

2021 China Anyang International Conference of Chinese Characters

Congratulatory Remarks by TCS Deputy Secretary-General Natsuko Sakata

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Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning!

On behalf of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, I would like to first extend my warmest congratulations on the opening of the 2021 China Anyang International Conference of Chinese Characters. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of this conference for their determination and ability to overcome the social difficulties under COVID-19, gathering provincial and municipal leaders, academia, experts, entrepreneurs and students through this hybrid format.

In alliance with this year's theme, "Chinese Characters and the World" I would like to first share my thoughts on "Chinese Characters and East Asia", as a regional aspect is an essential cornerstone in extending our views to a global aspect. "Chinese characters" is a common cultural asset among China, Japan, and the ROK, and its spreading reveals the long history of interaction and cultural exchange in the East Asian region.

Around the second to third century B.C. people from the Central Plains in China brought Chinese Characters to the Korean peninsula, which made way for Buddhist and Confucian scriptures to spread in Korea. Chinese Characters soon reached Japan when Wani from Baekje brought in the Analects of Confucius and the Thousand Character Classic in the 5th century. Since then, envoys traveled from Korea and Japan to China to share knowledge and technology, and in no time, Chinese characters became part of basic education in all three countries. This history highlights the role of Chinese Characters as a medium to enable smooth interaction and to accelerate Asian civilization.

Interestingly, the three countries have respectively developed ways of applying

Chinese Characters into their language systems over time. In China, massive revisions of Chinese characters took place in order to simplify them for daily use. Japan uses Chinese characters in combination with other alphabets such as hiragana and katakana. In ROK, although hangul is the official written language, numerous words can be converted into Chinese characters and easily be understood by the other two countries. These phenomena enable us to reaffirm that Chinese characters have been loved and treasured by the people of China, Japan, and the ROK. As a symbol of East Asia's aesthetic values, Chinese Characters underlie every aspect of our daily lives.

Living much of my life in Japan, I am also a user of Chinese Characters. I personally look up to the great calligrapher Wáng Xīzhī from Jin dynasty. He is my model for calligraphy. Well then, how is my writing? I would say it is a piece of unique art, as if written by a jovial kid. I am not satisfied and I am on a lifelong journey of improvement waiting for the day my hidden talents will shine through.

Returning to the significance of trilateral cooperation, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat. It all began in 2010 where leaders of China, Japan and the ROK gathered at the 3rd Trilateral Summit with the common ambition of promoting peace and common prosperity among China, Japan, and the ROK.

In the past decade, we have witnessed the outcome and development of trilateral cooperation including Trilateral Summits, 21 ministerial meetings, more than 70 inter-governmental mechanisms and numerous cooperation projects in extensive fields including culture, economy, environment, youth, disaster management, and local exchange.

In support of re-recognizing the unique value of Chinese Characters, I would like to introduce the 3rd edition of the "Trilateral Common Vocabulary Dictionary" compiled by the TCS. The book includes 658 vocabularies commonly used in China, Japan and the ROK, which facilitates mutual communication between people of the three countries.

Even outside of TCS, in various events such as the Trilateral Online Calligraphy Exhibition, the friendship and strong desire for peace among the calligraphers are displayed through their creative work, reassuring us that we are not alone in the

journey of conveying the value and potential that Chinese characters possess for regional harmonization.

In drawing to a close, I hope that this China Anyang International Conference of Chinese Characters will be a unique and meaningful platform for the participants to exchange views for both preserving and upgrading our common cultural asset of Chinese characters and Asian civilization. Chinese characters are the common homeland and a leading actor for cooperation between China, Japan and the ROK, and hopefully a treasure for the world as well.

Thank you.