The Association of North East Asia Regional Governments

Annual Report 2020

The Association of North East Asia Regional Governments (NEAR) was founded to pursue mutual development of Northeast Asia and contribute to world peace by establishing networks for exchange and cooperation between regional governments based on the spirit of mutual benefit and equality to build trust-based relationships. It is one of the largest international organizations in Asia with 78 participating regional governments from six countries, China, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, North Korea, and Russia, embracing 666 million people.
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Greetings

Honorable Members of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments (NEAR)!

The world faces the global challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. To overcome such a crisis, joint efforts based on humanitarian and solidarity are required. In these difficult times, our member governments must utilize the NEAR platform to further strengthen cooperation at local government levels.

Despite many restrictions caused by the pandemic, NEAR held several important events successfully. In particular, on September 28, 2020, the NEAR Special Session titled, “New Ways of International Cooperation Development in a Post-Pandemic World” was held on the sidelines of the Second Northern Forum on Sustainable Development. The session, which was NEAR’s first video conference, was co-organized by the Republic of Sakha, NEAR’s chair, and the NEAR Secretariat.

The Republic of Sakha, as the NEAR chair, will hold the 13th General Assembly in 2021. Furthermore, this year is meaningful because it marks the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments.

The Republic of Sakha is actively engaging in economy and trade and humanities cooperation with NEAR founding members and Northeast Asian countries. The Republic of Sakha has worked as a member of NEAR and has built close trust between NEAR member regions, and it will continue to participate actively in strengthening and expanding regional cooperation between Northeast Asian countries going forward.

We will join forces with one another and win the war against the virus sooner or later. I am also positive that relations between Northeast Asian countries and between Northeast Asian regions will rise to a new level for the development and prosperity of Northeast Asian countries.

Honorable members of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments, I wish you all health, happiness, and prosperity, and all the success in the new projects implemented through the NEAR platform.

Chair of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments, Head of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia)

Aysen Nikolaev

I wish for good health for the members of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments in 2021. Furthermore, I hope for the continued development of member governments. I would also like to convey my gratitude to everyone of you for having supported NEAR activities in 2020.

Last year, as the novel coronavirus spread in an unprecedented fashion, countries around the world faced difficult times when their livelihoods, as well as health, were threatened. Since direct contact between NEAR members was also extremely limited, all international exchange events set to take place had to be canceled.

In particular, the 13th General Assembly which was supposed to be held in the Republic of Sakha, Russia last autumn was postponed to this year, along with the subcommittees being prepared by each member government. Furthermore, exchange events such as the International Forum, Working-level Workshop, and Young Leader’s Forum had been suspended.

In one sense, however, the restrictions caused us to become keenly aware of the significance and importance of such direct exchange between member governments. This was demonstrated by the highest number of written ballots ever cast by member governments on the extension of the chair’s term of office of the Sakha Republic and the postponement of the 13th General Assembly, which reached around 90 percent.

In the first online video conference organized by the chair, the Republic of Sakha, which was held last September, 32 member regional governments from four countries participated and discussed “New Ways of International Cooperation Development in a Post-Pandemic World.” In the international forum celebrating “The First International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies” which was hosted by Chungcheongnam-do Province, the NEAR Secretary General attended the forum on behalf of NEAR and read out the code of conduct, along with former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

There are regional governments that have expressed their wish to join NEAR. Miyagi Prefecture, Japan signed up to become a NEAR observer group. In addition, a Chinese regional government expressed its desire to join NEAR. Consequently, it is anticipated that the number of NEAR members will rise when international exchange events resume this year.

The number of submissions for the NEAR Art-Poster Contest, NEAR’s annual event which targets youth, more than doubled in number compared to the previous year. The excellent works of the 2019 Art-Poster Contest were exhibited in the Gyeongsangbuk-do Office, the Education Center, etc., and many people were able to view them. The works were introduced by Korean broadcasters and newspapers as well, thereby making public the artistic talents of Northeast Asian youth.

The Secretariat will work hard to successfully host all kinds of international exchange meetings such as the 13th General Assembly, Subcommittees, and Working-level Workshop that were postponed last year. Furthermore, the Secretariat will make efforts to respond to the New Normal era by securing close communication between member governments and holding online video conferences.

Lastly, I hope that COVID-19 vaccines and treatment methods will be utilized swiftly in 2021, removing uncertainties and allowing active exchange between member governments to take place once again. I ask every member regional government for their continued support for the Secretariat.

Secretary General of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments

Kim Ok Chae
Main Activities of the Secretariat
Main Activities of the Secretariat

I. Appointing NEAR Honorary Ambassadors for Each Member Regional Government

1. Promotion Background
The NEAR Secretariat's new project of appointing the “NEAR Honorary Ambassadors” was started to raise NEAR's profile and invigorate private exchange in Northeast Asia by encouraging opinion leaders of each member government to participate in the active promotion of NEAR.

2. Current State of Promotion
NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae appointed 40 opinion leaders from 27 member governments of five countries as NEAR Honorary Ambassadors through the first and second rounds of recommendation by member regional governments. The NEAR Secretariat provided the appointed honorary ambassadors with letters of appointment and business cards. They are able to participate in NEAR public relations activities and exchange events not only within the region but further afield for the next two years.

The Current State and Number of Appointees for Each Member Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appointment Round</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Member Governments</th>
<th>Number of Appointees</th>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st Round</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Shanxi Province</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shaanxi Province</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Akita Prefecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Ulsan Metropolitan City</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>Dornod Province</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Bayankhongor Province</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Olgii Province</td>
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<td>Uvs Province</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zavkhan Province</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Khentii Province</td>
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<td>Khovd Province</td>
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<td>Khuvsgul Province</td>
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| 2nd Round         | China   | Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region | 2 | August 1, 2020 – July 31, 2022 |
|                   |         |Shandong Province | 2 |
|                   |         |Hunan Province    | 1 |
|                   | Japan   | Aomori Prefecture | 1 |
|                   | Mongolia| Dornogovi Province | 1 |
|                   |         |Govi-Altai Province | 2 |
|                   |         |Bulgan Province   | 1 |
|                   |         |Selenge Province  | 2 |
|                   | Russia  | Republic of Khakassia | 1 |
|                   |         |Primorsky Territory | 1 |

Total 5 countries | 27 members | 40 appointees

3. Future Plans
Going forward, the NEAR Secretariat plans to invite NEAR Honorary Ambassadors to the NEAR Secretariat and hold meetings, giving presentations on the roles of the honorary ambassadors, sharing experiences regarding individual promotion activities, and leading discussions on ways to promote, among other items.
II. The Secretariat’s First Experience · Training Program for Korean College Students

1. Overview
The NEAR Secretariat’s First and Second Experience-Training Programs for Students in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province took place from July 13 through 24 and August 18 through 28 at the NEAR Secretariat. First introduced in 2020, the NEAR Secretariat’s Experience and Training Program was designed to give students in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, South Korea, who have limited access to international organizations, a chance to experience the Secretariat and help them cultivate a global mindset through communicating with and learning from experts at the Secretariat. Students of various majors, including International Studies, received training and took part in discussions and presentations actively. The training course consisted of detailed programs such as lectures from experts and seconded officers, a special lecture from the Secretary General, discussions and presentations, and writing logs among other things. In particular, thoughtful lectures on each country delivered by experts on China, Russia, Japan, and Mongolia provided students with fresh perspectives and information. Secretary General Kim Ok-chae expressed his hopes that this training course would be a valuable opportunity for the participants so that they may understand the work of the Secretariat, make sense of the politics, history, societies, and cultures of Northeast Asia through discussions and performing assignments with the help of experts, and sense a need for regional cooperation and common prosperity.

2. Main Content
A total of 20 students, 10 students per round, who attended universities based in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province attended this program. Students of various majors outside of international studies, political science and diplomacy, and language and literature participated, including students of engineering, education, and natural science. Secretarial experts on China, Russia, Japan, and Mongolia and seconded officers gave presentations on their work and an overview for each country which included information on culture and economy. Also, administrative and public relations officers delivered lectures focused on practical business skills and gave relevant assignments. The students had constructive discussions under the guidance of experts and officers and performed assignments given such as mock business planning and presentations, which helped advance expertise in the work of international organizations. They also kept a training log on what they learned each day and played a role in promoting NEAR by posting it on their social network accounts.

3. Result
This training program was in and of itself a great opportunity and experience for students who had limited access to international organizations and lacked hands-on experience. Through quality lectures, the participants learned about the function of international organizations and the exchange and cooperative activities of NEAR. Furthermore, they gained a realization of the importance of cooperation at regional levels. As a result, the program served as an opportunity for students to communicate with and learn from the Secretariat staff in person and explore careers in the field of international cooperation.
III. The 8th NEAR Youth Art · Poster Contest

The NEAR Secretariat held an annual art contest to promote cultural exchange among the youth in Northeast Asia through works of art such as paintings. The theme of the year was "The Culture of Northeast Asia," and "The Future of Northeast Asia." 323 artworks were submitted by five countries: 105 from China, 22 from Japan, 18 from South Korea, 46 from Mongolia, and 132 from Russia. As a result, "The Magnificence of Tima" by Cao Zhi from Huangcang High School in Longshan County, Hunan Province, China was awarded the Grand Award. Students from Hunan Province of China, Chungcheongbuk-do Province of South Korea, Khentii Province of Mongolia, and Tomsk Region of Russia were awarded the Excellence Awards.

The NEAR Youth Art · Poster Contest, which was celebrated its eighth run, was a meaningful event due to more active participation from member regions than in the previous years despite the Covid-19 pandemic. The Secretariat selected more artworks for the Special Recognition Award than planned to present more participants with awards.

Prize-winning works were introduced on the NEAR homepage. Furthermore, the prize-winning works are expected to be exhibited officially, enabling residents in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province to experience and learn about the culture of Northeast Asia.
An Exhibition for Award-winning Works of the NEAR Youth Art · Poster Contest from Five Northeast Asian Countries

The NEAR Youth Art · Poster Contest started in 2016 to raise interest and understanding of the culture, economy, and environment of each region among the youth in Northeast Asia. Many young people have participated in this contest since then.

This year, the prize-winning works of the contests held so far were exhibited three times. For around two weeks from July 20 to 30, 61 award-winning works of the contests held over the past four years were displayed at a gallery in the Gyeongsangbuk-do Office of Education Cultural Center, which is based in Pohang-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. The same exhibition was held from July 31 to August 31 in the lobby of the headquarters of Gyeongsangbuk-do New Office, allowing residents in the province to learn about the culture and attitudes of different countries in Northeast Asia.

In addition, the award-winning works were displayed alongside professional paintings at the request of the working committee of Art Pohang from October 28 to 30.

This exhibition was covered by a local radio broadcast, which garnered interest from local residents so that they could view the artworks despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Excellence Award – Winter in Tomsk by Tkachenko Sofia from Children’s Art School No. 2 in Tomsk Region, Russia

Excellence Award – Three Types of Men’s Sports by Ulziitsetseg Erdenebat from Khentii Province, Mongolia
V. Visiting Three Prefectures in the Kyushu Region and Invitation to Join NEAR as Members

1. Overview
Four delegates from the NEAR Secretariat, including Secretary General Kim Ok-chae, visited Ōita Prefecture, Miyazaki Prefecture, and Nagasaki Prefecture in southern Kyushu, Japan from February 12 to 14. During the visit, Secretary General Kim gave a presentation regarding the establishment philosophy and activities of NEAR and encouraged them to join NEAR as members.

2. Main Content
Ōita Prefecture’s Director of Planning and Promotion Nakashima Eiji, Miyazaki Prefecture’s Director of Tourism and Economic Exchange Sako Shigehisa, and Nagasaki Prefecture’s Director General of Culture, Tourism and International Affairs Ura Masaki met with the NEAR delegation. They listened to the explanation and said that they would conduct a review before deciding on membership.

3. Reference
Miyagi Prefecture, Japan sent an official letter to the NEAR Secretariat in April, expressing a desire to participate in NEAR as an observer group. This came as a result of the NEAR delegation’s visit to Miyagi Prefecture in November 2019.

IV. New Year’s Meeting with Governors of 15 Mongolian Member Governments

1. Overview
Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and a delegation of five members of the NEAR Secretariat visited Ulaanbaatar City in Mongolia from January 1 to 4. There, they held a New Year’s party with 15 heads of NEAR regional governments including Arkhangai Province and Bayankhongor Province. They also visited the Cabinet Office and Ulaanbaatar City on January 3.

2. Main Content
In the New Year’s meeting, heads of regional governments in Mongolia made various suggestions to the Secretariat including arranging exchanges between Korean and Japanese primary local governments and Mongolian regional governments, encouraging high-level executives of members to participate in the General Assembly and Working Committee and focusing on economic exchange beneficial to regional governments. Secretary General Kim promised to make efforts in areas that can be resolved at the level of the Secretariat and asked Mongolian members to participate actively in various NEAR international exchange events such as the General Assembly which will be held in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) around September.

▲ Display at Pohang Hotel Art Fair (October 28 – 30, 2020)
Cooperation Activities with Related Organizations
Cooperation Activities with Related Organizations

I. NEAR Members Participate in the International Forum Commemorating the First International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies Online

1. Overview
Last year, the resolution to designate September 7 as the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies was adopted in the 74th UN General Assembly. To mark the day, the international forum was held both online and offline in Korea’s capital city, Seoul, on September 7 under the joint auspices of Chungcheongnam-do Province, a NEAR member, and Korea’s National Council on Climate and Air Quality. At the request of Chungcheongnam-do Province, the NEAR Secretariat approached its member governments with regards to participation and consequently, interested members registered to participate.

2. Main Content
Hosted by Chungcheongnam-do Province, this forum was designed to establish a platform wherein regional governments in Northeast Asia can share their policies and best practices. Eight regions from four countries, including Anhui Province and Shaanxi Province in China, Hyogo Prefecture in Japan, Uvurkhangai Province in Mongolia, and the Republic of Sakha, Krasnoyarsk Territory, Khabarovsk Territory, and Primorsky Territory in Russia, as well as 14 regions from South Korea, participated in the video meeting among NEAR members. In the forum held under the theme, “Clean Air and Climate Change Partnership for All,” the Chair of Korea’s National Council on Climate and Air Quality Ban Ki-moon delivered an opening speech and Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Kyung-wha gave welcoming remarks. There, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme Inger Anderson reported on the proceedings in her video message, and Governor of Chungcheongnam-do Yang Seung-jo, Governor of Shandong Province Li Ganjie, and Governor of Nara Prefecture Arai Shogo delivered speeches.
Meanwhile, along with Chairman Ban and Governor Yang, NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae read the code of practice on the declaration aimed at strengthening cooperation and facilitating actions at a local governmental level in Northeast Asia.

II. NEAR Special Online Session in the Northern Forum by the Republic of Sakha, Russia

1. Overview
At the request of the Republic of Sakha, Russia, NEAR’s first video conference, the NEAR Special Session of the Northern Forum hosted by the Republic of Sakha, was held on September 28. This NEAR Special Session was titled, “New Ways of International Cooperation Development in a Post-Pandemic World.” 111 participants from 32 NEAR member regional governments of four countries, China (5), South Korea (7), Mongolia (8), and Russia (12) took part in this online event.
Cooperation Activities with Related Organizations

2. Main Content

Welcome Speech / Congratulatory Remarks

Gavril Kirillin, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Sakha, presided over the video conference. There was a welcome speech by Sergey Mestnikov, Acting Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Republic of Sakha, followed by congratulatory remarks by Kim Ok-chae, the NEAR Secretary General, a video message from Lee Cheol-woo, Governor of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, and a congratulatory video message from Esteban Leon, Head of City Resilience Profiling Programme, UN-Habitat.

Presentations by Representatives from Member Governments

Six representatives from four member regional governments each gave a presentation on the experience of having implemented policies on health, education, business support, urban development, etc. during COVID-19 and shared relevant information.

For details, (1) Sergey Mestnikov, Acting Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Republic of Sakha, proposed regional education models for remote digital education in his presentation titled, “The Education Area during and after the Pandemic Era.” (2) Chilkhaa Oyunaa, Director of Health Bureau of Dornod Province of Mongolia, introduced the current situation of COVID-19 prevention in Dornod Province of Mongolia. In addition, (3) Shi Bingyin, President of the First Affiliated Hospital of Xi’an Jiaotong University in Shaanxi Province, China introduced the experience of dispatching medical staff abroad and the anti-COVID-19 experience. He stressed that each country must broaden its cooperation in terms of the prevention and treatment of epidemic. (4) Lee Yong-il, Ambassador for International Relations of Sejong Special Self-Governing City, South Korea, shared Sejong City’s case studies of implementing the establishment of smart cities based on the fourth industrial revolution in the Post-COVID 19 era. (5) Ekaterina Kireeva, First Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Foreign Economic Relations of the Amur Region, Russia, introduced continued international cooperation between Blagoveshchensk in the Amur Region, Russia and Heihe, Heilongjiang Province, China despite the COVID-19 era. Lastly, (6) Han Jae-sung, Director of the Division of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, South Korea, illustrated the policy to support the exports by SMEs in the post-pandemic era.

3. Assessment and Vision

This video conference served as a platform to create more opportunities for regional governments to share their experiences for future challenges like COVID-19. They concluded the NEAR Special Session with promises to meet again at the NEAR General Assembly which will be held in the Republic of Sakha, Russia in 2021.

III. NEAR Members Participate in International Video Conference Hosted by the World Smart Sustainable Cities Organization(WeGO) and the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat(TCS)

1. Overview

The Secretariat of the World Smart Sustainable Cities Organization(WeGO) and the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat(TCS) located in Seoul, Korea co-hosted the Webinar on China · Japan · Korea(CJK) Smart Cities on August 5. At the request of the WeGO Secretariat, the NEAR Secretariat approached its member governments with regards to participation in this online seminar, and interested member regions registered to participate.

2. Main Content

The goal of the online international conference is to bring together cities and businesses interested in cooperation in CJK smart cities to share the best practices and build joint projects by establishing a cooperative system for smart cities in which both cities and businesses can prosper.
72 participants from a total of seven members participated in the international conference. The details are as follows: For South Korea, Chungcheongnam-do Province(1), Jeollanam-do Province(5), and Jeju Province(6); for China, Shaanxi Province(40), Shanxi Province(1), Shandong Province(8), and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region(11). Going forward, the Secretariat will continue to cooperate with various regional cooperative international organizations to contribute to the common development and prosperity of member governments.

3. Additional Notes
The World Smart Sustainable Cities Organization (WeGO) is an international organization that was established by 50 founding member cities under the leadership of Seoul Metropolitan City, South Korea in 2010. It has a current membership of 208 cities from all over the world. It aims to develop sustainable cities and resolve the digital divide through exchange and cooperation in the Smart City and E-Government fields by utilizing information and communication technology (ICT).

IV. Member Regional Governments Submit Works in the COVID 19 & HUMAN International Photo Exhibition Hosted by Jeju, Korea

1. Overview
NEAR member Jeju Province, Korea has transformed the format of this year’s annual International Cultural Exchange Festival, which consists of international performances and exhibitions, by turning it into a non-contact exchange event. The International Photo Exhibition titled, “COVID 19 & HUMAN,” took place exclusively online from September 8 to October 11.

※ Photo Exhibition Video: https://youtu.be/ZgvecYKn5BI

2. Main Content
Nine NEAR members from four countries, South Korea, China, Mongolia, and Russia, submitted 34 photographs to the exhibition. Also, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, a NEAR associate member, alone sent 19 pieces, expressing a particular interest in this exhibition.
V. Participating in the 15th Jeju Forum for Peace & Prosperity

1. Overview
The 15th Jeju Forum for Peace & Prosperity took place from November 5 to 7 under the theme of "Reinventing Multilateral Cooperation: Pandemic and Humane Security." Renowned world leaders attended the forum and shared their thoughtful perspectives.

2. Main Content

<Opening Ceremony>
In the opening ceremony held on November 6, Governor of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province Won Heeryong, the 8th Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres, the 42nd President of the United States Bill Clinton participated and stressed the importance of cooperation and solidarity in the pandemic.

<Diplomat Round Table: Changing Dynamics of Northeast Asia Multilateral Cooperation>
Kim Sook, the former ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the UN, presided over the table, and presentations and discussions were made by the Indonesian ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Swedish ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Japanese ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Chinese ambassador to the Republic of Korea, and German ambassador to the Republic of Korea. The five ambassadors to the Republic of Korea shared their opinions on the current state of Northeast Asia and multilateralism in the region.

3. Assessment and Vision
The Jeju Forum for Peace & Prosperity proposed cooperation as a way toward peace and prosperity in the pandemic. Furthermore, eminent global leaders took part to convey fruitful ideas.

VI. Participating in the UN ESCAP ENEA Policy Dialogue

1. Overview
The Policy Dialogue organized by the UN ESCAP ENEA was held online on October 22, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the UN ESCAP East and North-East Asia office. The Policy Dialogue is titled, "Inclusive Subregional Cooperation in East and North-East Asia for Sustainable Development."

2. Main Content

<Opening Ceremony>
Gantold Baasanjav, the head of ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office, presided over the opening ceremony of this online Policy Dialogue. There, Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, gave an opening speech, followed by congratulatory remarks by Lee Tae-ho, the second Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Park Nam-chun, Governor of Incheon, and special remarks by Ban Ki-moon, the former UN Secretary General.

<Presentation and Discussion>
The panel discussions were divided into two sessions. The titles of the first and second sessions each were "broad-based and inclusive subregional cooperation priorities" and "strengthening institutional subregional cooperation mechanisms." Experts in the fields of energy, transportation, environment, and climate presented valuable ideas and led active presentations and discussions.

3. Assessment and Vision
This Policy Dialogue was an opportunity to bring together subregional experts in various areas to gather ideas on cooperation in terms of sustainable connectivity, environmental sustainability, and innovation for inclusive and resilient societies. It also stressed the importance of subregional cooperation. The experts shared views on strengthening inclusive cooperation in various areas, energy, climate, environment, transport, etc.
VII. Hosting the Conference of the Globalization of Regions in the Global Korea Convention 2020

1. Overview
The NEAR Secretariat and Gyeongsangbuk-do Province hosted a conference on "The Globalization of Regions" as part of the Global Korea Convention led by the Korean Government in Seoul on December 11. This conference was held both online and offline and simultaneous interpretation was provided from Korean to English. Multiple people viewed it on the online platforms YouTube and the 2020 Global Korea Convention webpage. The theme of the conference was "Ways to Invigorate Exchange between Northeast Asia Regional Governments."

2. Main Content
A. Opening
The conference began with opening remarks by Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and a welcoming speech by Governor of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province Lee Cheol-woo (read by Han Jae-sung, Director of the Division of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province).

B. Presentations and Discussions, and Q&A session
① Kim Hyeong-soo, the president of the Korean Association of Northeast Asia Studies and a professor at Dankook University, made a presentation titled, "Ways to Invigorate Exchange between Northeast Asia Regional Governments." ② Lee Seung-geun, the former president of the Korean Society of Contemporary European Studies and a professor at Keimyung University, delivered a presentation themed, "Ways to Invigorate Exchange between Northeast Asia Regional Governments based on the Realities of Exchange between European Local Governments." In response, former Korean ambassador to Brazil Koo Bon-woo, Senior Research Fellow at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy Suh Jin-kyo, professor at Sungkyunkwan University Yang Kee-ho, and Director of the Division of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province Han Jae-sung took part in the discussions based on the presentations.

The discussions were presided over by Secretary General Kim Ok-chae. After the presentations, experts presented various ways to invigorate exchange, stating "As NEAR is an international organization similar to the UN in Northeast Asia, its role should be expanded, and active exchange with other organizations such as the Assembly of European Regions known as AER is required." The conference served as an opportunity to invite experts and devise ways to overcome the limitations of exchange and cooperation between Northeast Asian regional governments. Furthermore, the conference provided an opportunity to make practical developments at a time when international exchange has been suspended due to COVID-19.
International Cooperative Networking
The Association of North East Asia Regional Governments Annual Report 2020

International Cooperative Networking

The NEAR Secretariat discusses the Northeast Asia Young Leaders Forum with Mongolia International University (MIU) on February 6

Secretary General Kim Ok-chae held a meeting with Gijn Su-yong, Dean of External Affairs of Mongolia International University (MIU), at the Secretariat on February 6. In this meeting, Secretary General Kim agreed to co-host the Northeast Asia Young Leaders Forum with MIU in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in early August and discussed the specific details of promotion. The NEAR Secretariat decided to hold and bear the costs of the Northeast Asia Young Leaders Forum in Mongolia in consideration of the fact that thus far, Mongolian Regional Governments have had very few opportunities to host NEAR international exchange events. In response, MIU expressed its intentions to provide school facilities and an exchange program. Various programs such as the Mongolian grassland experience will be prepared for the year’s event. The organizers anticipate the active participation of young people from NEAR member regions.

Krasnoyarsk Region Holds Awards Ceremony for Winners of the NEAR Youth Contest on January 28

Krasnoyarsk Region in Russia held various events inviting approximately 173 budding painters for the 110th anniversary of the establishment of the Sunkov Children’s Arts School on January 28. During the event, there was an awards ceremony for the students who won a variety of national and international art contests. In particular, the winning students of the 7th NEAR Youth Contest were presented with certificates of merit and prizes. Meanwhile, a total of 44 artworks from Krasnoyarsk Region were put forward for the same contest and nine applicants were awarded the excellence award, participation award, and special recognition award.

NEAR Secretariat Appoints Kim Su-hyun as New Administrative Expert on January 15

The NEAR Secretariat appointed Kim Su-hyun as the new administrative expert on January 15. She started working at the Secretariat, having received a certificate of appointment from Secretary General Kim Ok-chae. After majoring in accounting at university, Kim Su-hyun has built up experience through managerial and secretarial roles in private companies over the years. As the administrative expert in the Department of Planning and Public Relations of the NEAR Secretariat, she is in charge of accounting, general affairs, and secretarial work. Kim Su-hyun stated that she would adjust to her new position swiftly and contribute to the development of the NEAR Secretariat.

Delegation from Shimane, Japan Visits the NEAR Secretariat for Business Consultation on January 14

Three delegates from Shimane Prefecture, Japan including the Deputy Head of the Department of Environment and Living, Imakka Yasuharu, and Director of Culture and International Affairs, Hironori Negara, visited the Secretariat and discussed a work-cooperation plan between Shimane Prefecture and the NEAR Secretariat, meeting with Secretary General Kim Ok-chae on January 14. Deputy Head Imakka gave a detailed explanation on how the Shimane Prefecture official scheduled to be dispatched to the Secretariat in April will perform NEAR Secretariat duties at the Shimane Prefectural Office. However, he promised that there would be no disruptions because of this, and Secretary General Kim Ok-chae accepted this.

Newly Appointed NEAR Secretariat Seconded Officials from Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, South Korea

On the expiration of their office terms, Kim Young-hee, Director of Planning and Public Relations and Lee Won-yeong, Manager of the Department of Planning and Public Relations, have returned to Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. They have been succeeded by dispatched officials Jung Pil-ran and Choi Hae-yong, who started work at the NEAR Secretariat on January 23.

Mongolian Dispatched Officer of the NEAR Secretariat Erdenebileg Azzaya Leaves Her Post on April 3

Erdenebileg Azzaya, who was dispatched from Umnugovi Province, Mongolia in April 2018 to the NEAR Secretariat, left her office on April 3 after completing two years of a dispatch service. Azzaya contributed to the work of the NEAR Secretariat which included exchange and liaison between Mongolian members and the translation and interpretation of Mongolian documents drawn up at the Secretariat for the past two years.

NEAR Secretariat Coordinates Mutual Cooperation and Support Regarding COVID-19 Crisis Among Member Regional Governments

The NEAR Secretariat is making efforts to strengthen membership and ties between member regional governments by encouraging NEAR members in their bid to overcome difficulties caused by COVID-19 which has so far spread throughout the world. The NEAR Secretariat has sent a letter of consolation to the heads of eleven Chinese regional governments immediately following news of the outbreak of COVID-19. The Secretariat received replies from ten Chinese regional governments who strengthened their resolve to overcome the crisis and expressed their gratitude to the Secretariat. Additionally, the Secretariat is creating an environment in which current difficulties can be resolved together through cooperation with regional governments including exchanging letters of consolation, relief, and sharing of disinfection experiences to deal with hardships.

Miyagi Prefecture, Japan Expresses Wish to Join NEAR as an Observer Group

Governor Yoshihisa Murai of Miyagi Prefecture, Japan sent an official letter to NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae on April 8, 2020, expressing a desire to participate in NEAR as an observer group. This came as a result of Secretary General Kim’s visit to Miyagi Prefecture on November 1, 2019 to introduce NEAR and its general international exchange activities. The Secretariat welcomes the participation of Miyagi Prefecture and will provide relevant information for Miyagi Prefecture to take part in future NEAR’s various international exchange events. In accordance with the joining of Miyagi Prefecture as an observer group, 11 member regional governments and 2 observer groups (Yamaguchi Prefecture and Miyagi Prefecture) in Japan will participate in NEAR’s activities.

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The Association of North East Asia Regional Governments Annual Report 2020

International Cooperative Networking

Secretary General Kim Ok-chae took part in the 22nd East Sea Rim Forum hosted by the Institute of Global Affairs at Kyunghee University on May 11. There, he gave a 90-minute special lecture on “The History of Ancient Korean-Japanese Exchange” to researchers and professors including Director Kim Ju-yi, who was in charge of the forum. There, opinions on the overall relationships between Korea and Japan were exchanged. During the special lecture, Secretary General Kim presented historical resources that indicated that the southern part of the Korean peninsula and the Yamato Court of Japan were in fact political and military alliances until the end of the 7th century AD. Also, he emphasized that when the citizens of both countries turn back on the spirit of exchange of ancient ancestors instead of being buried in the memories of the modern and contemporary times, true historical reconciliation is achieved, and future-oriented relationships are constructed.

Secretary General Kim Ok-chae was invited as a guest speaker for the NEAR Secretariat’s affairs and discussed business cooperation methods with the Win-Win Committee established jointly by Daegu Metropolitan City and Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korean members of NEAR. The Win-Win Committee stated that it expected to utilize the cooperation network in the Northeast Asian countries of the NEAR Secretariat when Gyeongsangbuk-do Province and Daegu Metropolitan City jointly promote overseas cooperative business to strengthen competitiveness. The NEAR Secretariat agreed to cooperate on a case-by-case basis.

Choi Jo Hee, manager of the Department of the International Cooperation, and expert Son Miyoung of the NEAR Secretariat each published an academic thesis on the Arctic in the Summer 2020 Issue of “The Journal of Arctic,” published by the Arctic Society, Pai Chai University in Korea. Manager Choi Jo Hee presented views on the development of the region through the guarantee of being fight for the inhabitants of the Arctic region of the Sakha Republic and the transmission of indigenous culture in her paper titled, “Sustainable Future for Indigenous People in the Arctic of the Sakha Republic.” Expert Son Miyoung proposed an analysis and future strategies on Japan’s Arctic policy in her paper titled, “Implementation and Strategies of Japan’s Arctic Policy.” The NEAR Secretariat will continue to participate actively in publishing papers and contributing articles related to the activities of the NEAR member regional governments in domestic and international academic journals to cultivate the expertise of NEAR’s experts.

Decision to Postpone the 13th NEAR General Assembly Until 2021 Finalized

On July 6, Han Jae-sung, the newly appointed Director of the Division of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province visits NEAR Secretariat on July 6

On July 7, there was a two-hour special lecture on “The History of Ancient Korean-Japanese Exchange” to researchers and professors including Director Kim Jun-yeup who was in charge of the forum. There, opinions on the overall relationships between Korea and Japan were exchanged. Also, he emphasized that when the citizens of both countries turn back on the spirit of exchange of ancient ancestors instead of being buried in the memories of the modern and contemporary times, true historical reconciliation is achieved, and future-oriented relationships are constructed.

NEAR Secretariat Expertise Publish Theses in the Journal of Korea’s Arctic Society

NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae was invited as a guest speaker for the “Course for Understanding Global Culture” hosted by Korea’s Gyeongbuk-do Human Resource Development Institute on July 7. There, he gave a two-hour special lecture on the region through the guarantee of being fight for the inhabitants of the Arctic region of the Sakha Republic and the transmission of indigenous culture in her paper titled, “Sustainable Future for Indigenous People in the Arctic of the Sakha Republic.” Expert Son Miyoung proposed an analysis and future strategies on Japan’s Arctic policy in her paper titled, “Implementation and Strategies of Japan’s Arctic Policy.” The NEAR Secretariat will continue to participate actively in publishing papers and contributing articles related to the activities of the NEAR member regional governments in domestic and international academic journals to cultivate the expertise of NEAR’s experts.

NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae Gives Special Lecture for Korea’s Gyeongbuk Official on July 7

Foreign dispatched officers of the NEAR Secretariat were invited by Pohang Idong High School, where they delivered lectures on foreign cultures to the students and held discussions in English on July 3. Chinese Resident Officer Ma Suchao, dispatched from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, talked about the diverse cultures presented by 55 ethnic minorities in China and the recent trends of Chinese students. Russian Resident Officer Anastasia Konstantinova from the Republic of Sakha (Nenets) introduced Yakutia’s harsh natural environment and climate where temperatures fall to below minus 55°C in the winter, as well as the great Russian authors, such as Tolstoy and Pushkin.

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NEAR Secretariat Implements Global Mind Cultivation Training for Local Youth on July 3

On July 6, Han Jae-sung, the newly appointed Director of the Division of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province visited the NEAR Secretariat. Director Han was appointed as a government official of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province in 1992. He worked as a resident Trade & Investment officer in New York and Los Angeles. He stated he would cooperate closely with the NEAR Secretariat to actively support the development of NEAR.

NEW Appointed Director of the Division of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province Visits NEAR Secretariat on July 6

NEAR Secretariat Appoints Former Korean Minister to Russia Kim Kyung-ho as NEAR Honorary Ambassador on July 1

NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae appointed former Minister to the Korean Embassy in Russia Kim Kyung-ho as a NEAR honorary ambassador on July 1. Honorary Ambassador Kim Kyung-ho is a regional expert who has served as a high-ranking diplomat for many years in the embassies of the Republic of Korea in Russia and Uzbekistan. He is currently an advisory ambassador on Healthcare and Tourism for Daegu Metropolitan City and an honorary advisor for the Association of Korean Cultural Center under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae gives Special Lecture for Professors of the Institute of Global Affairs at Kyunghee University on May 11

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Decision to Postpone the 13th NEAR General Assembly Until 2021 Finalized

The 13th NEAR General Assembly, scheduled to be held in the Republic of Sakha, Russia this October (has been postponed until 2021 due to the prevalence of COVID-19). Taking the situation into account, the Republic of Sakha, the NEAR Chair, stated that it hoped to postpone the 13th NEAR General Assembly until next year, and extend the chair’s term of office. Accordingly, the Secretariat collected opinions in written form from the member regions in accordance with the NEAR Charter. Out of a total of 78 member regions, 66 member regions from five countries, excluding North Korea, voted in favor of the postponement of the 13th NEAR Assembly and the extension of the chair’s term of office. Once the schedule of the 2021 General Assembly has been finalized, the NEAR Secretariat will notify all member regions of the schedule around three months before the General Assembly is held.

NEAR Secretariat Chairman: Lee Sang-gyu
**NEAR Secretariat Appoints Seok Ji-young as New Expert on English on August 3**

NEAR Secretariat appointed Seok Ji-young as the new expert on English on August 3. She received a letter of appointment from Secretary General Kim Ok-chae, and started working at the Secretariat. After majoring in English translation and interpretation at graduate school, Ms. Seok built up her translation and interpretation experience at a large company. She is in charge of promoting cooperative projects with other international organizations and associate member regions, as well as translation and interpretation for English-speaking countries as the expert on English in the Department of Planning and Public Relations of the NEAR Secretariat.

**Russian Dispatched Officer of the NEAR Secretariat Anastasia Konstantinova Leaves Her Post on August 12**

Anastasia Konstantinova, who was dispatched to the NEAR Secretariat from the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Russia in August 2018, left office on August 12 after completing two years of dispatch service. Anastasia contributed to the work of the NEAR Secretariat which included exchange and liaison between Russian members, interpretation, and translation of Russian documents drawn up by the Secretariat over the past two years. Secretary General Kim Ok-chae delivered a commemorative plaque and gift on behalf of the NEAR Secretariat and commended her hard work. In response, Anastasia stated that her time at the Secretariat as a dispatched officer was an excellent opportunity to deepen her understanding of international affairs and built up human networks.

**Newly Appointed Ambassador Koo Hyun-mo for International Relations of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea Visits NEAR Secretariat on September 24**

Koo Hyun-mo is the newly appointed Ambassador for International Relations of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea. He visited the NEAR Secretariat on September 24. Following the presentation on the current state of NEAR, he had a discussion with NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae on September 24. Mr. Koo watched a presentation on the roles and networks of NEAR by the executives of the Secretariat and exchanged opinions on how to improve international exchange and cooperation with them.

**President of the Saemaul Globalization Foundation of Korea Chang Donghee Visits NEAR Secretariat on October 22**

President Chang Donghee of the Saemaul Globalization Foundation, headquartered in Gumi, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea, and his staff visited the NEAR Secretariat on October 22. They held discussions with NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae regarding their visit in which the Foundation would like the NEAR Secretariat to work together cooperatively.

**Newly Appointed Vice Governor Ha Dae-sung for Economic Planning of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea Visits NEAR Secretariat on October 15**

Vice Governor Ha Dae-sung, for Economic Planning of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea visited the NEAR Secretariat on October 15. He had a meeting with NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and head of the Pohang Medical Center Ham In-suk aimed at exchanging views regarding the healthcare of the NEAR Secretariat staff and exchange and cooperation with NEAR members in the health sector through mutual cooperation between the two entities.

**The NEAR Secretariat signed an MOU on cooperation with the Gyeongsangbuk-do Pohang Medical Center on October 21**

At the Pohang Medical Center, located in Pohang, Korea, NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and head of the Pohang Medical Center Ham In-suk signed an MOU aimed at exchange and cooperation with NEAR members in the health sector through mutual cooperation between the two entities.

**NEAR Secretariat Attends Economic Cooperation Forum for CEOs in Northeast Asia Hosted by Pohang, Korea on October 30**

The NEAR Secretariat attended the Economic Cooperation Forum for CEOs in Northeast Asia, which was held in Pohang, Korea on October 30. The forum was organized by the Pohang Development Institute of Korea and the NEAR Secretariat. The forum began with a keynote speech by Hong Seok-woo, former Minister of South Korea’s Knowledge Economy. Afterwards, under the theme, “Recovery and Cooperation of Northeast Asian Local Governmental Entities” the mayor of Pohang, Mr. Kang Hyun-chul, visited the NEAR Secretariat and Kim Ok-chae, Secretary General of the NEAR Secretariat reviewed the NEAR Secretariat, the current state of NEAR, and its future plans for cooperation with the NEAR Secretariat.

**NEAR Secretariat Appoints Cho Sun-hwa as New Expert on China on October 16**

The NEAR Secretariat appointed Cho Sun-hwa as the new expert on China on October 16. She received a letter of appointment from Secretary General Kim Ok-chae, and started working at the Secretariat. After majoring in Chinese Language and Literature at college and earning a Master's degree from Peking University, China, Ms. Cho built up her international exchange experience at a South Korean consulate general in China for six years. She also taught Chinese at a college in Korea until recently. As the new expert on China, Ms. Cho will work for improving cooperation with Chinese member regional governments and conducting area studies, as well as Korean-Chinese translation and interpretation. She stated that she would adjust to her new position swiftly and contribute to the development of the NEAR Secretariat.

**NEAR Secretariat Signs MOU with Gyeonggisaengbuk-do Pohang Medical Center**

The NEAR Secretariat signed an MOU on cooperation with the Gyeongsangbuk-do Pohang Medical Center in Korea on October 21. The Pohang Medical Center was established to contribute to the improvement of the health of citizens and medical development of the region in accordance with medical laws and an ordinance of Gyeongsangbuk-do. It has been gaining the favor of the local community since it recently introduced up-to-date equipment for health check-ups.

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Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and the NEAR Secretariat staff attended the 2020 Public Diplomacy Symposium for Local Governments, which was co-organized by the Government of the Republic of Korea and Keimyung University on November 20. The symposium aimed to help local governments expand the awareness of public diplomacy, notably the legal protection of local ambassadors. The event started with the presentation of the local ambassador of Indonesia, who highlighted the role of NEAR as a forum for public diplomacy for local governments. The NEAR Secretary General emphasized the roles of NEAR as a platform for public diplomacy for local governments and also presented the NEAR’s efforts in expanding the awareness of public diplomacy. He highlighted the importance of public diplomacy in today’s world and stressed the need for local governments to take advantage of NEAR’s platforms to promote their regions and communities.

New Chinese Resident Officer Cheng Anni Inaugurated at the NEAR Secretariat on December 28

Cheng Anni, a government officer from the Foreign Affairs Office of Heilongjiang Province, China, was inaugurated as the Chinese resident officer on December 28. She received a letter of appointment from Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and started working at the Secretariat. After majoring in Korean Language at Harbin University and China, Ms. Anni worked as a government officer in the Sakha Republic and earning a Master’s degree in International Trade from Heilongjiang University, China. After returning to China on November 27, Ms. Anni contributed to the work of the NEAR Secretariat, taking charge of exchange and liaison between the Secretariat and Chinese regional governments, supervising Chinese documents drawn up at the Secretariat, and supporting interpretation services over the past 11 months.

Daegu Metropolitan City, South Korea Expresses Plans to Share Case Studies Related to the COVID-19 Outbreak

Daegu Metropolitan City gathered case studies of the methods of overcoming the large coronavirus outbreak that first occurred in Daegu Metropolitan City, the Republic of Korea over a short period of time. The city sent reference materials to the NEAR Secretariat so that they could be distributed among NEAR member regional governments. After the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Daegu Metropolitan City on February 20, it turned into a large pandemic and the number of daily confirmed cases soared to 714. However, the city’s proactive measures such as making face masks compulsory on public transportation and in public facilities, the dedicated efforts of medical staff, and the voluntary actions of citizens led to zero confirmed cases in 53 days since the first outbreak. Such practices were publicized by the media as being best practices in dealing with the virus worldwide.

New Russian Resident Officer Irina Sleptsova Inaugurated at the NEAR Secretariat on November 2

Irina Sleptsova, the chief specialist of the Ministry for External Relations and Ethnic Affairs of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), was inaugurated as the Russian resident officer on November 2. She received a letter of appointment from Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and started working at the Secretariat. After majoring in Russian Language and Literature at the Sakha State University and earning a Master’s degree in International Trade from Heilongjiang University, China, Ms. Sleptsova worked as a government officer in Sakha Republic over a short period of time. The city sent reference materials to the NEAR Secretariat so that they could be distributed among NEAR member regional governments. After returning to China on November 27, Ms. Sleptsova contributed to the work of the NEAR Secretariat, taking charge of exchange and liaison between the Secretariat and Chinese regional governments, supervising Chinese documents drawn up at the Secretariat, and supporting interpretation services over the past 11 months.

NEAR Secretariat Attends Public Diplomacy Symposium for Local Governments on November 20

New Mongolian Resident Officer Batsaikhan Munkhtsetseg Inaugurated at the NEAR Secretariat on November 4

Batsaikhan Munkhtsetseg, a government officer of the Labor and Welfare Service Office, Darkhan-Uul Province, was inaugurated as the Mongolian resident officer on November 4. She received a letter of appointment from Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and started working at the Secretariat. After majoring in Korean Language and Literature at the University of the Humanities, Mongolia and earning a Bachelor’s degree in Korean Language and Literature from Chongbuk National University, South Korea, Ms. Munkhtsetseg worked as a government officer in Darkhan-Uul Province for eight years and was in charge of welfare and labor. As the Mongolian resident officer in the Department of the International Cooperation of the NEAR Secretariat, Ms. Munkhtsetseg is in charge of liaison and coordination with Mongolian member governments. It is anticipated that Ms. Munkhtsetseg will perform her duties at the NEAR Secretariat successfully due to her three-year experience studying in Korea and her deep understanding of Korean society and culture.

Secretary General Kim Ok-chae Attends Luncheon at Official Residence of Consul General of Japan in Busan on November 5

NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae and the NEAR Secretariat staff received an invitation from Consul General Mayama Kinue and attended a luncheon held at the Consul General’s official residence located in Busan, Gyeongsangnam-do on November 5. Secretary General Kim gave a presentation on the roles of Japanese member governments such as Hyogo Prefecture and Shiretoko Prefecture at the invitation of NEAR, the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments. He asked for support from the Consul General of Japan in Busan so that exchanging and cooperation between local governments in Korea and Japan can generate mutual prosperous go forward. Consul General Mayama stated that he is a native of Toyo Prefecture, a NEAR member. He also expressed regret at the limited exchange and contact between the Japanese and Russian governments due to current diplomatic conflict and Covid-19. He said that exchange between local governments in non-political areas such as business or culture is important.

Secretary General Kim Ok-chae Attends Symposium for Local Governments on November 5

Five officials including Choi Jeongsook, deputy director of the International Cooperation Team of Daegu Metropolitan City Hall, and officials from the Gyeongsangbuk-do provincial government, visited the Secretariat and NEAR Secretary General Kim Ok-chae on November 5. The officials and the Secretariat staff discussed how to enhance exchange and cooperation with NEAR. Secretary General Kim gave a presentation on the effective use of NEAR as a platform by its members. He also asked for Daegu Metropolitan City’s active participation in international exchange and events carried out by NEAR going forward. Deputy director Choi of Daegu Metropolitan City Hall stated that Daegu hoped to share with NEAR member case studies regarding the city’s experiences with dealing with the worst COVID-19 outbreak that they have ever seen before this year. She also said that Daegu would consider establishing a NEAR subcommittee in the future, taking the characteristics of Daegu Metropolitan City into consideration.

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Introduction:

NEAR Secretariat
1. Establishment of the Secretariat

In 2004, a standing office of a four-year term was adopted at the 5th General Assembly which was held in Heilongjiang Province, China. Accordingly, the operation of a standing secretariat was decided at the General Assembly, as Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, South Korea proposed to attract a standing secretariat on the condition that the entire cost would be covered by Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. Later, at the 9th General Assembly held by the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, China in 2012, it was decided that the permanent secretariat would be located in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, South Korea to ensure consistent operational practices of the Secretariat.

2. Secretariat Organization and Personnel

The Secretariat is managed by the Secretary General and the two-part system (Department of Planning and Public Relations and Department of International Cooperation), and it is staffed by a pair of public officials dispatched from Chinese, Japanese, South Korean, Mongolian, and Russian regional governments and experts.

3. Budget

The operating costs of the Secretariat are around KRW 1.5 billion (USD 1.36 million / CNY 8.81 million / JPY 141 million) and it is covered by Gyeongsangbuk-do Province (70%) and Pohang (30%) of South Korea.

4. Task

A. Coordination of liaison between member regional governments
B. Supporting the operation and the execution of decisions of the General Assembly, Working Committee, and Subcommittee
C. Conducting projects of the Secretariat such as the NEAR International Forum, Working-level Workshop, Northeast Asia Young Leaders Forum, etc.
D. Developing and investing in exchange programs for the development of the Association
E. Establishing networks between international organizations and regional research institutes
F. International public relations and the operation of an Honorary Ambassador system
G. Preparation of business plan, annual report, and accounting report
H. Budgeting and budget execution

5. Secretariat Staff

- **Secretary General**
  - Kim Ok-chae

- **Director, Department of Planning and Public Relations (Gyeongsangbuk-do)**
  - Jung Pil-ran

- **Manager, Department of Planning and Public Relations (Gyeongsangbuk-do)**
  - Choi Hae-yong

- **Expert on China**
  - Cho Sun-hwa (Piao Lijing)

- **Expert on Mongolia**
  - Lkham Khishigjargal

- **Expert on Japan**
  - Son Mi-kyoung

- **Expert on Russia**
  - Egorov Artem

- **Expert on English**
  - Seok Ji-young (Kim Mi-yun)

- **Chinese Resident Officer (Heilongjiang Province)**
  - Cheng Anni (Ma Suchao)

- **Mongolian Resident Officer (Darkhan-Uul Province)**
  - Batsaikhan Munkhtsetseg (Erdenebileg Azzaya)

- **Russian Resident Officer (the Republic of Sakha)**
  - Sleptsova Irina (Anastasia Konstantinova)

- **Administrative Officer**
  - Kim You-jin

- **Public Relations Officer**
  - Do Eon-seok

- **Administrative Officer**
  - Kim Su-hyun

- **Administrative Officer**
  - Cho Hee-eun

- **Administrative Officer**
  - Kim Su-hyun

- **Mongolian Resident Officer (Bankhan-Lul Province)**
  - Sleptsova Irina (Anastasia Konstantinova)
Charter of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments

Preamble
In the spirit of reciprocity and equity, representatives of regional governments in the Northeast Asian region, which has unlimited potential to contribute to the international community, have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish co-development in the region and, at the same time, to contribute to world peace by promoting exchange and cooperation in all fields of administration, economy, and culture. Accordingly, to accomplish these noble aims, the representatives have agreed to the present Charter of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments and do hereby establish an international organization known as the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments.

Chapter 1 Name and Purposes of the Association

Article 1 (Name) This organization shall be named “The Association of North East Asia Regional Governments” (hereinafter referred to as “the Association”).

Article 2 (Purposes) In the spirit of reciprocity and equity, the Association has the purpose of pursuing the joint development of the Northeast Asian region and, at the same time, contributing to world peace by building trust based on mutual understanding through the establishment of networks for exchanges and cooperation among member governments.

Article 3 (Agenda) “The Association” shall perform the following clauses:
1. Regularly hold the General Assembly of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments
2. Collect and distribute information on economic and technological development within the region
3. Support and execute projects related to exchange and cooperation
4. Review projects necessary to accomplish the purposes of the Association

Chapter 2 Scope and Rights & Obligations of Members and Others

Article 4 (Membership Scope) The members of the Association shall be the regional governments of the People’s Republic of China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation which have agreed to the purposes of the Association and obtained the approval of membership by the General Assembly. (newly enacted on September 27, 2016)

Article 4-2 (Associate Membership Scope) The associate members of the Association shall be the regional governments of countries located in Asia, excluding the Northeastern region, which have agreed to the purposes of the Association and obtained the approval of membership by the General Assembly. (newly enacted on September 27, 2016)

Article 5 (Rights and Obligations of Members) Members shall have the right to participate in various projects and activities performed by the Association and have the obligation to comply with the provisions stipulated in the Charter.

Article 5-2 (Rights and Obligations of Associate Members) Associate members do not have the right to vote and are not eligible to run for election as addressed in Article 7 and the right to vote as addressed in Clause 1, Article 9. (newly enacted on September 27, 2016)

Chapter 3 Organization and Functions

Section 1 The General Assembly

Article 6 (Structure and Operation) The General Assembly is the supreme legislative body of the Association, which consists of heads of member regional governments. The General Assembly is held biennially. (revised on September 27, 2016)

Article 7 (Executives) The General Assembly shall be given due authority to appoint executives to positions specified in the clauses below:
1. The General Assembly shall designate one person as the chair who represents the Association. The head of the regional government, which holds the General Assembly, shall ex officio become the chair of the General Assembly. The chair’s term of office ends on the last day of the General Assembly. However, when the chair is absent, the deputy representative of the regional government shall act as the chair on behalf of the representative. (revised on October 28, 2010)
2. Each country shall have an auditor. Auditors shall be elected out of director general or director levels at the General Assembly and administer accounting and audit. The auditor’s term of office is as stipulated in Clause 1. (revised on September 27, 2016)
3. In accordance with the Regulation of Member Rights in the Regulations for the Membership Fee System, the right to vote and be elected for chair stated in Clause 1 and for auditor in Clause 2 can be restricted. (newly enacted on September 27, 2016)

Article 8 (Functions) The General Assembly shall perform the following clauses:
1. Resolution of member and associate member admission and dismissal (revised on September 27, 2016)
2. Determination of membership fees
3. Amendment of the Association Charter
4. Determination of termination and liquidation of the Association
5. Determination of the Secretariat venue
6. Appointment of auditors
Article 9 (Resolution) Decision-making at the General Assembly shall be made in accordance with the following clauses:
1. Each member regional government shall have one vote. However, the right to vote may be restricted in certain situations as determined by the Regulations for the Membership Fee System. (revised on September 27, 2016)
2. The particulars specified under Clauses 1 to 5 of Article 8 shall be resolved by a two-thirds majority of the present members voting with more than half of members with the right to vote present. (revised on September 27, 2016)
3. The particulars specified under Clauses 6 to 11 of Article 8 shall be resolved by more than half of the present members voting with more than half of the members present. (revised on September 27, 2016)

Article 9-2 (Decision-making Delegated to Working Committee)
1. In years that the General Assembly is not held, the decision-making items listed in Clauses 1, 7, and 8 of Article 8 can be commissioned to the Working Committee. (newly enacted on September 27, 2016)

Section 2 Working Committee

Article 10 (Organization and Operation)
1. The Working Committee consists of director-general level or administrator-level staff nominated by the head of each member regional government. The executive or chair of the Working Committee will convene in the year before the General Assembly is supposed to be held. However, if deemed necessary by the executive of the Working Committee, a meeting of the interim working committee may convene. (newly enacted on October 22, 2014) (revised on October 29, 2018)
2. The chair of the Working Committee shall be the vice head of the chair local government. The executive or chair of the Working Committee shall report the result of the meeting to the General Assembly. (newly enacted on October 22, 2014) (revised on October 29, 2018)
3. Liaison and coordination among members
4. Execution of decisions made by the General Assembly and the Working Committee
5. Other functions deemed to be necessary

Article 11 (Functions) The Working Committee shall perform the following clauses:
1. Discussion of business plans and individual projects
2. Documentation of annual reports and audit reports
3. Coordination of opinions among members
4. Determination of the establishment of sub-committees (composition, functions, and operations) (newly enacted in September 1998)
5. Determination of issues delegated by the General Assembly to the Working Committee
6. Other functions deemed to be necessary

Section 3 The Secretariat

Article 12 (Organization and Operation) The Secretariat is a standing body of the Association. Each member regional government may set up a liaison body if necessary. The Secretariat will remain in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. In case of unavoidable reasons, however, the location of the Secretariat may change after the resolution of the General Assembly. (revised on October 22, 2014)

Article 13 (Executives and Staff) The Secretariat shall have the following executives and staff:
1. The Secretary-General shall be one person. The Secretary-General shall be appointed by the head of the member regional government where the Secretariat is located and be appointed by the chair of the Association.
2. The executives and staff of the Secretariat shall be comprised of government officials dispatched by the Association in principle. However, when it is deemed necessary by the Secretary General, it can be constituted separately after receiving approval from the chair of the Association.

Article 14 (Functions) The Secretariat shall perform the following clauses:
1. Budgeting and budget execution
2. Documentation of business plans, annual reports, and accounting reports
3. Liaison and coordination among members
4. Execution of decisions made by the General Assembly and the Working Committee
5. Other functions deemed to be necessary

Article 15 (Financing)
1. The accounting of the Secretariat shall be treated as special accounting, and its operations shall be covered by membership fees and other miscellaneous incomes.
2. Accounting shall tentatively be carried out in accordance with the following clauses:
   1) The members of the Association shall pay the membership fee and the matters necessary for the management and operation of the membership fee shall be prescribed in the separate Regulations for the Membership Fee System. (revised on September 27, 2016)
   2) All expenses incurred by holding the General Assembly and the Working Committee shall be covered and shared as follows:
      A. Half of the total expenses shall be borne by the regional government hosting the conference.
      B. The remaining sum will be divided among the rest of the regional governments of the Association excluding the host of the conference.
C. If the number of regional governments participating in the conference is less than the total number of regional governments minus the host, the balance shall be borne by the regional government hosting the conference.

D. In the event that a member regional government is unable to bear a significant portion of the expense due to unavoidable circumstances such as natural disasters etc., the expense to be borne may be partially reduced to a reasonable level based on the agreement of other member regional governments.

E. During the General Assembly, the regional government which proposed to host the next General Assembly shall submit tentative accounting of expenses for organizing the General Assembly and the Working Committee.

3. The operating expenses of the Secretariat shall be borne by the member government which hosts the Secretariat.

4. Expenses for other individual exchange and cooperation projects shall be covered by the member government which proposed those projects. However, based on agreement, they may be shared among participating members which desire to join the projects.

Section 4 Associated Supporting Organizations

Article 16 (Establishment) Aimed at contributing to the development of the Northeast Asian region, each member regional government may establish a supporting organization (hereinafter referred to as “Supporting Organization of the Association”) to support the activities of the Association. (newly enacted on September 1998)

Article 17 (Registration)

1. In the event that a member regional government establishes a Supporting Organization of the Association, it can register the organization by submitting an application. (newly enacted in September 1998)

2. The Supporting Organization of the Association shall report its activities to the Association. (newly enacted in September 1998)

Chapter 4 Final Provisions

Article 18 (Effectuation) This Charter shall take effect from the 27th of September 2016. (revised on September 27, 2016)

Article 19 (The Scope of Members) The founding members of the Association consist of regional governments, which attended the conference of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments in 1996 and agreed to the basic spirit of the Charter.

Article 20 (Language) This Charter shall be written in English and in the languages of the countries where the member regions belong. Original copies of which shall be kept at the archive of the Secretariat and copies of which shall be kept by each member. (revised on October 28, 2013)

The representatives of the regional governments who have been given due authority from each member government have signed the present Charter of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments in Gyeongju City, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, the Republic of Korea on the 12th day of September 1996.

Supplementary Provision
This Charter shall take effect from October 21, 1998.

Supplementary Provision
This Charter shall take effect from September 11, 2002.

Supplementary Provision
This Charter shall take effect from September 8, 2004.

Supplementary Provision
This Charter shall take effect from October 28, 2010.

Supplementary Provision
This Charter shall take effect from October 22, 2014.

Supplementary Provision
This Charter shall take effect from September 27, 2016.

Supplementary Provision
This Charter shall take effect from October 29, 2018.
Regulations for the Establishment and Operation of Subcommittees of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments

(Establishment) October 21, 1998
(Partial Revision) September 4, 2007
(Partial Revision) September 2, 2008
(Partial Revision) October 28, 2010
(Partial Revision) July 19, 2011
(Partial Revision) September 11, 2013
(Partial Revision) September 26, 2017
(Partial Revision) October 29, 2018

The present regulations stipulate rules regarding the establishment and operation of subcommittees in accordance with Clause 4 of Article 10 of the Charter of NEAR. <revised on September 26, 2017>

Article 1 (Establishment) For smooth operation of individual projects or tasks (hereinafter referred to as “Individual Projects”) proposed at the General Assembly or the Working Committee of the Association of North East Asia Regional Governments, subcommittees shall be established for each field of work. <revised on September 26, 2017>

Article 2 (Name and Working Area) The names of the subcommittees shall be as follows:
1. Subcommittee on Economy and Humanities Exchange <revised on September 11, 2013>
2. Subcommittee on Environment
3. Subcommittee on Educational and Cultural Exchange <integrated on September 2, 2008>
4. Subcommittee on Disaster Prevention
5. Deleted <September 26, 2017>
6. Deleted <September 26, 2017>
7. Subcommittee on Oceans and Fisheries <newly established on September 2, 2008>
8. Subcommittee on Tourism <newly established on September 2, 2008>
10. Subcommittee on Energy and Climate Change <newly established on October 28, 2010>
11. Deleted <September 26, 2017>
13. Subcommittee on Agriculture <newly established on July 19, 2011>
14. Subcommittee on Sports <newly established on September 11, 2013>
15. Subcommittee on Logistics and Transportation <newly established on September 26, 2017>
16. Subcommittee on International Exchange of Human Resources <newly established on September 26, 2017>
17. Subcommittee on E-Commerce <newly established on September 26, 2017>
18. Subcommittee on Innovation Plus <newly established on October 29, 2018>
19. Subcommittee on Youth Policy <newly established on October 29, 2018>
20. Subcommittee on Traditional Medicine <newly established on October 29, 2018>

Article 3 (Functions) 1. Each subcommittee shall review and discuss methods to coordinate opinions among regional governments and realize project plans to promote effective execution of “Individual Projects” led by member regional governments. <revised on September 26, 2017>
2. Each subcommittee shall report the results of the review and discussion on “Individual Projects” proposed by regional governments to the Working Committee. <revised on September 26, 2017>

Article 4 (Structure) Each subcommittee consists of directors of local government divisions who have an interest in the field that each subcommittee is responsible for.

Article 5 (Operation) 1. An elected member regional government (hereinafter referred to as “Coordinator”) shall be in charge of liaison, coordination, and operation of each subcommittee. <revised on September 26, 2017>
2. The office term of a Coordinator is two years, and it can be reelected. Upon request, a subcommittee can be operated jointly with a joint coordinating government. <revised on July 19, 2011, September 26, 2017>
3. In principal, liaison, and coordination for the operation of a subcommittee shall be based on telecommunications such as postal mail, fax, and e-mail.
4. The Coordinators of each subcommittee should host a subcommittee meeting or participate in NEAR-related activities at least once during its term. <revised on July 19, 2011, September 26, 2017>
5. The Coordinator should endeavor to attract many participants from NEAR member regional governments to participate in the subcommittee meeting. <newly enacted on July 19, 2011, revised September 26, 2017>
6. If necessary, the Working Committee can conduct evaluations on the subcommittee’s operation. <newly enacted on July 19, 2011>
7. The NEAR Secretariat may propose a replacement of Coordinators to the Working Committee if the Coordinator has not run subcommittee meetings for more than two years and another regional government wishes to take over the role of Coordinator. <newly enacted on October 29, 2018>
8. The replacement of the Coordinator will be decided at the Working Committee where the majority of the members are present and the members with the right to vote cast a majority (more than half) yes vote. <newly enacted on October 29, 2018>

Article 6 (Participation) 1. All member regions are eligible to participate in a subcommittee. <revised on July 19, 2011>
2. For efficient operation and practical outcomes of each subcommittee, the Coordinator may invite...
specialists, experts, or businesspersons from NEAR member regional governments. <newly enacted on September 26, 2017>

Article 7 (Expenses) Expenses for the operation of each subcommittee shall be borne by the "Coordinator." In the event of a subcommittee meeting being convened, expenses for transportation and accommodation shall be covered by participating regional governments, in principle.

Article 8 (Relation to the Secretariat) Each "Coordinator" shall send information organized and updated at the subcommittee to the Secretariat, which shall distribute the documentation to the rest of the regional governments. <revised on July 19, 2011, revised on September 26, 2017>

Article 9 (Revision of Regulations) Revision of the present regulations shall be decided by the Working Committee.

Supplementary Provision
These regulations shall take effect on October 21, 1998.

Supplementary Provision
These regulations shall take effect on September 4, 2007.

Supplementary Provision
These regulations shall take effect on September 2, 2008.

Supplementary Provision
These regulations shall take effect on October 28, 2010.

Supplementary Provision
These regulations shall take effect on July 19, 2011.

Supplementary Provision
These regulations shall take effect on September 11, 2013.

Supplementary Provision
These regulations shall take effect on September 26, 2017.

Supplementary Provision
These regulations shall take effect on October 29, 2018.

Regulations for the Membership Fee System

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<td>September 28, 2016</td>
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Article 1 (Purpose)
This regulation seeks to prescribe matters related to the management and operation of the membership fee and its usage.

Article 2 (Principles of Accounting)
Accounting shall be conducted according to the principles below:
1. The Secretary General shall maintain transparency and reliability of the accounting process by submitting objective and evidential documents.
2. The Secretary General shall disclose information on the operation of the membership fee when requested by members.
3. The Secretary General shall manage the membership fee effectively.

Article 3 (Fiscal Year)
The fiscal year of the Association shall be from January 1 to December 31 of each year.

Article 4 (Responsibilities in Accounting)
The Secretary General shall be responsible for the management of the membership fee, and any related processes.

Article 5 (Membership Fees)
The membership fee shall be applied in accordance with the following clauses:
1. Each member shall pay an annual fee of USD 1,000.
2. The currency that shall be used for paying the membership fee is the currency of the country where the Secretariat is located, and the fee shall be paid by April 30 of each fiscal year. NEAR members who are new to the Association shall pay the fee starting in the year following the approval of its membership.
3. The amount of the annual membership fee stipulated in Clause 1 may be adjusted at the General Assembly depending on economic status.

Article 6 (Regulation of Member Rights)
When a member fails to pay the membership fee for two fiscal years, the rights to vote and run for election provided in Article 7 and the right to vote in Clause 1, Article 9 may be restricted by the Secretariat. However, the member regional government with restricted rights may recover its right as a member in the fiscal year when the
Article 7 (Usage of Membership Fee)
The membership fee shall be used for the development and projects of NEAR to meet the common goals of the members. The Secretariat shall gather the opinions of members when selecting projects that require funding.

Article 8 (Installation, Composition, and Operation of the Deliberation Committee)
The Deliberation Committee shall be installed, formed, and operated in accordance with the following clauses:
1. The Deliberation Committee constitutes of people at the director general or director level of each member country that have dispatched public officers to the Secretariat. However, in the case of the Republic of Korea, the Committee member will be elected from regions other than Gyeongsangbuk-do Province and the member regions including auditors will be excluded.
2. The term of each committee member shall be within the period of secondment of dispatched officers from each member country.
3. The Deliberation Committee shall have a chairperson and he/she will be elected by mutual vote.
4. To facilitate the smooth operation of the Deliberation Committee, the committee shall be operated by a suitable person who is in charge of the Secretariat.
5. The Chairman of the committee shall hold a meeting more than once a year. However, if there is a difficulty in convening the committee meeting, it can be resolved in writing.
6. A meeting of the Deliberation Committee shall be formed by more than half of the committee members present and resolved by the votes of more than half the members.

Article 9 (General Budget Planning)
The Secretary General shall draw up and submit a budget plan and business plan (hereinafter referred to as "General Budget Planning") for the following year to the board of directors of the committee for approval by June 30.

Article 10 (Deliberation on General Budget Plan)
1. In case of a budget plan submitted by the Secretary General, the Deliberation Committee shall review it and submit it as a bill for approval to the General Assembly or Working Committee which will be held in the year.
2. Financial plans shall be approved by the decision of the General Assembly or Working Committee. The deliberation in Clause 1 shall be carried out at least one month before the General Assembly or Working Committee is held.

Article 11 (Execution of Budget and Project Plans)
1. The Secretary General shall execute budget and project plans approved at the General Assembly or the Working Committee.
2. The Secretary General may make necessary expenditures after receiving the Chairperson’s approval in case of extraordinary disbursements. In such cases, the Secretary General shall need to report and get approval at the General Assembly or the Working Committee held for the current year.

Article 12 (Examination of Accounts)
1. The Secretary General shall prepare a periodical financial report for every fiscal year and submit it to auditors by May 31.
2. Auditors shall submit the audit reports and comments to the Secretariat at least a month before the General Assembly or the Working Committee is held, and the reports shall be approved at the meeting.

Article 13 (Appointment and Term of Auditors)
The appointment and term of auditors shall be executed in accordance with Article 7 (Executives) and Article 8 (Functions) of the Charter.

ADDENDUM
The Regulations shall enter into force on January 1, 2017. (However, the payment period of the annual membership fee will be delayed for the time being.) Revised on September 26, 2017, Revised on August 7, 2019.
Member Regional Governments

Russia
- Republic of Buryatia
- Sakha Republic (Yakutia)
- Republic of Tuva
- Altai Republic
- Zabaikalsky Krai
- Krasnoyarsk Krai
- Primorsky Krai
- Khakassia
- Amur Region
- Khabarovsk Krai
- Kamchatka Krai
- Magadan Region
- Sakhalin Region
- Tunguska Region
- Koryaksky Krai
- Republic of Khakassia

Mongolia
- Ulaanbaatar City
- South Aimag
- Bayan-Ulgii Aimag
- Bayankhongor Aimag
- Bulgan Aimag
- Govi-Altai Aimag
- Govisümber Aimag
- Dornod Aimag
- Dornogovi Aimag
- Dundgovi Aimag
- Govi-Altai Aimag
- Uvurkhangai Aimag
- Umnugobi Aimag
- Sukhbaatar Aimag
- Selenge Aimag
- Tov Aimag
- Uvs Aimag
- Khovd Aimag
- Khentii Aimag
- Khuvsgul Aimag

Japan
- Aomori Prefecture
- Akita Prefecture
- Aichi Prefecture
- Toyama Prefecture
- Ishikawa Prefecture
- Fukui Prefecture
- Kiyotaka Prefecture
- Hyogo Prefecture
- Tottori Prefecture
- Shimane Prefecture

China
- Anhui Province
- Heilongjiang Province
- Hebei Province
- Hunan Province
- Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region
- Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region
- Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
- Shaanxi Province
- Shanxi Province

DPR Korea
- Hamgyeongbuk-do Province
- Hamgyeongnam-do Province

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)
The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is a global network of more than 1000 cities from 86 countries around the world, committed to build a sustainable future. In order to achieve sustainable development goals in the international community, it works to support the role of regional government and local action.

Regions of Climate Action (R20)
Founded by global leaders in cooperation with the United Nations, R20 aims to help the regional governments develop projects, policies, and best practices for low carbon green growth economic development and implement it in order to cope with climate change.

Assembly of European Regions (AER)
Established in 1985 to pursue coprospereity and subsidiarity, AER brings together nearly 230 regional governments from 35 countries, and is located in Strasbourg, Alsace, France.

www.iclei.org
www.r20.org
www.aer-eu.org