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Japan-Finland bilateral project on the socio-economic development of the Russian Far North

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In this report, I introduce the project that we have just started with Finnish colleagues on the topic of the sustainable development of the Russian Far North. Its formal title is "Russia's final energy frontier – Sustainability challenges of the Russian Far North." This is a bilateral project between Japan and Finland, managed jointly by the author and Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen of the University of Helsinki and funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) for the Japanese side and the Academy of Finland for the Finnish side. It started in September 2014 and will continue for two years.

The aim of this project is to examine sustainability of the development of the Russian Far North based on oil and gas development. It also aims to analyze the significance of the development of the Russian Far North for the development of the Russian economy as a whole, calculating costs and benefits of the development of the Russian arctic areas in a broader sense.

A few words about the definition of the Russian Far North. Russian Far Northern areas were defined in the Soviet time, in order to pay additional salaries and other benefits to the people working in these areas (USSR Cabinet Resolution No. 1029 of November 10, 1967). They include 16 regions (four Republics, three Krai, five Oblasts and four Autonomous Okrugs). On April 21, 2014, the State Program "Socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation for the period until 2020" was adopted by Government Resolution No. 366. In this program, eight regions were listed as Arctic areas, including Murmansk Oblast, part of Arkhangelsk Oblast, Nenets Autonomous Okrug (AO), one region of Komi Republic, Yamalo-Nenets AO, part of Krasnoyarsk Krai, part of Sakha Republic and Chukotka AO. We will concentrate our attention on these eight regions in our project in its first stage.

Topics to be included in the project are broad. First, we investigate the role of energy in the socio-economic development of the Russian Far Northern areas, including the following sub-topics: 1) Budgetary relations between the center and these areas; 2) Demographic trends in these areas; 3) Social and environmental responsibility of the hydrocarbon sector; 4) Energy developments and rights of indigenous people in the Russian Far North; and 5) Future role of international companies in the development of the Russian Far North. Second, we analyze the effects of oil and gas development in the Russian Arctic and Far Northern areas on the following: 1) International politics and relations in the Arctic; 2) Future use of the NSR; 3) Environmental situation of the Russian Far North and the Arctic. In this context, we are interested in the implementation of the above-mentioned State Program "Socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation for the period until 2020." We will examine the concrete measures taken by regional governments to implement this program.

Four features of our project should be mentioned. First, this project is characterized by its multidisciplinary approach. Members of the project are specialists in various disciplines of mostly social sciences, including economics, geology, political science, international relations and anthropology. Japanese members include not only researchers in Hokkaido, including Natsuhiko Otsuka, Masanori Goto and Tomoko

Tabata, but also specialists in other parts of Japan, including Masumi Motomura, Fujio Ohnishi, Masahiro Tokunaga and Kazuho Yokogawa. As for the Finnish side, members consist of scholars of the universities of Helsinki, Turku and Lapland, including Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen, Lassi Heininen, Kari Liuhto, Hanna Mäkinen, Eini Laaksonen and Nina Tynkkynen. Our intention is to implement this project from a viewpoint of various disciplines by top specialists in each field both in Japan and in Finland.

Second, we attach greater attention to field research. The timetable of the project includes four seminars in Helsinki (September 2014 and 2015), in Tokyo (January 2015) and Sapporo (July 2016) and field trips to the Russian High North in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk (September 2014) and Yamalo Peninsula (May-June 2015). We already held a seminar in Helsinki in September with the participation of Mr. Kenji Shinoda, Ambassador of Japan in Finland, and Dr. Hideo Akutsu, Director of the Stockholm Office of JSPS. Following this seminar, we had a fieldtrip to Murmansk and Arkhangelsk with 13 participants (seven Japanese, five Finns and one Chinese). We visited regional administrations, Northern (Arctic) Federal University, local offices of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, Finnish Consulate in Murmansk, shipping and logistics companies and local associations of enterprises.

Third, we compare eastern and western parts of the Russian Far Northern areas. Japanese participants have good experiences in research in the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia, some of which regions are included in the Far North. On the other hand, Finnish colleagues have more expertise on the north-western part of Russia. We expect some unique results from the exchanges or fusion of experiences and views between Japanese and Finnish colleagues.

Fourth, in our project we make full use of all available statistical materials. We analyze statistical data on national accounts, state budget, foreign economic relations, energy, demography etc. Our members include specialists of statistical analysis on the Russian data who have written a number of papers in international journals.

For successful implementation of the project, we need close cooperation with Russian colleagues, especially working in the Far Northern regions. We are ready to expand this project into a trilateral project between Japan, Finland and Russia. ■



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