

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

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The Asia-Pacific Panel was held in conjunction with the Twenty-fifth International Congress of Administrative Sciences. One of the workshops of the Congress dealt with the concept of governance in the context of civil society. The result of that workshop is regarded as very valuable for comprehensive grasp of governance in the other regions so that the summary report is attached for your reference.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. My summary statement would take less than ten minutes. I do not mean to bother you with my Japanese English with a California overtone. I would like to report to you the outcome of discussion in Session 4, which has dealt with Governance and Civil Society.

Before I go into any details, I would like to make my personal observations about the papers that have been delivered in our session. I would like to forward my subjective remarks at the outset, because they will form an important backdrop for the summary statement that I am about to provide.

I am a Japanese. I was born and raised in the culture where Mandarin Tradition has remained highly strong even to this date. We have been taught that government is extremely important and that government is the object of public awe and respect. In Japan, we have a popular saying, which goes, "Government is revered and business is despised." More often than not, in Japan, the government is a solution. We have been trained to look up to the government and other public agencies, wherever there is a social issue of significance.

Now, in Session 4, a total of sixteen papers were presented. Except a few, a majority of the papers discussed various issues in either European or North American contexts. Most of these papers have one characteristic in common. One of the most amazing aspects of these products was that these papers showed and reflected a strong mistrust and distrust of government. As a matter of fact, those who were exposed to these papers, they would get the impression that the people particularly in Europe would not trust government. Unlike the Japanese, they would not trust bureaucrats, nor would they trust big business. Indeed, they do not trust anybody except NGOs.

Contrary to the Japanese experience, in Europe and in North America, the government is not a solution. It is a problem. The people therefore tend to look down on the government and any other agencies.

It is for this reason that many papers in Session 4 discussed the importance of participation. Participation was one of the key concepts in the session for Governance and Civil Society. The significance of political and social participations seems inextricable from the decline of public confidence in government in this part of the world. These manuscripts indicated that participation would be critical because it should be a safeguard against the government. As these products mirrored, the people in Europe and North America believed that the government often goes wrong and makes bad decisions.

Similarly, many papers in Session 4 described institutionalization of NGOs. Once again, institutionalization of NGOs is another common denominator in this session. However, institutionalization of NGOs is intrinsic to the loss of confidence in government in both Europe and North America. The papers in the session alluded that NGOs often would function as a sounding board of vox populi. They would also serve as an instrument of improving the quality of civil society. In this regard, there is one paper that is worth noting. Pierre Vincent Ngambo Fondjo of Cameroon writes it. He showed that, in Cameroon, both the government and the wealthy segment of the society had tried to develop NGOs for the poor. Nonetheless, because these NGOs were created from above, they failed to become the guardian and the vanguard of the underprivileged. Instead, NGOs would often become captured and begin to serve as an important agent of government.

This paper seems to lead us to another important dimension of NGOs. I mentioned at the beginning that Europeans and North Americans would not seem to trust anybody but NGOs. In these parts of the globe, NGOs have been highly valued

and regarded indispensable for governance and civil society. However, NGOs in and of themselves would not and could not contribute to the development of civil society. Quite to the contrary, NGOs, if left unchecked, would often do great harm to governance and the quality of civil society.

We therefore must study NGOs from the view of internal responsibilities and external accountabilities. We also must analyze NGOs from the perspective of political responsibilities and social accountabilities. However, there was no paper that directly addressed to this important problem. This, I thought, was one of the most interesting outcomes of Session 4. In fact, there was one paper that dealt with accountability of NGOs. However, the author could not partake in the conference. It was written by an Asian in the Asian context.

Although NGOs will become critical in the coming decades and beyond, they would easily grow to be an impediment to the health of civil society and the quality of governance. Therefore, while distrusting and mistrusting government, we all must pay attention to the potential problems and shortcomings of NGOs. In this regard, we must once again remind ourselves of the fact that, unlike NGOs, government has a long history of trials and errors, as far as accountability and responsibility are concerned. This fact conveys an important message.

NGOs may become a stumbling block for the health of civil society and governance. They may easily develop to be a victim of their own success, if and when they are not held accountable for their political and social actions. If my anxiety is accurate, in the not-too-distant future, the days may soon come when we may say in unison, instead of governance, **TO BRING THE GOVERNMENT BACK IN**. Thank you very much.