

A statement from Korea Environment Institute

June 5, 2014

High-level Segment

The sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention, UNECE

Since 2004, with a strong support from the Korean government, KEI has been contributing to introducing the Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (TEIA) system in Northeast Asia by organizing meaningful TEIA workshops as well as by conducting related researches with other Northeast Asian countries in order to mitigate and prevent environmental impacts arising from near-border development projects.

Northeast Asia including China, Japan, Mongolia, Russia, DPRK and ROK, is a geographically close region that falls under the same environmental influence. Recently the region is not only facing serious domestic environmental problems with rapid economic growth, but also confronted with transboundary environmental problems and associated conflicts between countries.

Unfortunately, Northeast Asia lacks a solid environmental management system among countries to deal with transboundary and other environmental issues. TEIA can, therefore, be one of the essential systematic measures in which environmental problems between countries would be negotiated. However, it would be necessary to have an in-depth discussion of what we have to do first for implementing TEIA system in the region, and how to operate it while customizing each Northeast Asian country with different EIA system and socio-economic circumstance. All these cannot be decided in a short time, and we need to invest enough time for discussing and considering them from various aspects.

Recently, the Korean government declared “*Eurasia Initiative*”. The initiative proposes important developing projects and plans to expansively rebuild the pre-Cold-War linkages between Europe and East Asia, and ultimately building a peaceful community throughout Eurasia based on comprehensive cooperation. The initiative aims to increase exchanges in transportation, energy and agricultural sectors to achieve the goals. For example, the government is currently reviewing projects such as connecting gas pipelines through ROK, DPRK and Russia as well as trans-continental railroad systems to enhance exchanges across the Eurasian region, including the Korean Peninsula.

In this regard, South Korea’s key role in efforts to mediate the different positions of each country toward establishing TEIA system in Northeast Asia will continue, especially with strong supports from the TEIA expert network of Europe and Asia like the Espoo Convention.

Thank you very much.

Byung-Wook Lee
President of Korea Environment Institute (KEI)