

Address by Yohei Sasakawa
Chairman, The Nippon Foundation
at the
Asian Public Intellectuals Regional Workshop
November 9, 2014, Hiroshima, Japan

On behalf of the Nippon Foundation Chairman, Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the API fellows for the year 2013-2014, distinguished members of the API Executive Committee, the International Selection Committee, the Coordinating Institution, and Partner Institutions from around Asia, to the 13th API Regional Workshop here in Hiroshima.

The API fellowship program was inaugurated in the year 2000, in Malaysia. Almost all of the PI representatives who were at the launching ceremony in Kuala Lumpur then are here today. Over the fourteen years, the fellowship program has identified an array of public intellectuals from diverse professions—scholars, researchers, creative artists, journalists, NGO leaders—and provided them with the opportunity to visit and learn from neighboring countries; to gain a deeper understanding of the various issues in the region; and to capture its essence and propose creative solutions.

The API fellowship program has produced nearly 340 fellows over the last 14 years. The contributions made by each fellow to society have been remarkable. They have shared their research findings to society through mediums such as publications, reports, conferences, film, and artworks and this has earned the program a high score on the aspect of social impact in a recent third party review. We are overjoyed with these positive results.

Another unique feature of the API fellowship has been the follow up programs. This has enabled fellows from diverse disciplines to overcome country borders to engage in collaborative research and activities.

Over the last 14 years, Asia has undergone a major transformation. Growth was seen predominantly in the ASEAN region. Their economies grew considerably and continue to do so. The rapid growth of Asia, however, has brought with it a tidal wave of new challenges. These include huge population growth, environmental destruction, and the depletion of resources. Widening gap between rich and poor, cross border migration, human rights violations, and natural disasters are all regional challenges that are showing no signs of tapering.

As these serious challenges threaten not only the region's sustainable growth but the wellbeing of its

citizens, what we need are individuals who are brimming with new and innovative ideas to solve regional and global challenges; who have profound and holistic views of the direction to which humanity should progress; and who have the ability to inspire and engage the greater society.

When envisioning a person with these qualities, I can think of no other people who are better suited for the position than all of you fellows in this room and the 300 former fellows of the past 12 batches who together form the API community and represent the public intellectuals of Asia. I am looking forward to seeing what new and innovative discoveries and perspectives are brought to the fore.

This will be the last API regional workshop where representatives of the CI and the PIs will come together. I would like to end my welcome remarks by expressing my deepest gratitude for the love and dedication that all of you have poured into the API program over the last 14 years.

Thank you very much.