

An Overview of Black Sea Study in Japan.

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As an introduction to this two-day symposium, I would like to begin by giving a brief overview of Black Sea Studies in Japan. But first of all, please allow me to introduce, with our deep appreciation, our sponsor for this symposium.

This symposium is funded by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A), in Japanese, KAKENHI, from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). The project is called “International Relations in the Black Sea region: An Interdisciplinary Study with a Four-Dimensional Analysis. The symposium is organized by the University of Shizuoka, the Wider Europe Research Center, and the Japan Association of Black Sea Studies in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the University of Shizuoka.

The official start of Black Sea studies in Japan began in April 2006 when Japanese scholars of the Black Sea area created the Japan Association of Black Sea Studies. They have been promoting Black Sea studies ever since. In October 2009, in Istanbul, they organized the symposium – the Black Sea Region in International Relations: Old Issues, New Trends - with the kind help of professor Gun Kut. Professor Kut is with us today from Turkey. His university, Bogazici University, has been cooperating academically with the University of Shizuoka under the Memorandum of Understanding.

In addition, in 2005, 2007 and 2010, the international symposia ‘Japan – Black Sea Dialogue’ were held by the Japan Global Forum, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and the Wider Europe Research Center of the University of Shizuoka. These people are now preparing for the fourth symposium to be held in Tokyo next spring.

Furthermore, some members of the Japan Association of Black Sea Studies have been involved in facilitating the fourth pillar of Japan's foreign policy - 'The Arc of Freedom and Prosperity.' In December 2007, together with the Japan Institute of International Affairs, they organized the GUAM conference in Tokyo, inviting vice-foreign ministers from GUAM countries – Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. The Secretary General of GUAM, Mr. Valeri Chechelashvili also attended. He is with us here today and we have the wonderful opportunity to hear his presentation in this afternoon's session.

Also contributing to Black Sea Studies in Japan is the Slavic Research Center of Hokkaido University. It has organized several symposia on the Black Sea area under the leadership of Professor Kimitaka Matsuzato. He is with us here today, too.

Thus, today's symposium is a part of the evolutionary process arising from this variety of academic and diplomatic activity concerning the Black Sea area in Japan.

Now, let me explain the content of today's symposium briefly. The symposium is composed of four sessions. The first session will discuss the political economy of the Black Sea Area, focusing on Labour Migration. It will show the economic relations within the region, and the relations between the region and the outer world.

The second session will discuss regional cooperation in the Black Sea Area, focusing on the BSEC (Black Sea Economic Cooperation) and the GUAM, an organization (as I mentioned earlier) composed of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Thus, the first and second sessions will tackle the critical issue - whether the Black Sea area exists as a cohesive unity, and whether it is worthwhile analyzing the Black Sea area as a regional entity.

The third session will consider the transnational relations in the Black Sea area, focusing on the activities of enterprises. We believe this subject has rarely been

discussed and are interested in how states behave in their relations with foreign enterprises as well as with their own enterprises. It would be valuable from an academic point of view if we could describe the relations amongst domestic enterprises, foreign enterprises and several states such as Russia, Ukraine, and even member states of the European Union as a whole.

The fourth session will discuss the current internal and external situation of the Black Sea countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Rumania, Moldova and Georgia. In addition, this session will discuss the Caucasian situation in general, including Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the efforts of the international community towards the settlement of the Transnistrian issue.

Now, I would like to invite our keynote speaker, Prof. Shigeo Mutsushika. Professor Mutsushika is someone who has contributed greatly to Black Sea studies in Japan and can be best described as a powerhouse of energy in the field in Japan. Without his worldwide personal and academic network, this symposium could never have been realized. Please welcome Professor Mutsushika.

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