop leaders capable of global governance, through the creation of a multi-national and multi-cultural training ground. We are committed to the development of human resources that will meet the needs of the Asia Pacific region in the 21st century.

It should be noted that there is a limit to what a single university can accomplish, however large the school is and however broad its educational scope. Active collaboration among universities, each with its own individual features and strengths, will be the only answer. Close collaboration with various institutions outside academic society, especially institutions in the industrial sector, will also be of vital importance. Universities will be able to fulfill their mission only by working together utilizing extensive networks. Ritsumeikan University and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in tandem have already concluded co-operative agreements with 85 major universities and institutions in the world, including the universities represented in this conference. Under these agreements, various forms of co-operative activities are already well underway. We are also proud of our on-going collaboration with major Japanese corporations, which has become a model case for industry-university collaboration in Japan.

We at Ritsumeikan are all determined to fulfill our mission hand in hand with our present and future partners. Thank you very much.