

OPENING REMARKS

Director MORINAGA Taro

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to announce the opening of the Fifteenth Regional Seminar on Good Governance for Southeast Asian Countries.

We sincerely welcome all of you to this significant forum which is taking place in an online format. Due to the disruptions caused by the current pandemic, we have, very unfortunately, made the difficult decision to postpone all international training courses in Fiscal Year 2021. However, thanks to the advancement of technology, it is our great pleasure to be able to continue to host this seminar despite the pandemic.

Since 2007, this seminar has been an exceptional opportunity for criminal justice practitioners in Southeast Asian countries to share our experiences in pursuit of the eradication of corruption in this region and beyond. The seminar has been co-hosted by UNAFEI and participating countries, and the host country rotates every two years: it was first held in Thailand, and then the Philippines, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Japan again.

Over these fifteen years, we have discussed many important issues dealing with anti-corruption legislation and criminal justice practices in this region. This time, in our three-day discussion, we will focus on “Effective International Cooperation for Combating Corruption”.

As corruption has become increasingly transnational, countries increasingly rely on international cooperation to gather information and evidence. The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) devotes one full chapter to “international cooperation”; however, many of the participating countries face challenges in fully implementing those provisions. In particular, in the field of mutual legal assistance (MLA), practical obstacles and challenges remain, such as the lack of knowledge about the laws of requested countries and the lack of knowledge about formal and informal procedures for requesting and obtaining MLA. These challenges hinder the realization of prompt and useful collection of evidence and information. One of the keys to overcoming these obstacles and challenges lies in sharing practical knowledge and experience, as well as building mutual understanding and trust. Thus, the aim of this Seminar is to share and discuss legal frameworks for the collection of information and evidence in the participating countries based on actual cases.

To all of the distinguished participants, I would also like to thank you for taking valuable time away from your work to make precious contributions to this seminar. I can assure you that all of us will learn from each other and that will put us further on the path toward eliminating corruption.

In this seminar, UNAFEI has continued its practice of inviting participants from one or two criminal justice organizations from each country. And as I said before, some of these

organizations co-hosted previous seminars. I believe this system establishes not only a personal network among participants but also an organizational network as well.

I look forward to seeing this seminar provide a useful forum to exchange expertise and experience in our common endeavour against corruption, contributing further to the promotion of good governance in Southeast Asia.

Thank you very much for your attention.