

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Prof. Hidetoshi
Nishimura**
Executive Director

“Today, ERIA’s role in the region continues to expand especially as ASEAN and East Asia enter into critical phases in regional integration in the coming years.”

ERIA has made a number of important contributions to facilitate regional integration in both ASEAN and East Asia in the past five years through the conduct of research, provision of policy recommendations and organisation of symposia as mandated by both ASEAN and East Asia Leaders. The section on the First Five Years of ERIA included in this Report outlines the significance of these contributions and essays how such works have responded to key issues and concerns in the region.

Today, ERIA’s role in the region continues to expand especially as ASEAN and East Asia enter into critical phases in regional integration in the coming years. In this light, Fiscal Year 2013 proved to be a challenging as well as exciting year as ERIA helped ASEAN and East Asia push the envelope further to achieve the meaningful fulfillment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 and to set up a new and more enhanced regional architecture for deeper integration in the Asia Pacific region.

In the area of research, for example, ERIA’s contributions to ASEAN under the AEC included the completion and presentation of the results of the AEC beyond 2015 project which offered key recommendations for moving ASEAN and AEC forward beyond 2015; the continuation and subsequent completion of Phase 3 of the AEC Scorecard Project which dealt with the conduct of informed conversations, with the help and support of the members of ERIA’s Research Institutes Network (RIN), on regulatory reform and improved regulatory coherence in ASEAN (with special reference to logistics services sectors and trade facilitation) as well as with the estimation and analysis of border and behind-the-border restrictions in the logistics sector and trade facilitation to see their impact on the economic performance of the ASEAN Member States; and the further strengthening of the monitoring of the implementation of the AEC Blueprint through a more enhanced AEC Scorecard under Phase 4 which started around the end of 2013. All these have helped ASEAN in taking stock of the AEC progress.

In FY 2013, ERIA also conducted a number of RCEP-related studies which aimed to facilitate the completion of the RCEP negotiation by 2015. It also formulated Public-Private Partnership (PPP) institutional assessment studies in ASEAN countries (Phase 2) to help develop appropriate PPP frameworks in certain countries as well as developed the ASEAN SME Policy Index with a view to supporting competitive and innovative SMEs in ASEAN.

Recognising the crucial role of energy in supporting the economic growth in the ASEAN and East Asia region, ERIA has conducted numerous studies in the energy field since its establishment in 2008. This commitment to doing research in energy-related concerns was further fortified as the institute enhanced its energy unit through the addition of two more energy economists in FY 2013. This thereupon strengthened the unit's capacity to respond all the more to priority energy issues as it conducted and coordinated 13 energy-related projects tasked out by the EAS Energy Ministers Meeting.

ERIA's hard work and meaningful research did not go unnoticed. In the ASEAN and East Asian Summits, especially in the statement of the 8th East Asia Summit in October 2013 in Brunei Darussalam, the leaders called on ERIA to continue its extensive research activities to promote the economic integration of ASEAN and East Asia. In particular, the Chairman's Statement contained one chapter titled "ERIA" mentioned along with the concepts of Energy, Connectivity, Trade and Economics. While the recognition and appreciation certainly give honor to ERIA, they also represent greater responsibility for the institute as it is expected to continue to support the Summit activities as Sherpa organisation with the same vigor and commitment.

ERIA has also enjoyed a high ranking among think tanks all over the world through the years. For 2013, according to THE GLOBAL GO TO THINK TANK REPORT 2013, ERIA is ranked as Number 30 among the Top 50 International Economic Policy Think Tanks. The report had 6,826 think tanks from

182 countries participating in the process. Credit for this feat goes to the recognition of ERIA's extensive research works on economic integration in ASEAN and East Asia notwithstanding the fact that ERIA is still a relatively young institution in the region.

Fiscal year 2013 likewise saw the broadening of ERIA's reach to wider arenas as it deepened liaison with various international frameworks. Last October, ERIA jointly published a Special Report on "Southeast Asia Energy Outlook" with the International Energy Agency (IEA). Then in December, ERIA published a book titled "The Road to Bali: ERIA Perspectives on the WTO Ministerial and Asian Integration" and hosted a session on "East Asian Economic Integration and the WTO" in the Bali Trade and Development Symposium on the

margins of the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference. Furthermore, ERIA has been strengthening ties with the OECD as the latter set up the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme, including the development of a follow-up joint project to the ASEAN SME Policy Index which will be published in 2014. Considering the global interconnectivity and high transmissibility of economic changes and impacts, it is only appropriate for ERIA to extend its activity outwards.

Finally, the year 2013 also gave me much honor when I was reappointed as Executive Director for another five-years during the 6th ERIA Governing Board Meeting on May 4, 2013. To which I vow to commit to carry out ERIA's sacred mission as it charts new courses and explores new frontiers. ■



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