

# Preface

KIHWAN KIM AND SOOGIL YOUNG

## PREFACE

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Launched in Canberra in September 1980, as a movement to promote the idea of a Pacific Community, PECC celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Written by people who have been closely involved in this movement through all those years, this collection of essays chronicles thoughts and activities on Pacific economic cooperation which have shaped the first quarter-of-a-century of PECC. These essays review the antecedents of PECC and recall how it was launched. They describe how its agenda, along with the attendant institutional features, have evolved by stages since then, relating this evolution to critical developments in the Pacific region. They also document the role that PECC played in the launching of APEC as well as how it has been contributing to the subsequent development of the APEC process. Drawing lessons from these recollections, which also include honest self-criticisms on PECC, the book concludes with an overall assessment of challenges now facing PECC along with suggestions on how the organization might cope with them.

We first discussed the possibility of publishing a book on PECC's first 25 years when we were in Jakarta one day in April this year. We were reminiscing about PECC's earlier days with Narongchai Akrasanee and a few other PECC colleagues in a lounge of the hotel where the Standing Committee meeting hosted by the Indonesian PECC national committee had just been adjourned. All those who were there readily agreed that it would be very meaningful to publish a collection of personal observations by PECC's "old hands" on the evolution of PECC, if possible on the occasion of the forthcoming 16th PECC General Meeting to be held in Seoul on 5–7 September, in order to commemorate its 25th anniversary. Although

PECC and its members have published a plethora of reports, papers and articles on various issues PECC has been grappling with, there has previously been no document telling, in a comprehensive way, and from a historical perspective, how PECC as an institution has evolved thus far. That is how this book was first conceived.

In May, in order to follow up on this agreement, Soogil Young organized an ad hoc gathering of several PECC colleagues who were participating in a Joint Meeting of the PECC Trade Forum 2005 and the APEC Study Centers Consortium Conference 2005 in Jeju, Korea. The group included, as we recall, Narongchai Akrasanee, Andrew Elek, David Hong, Jean-Luc Le Bideau, Eduardo Pedrosa, Robert Scollay and Hadi Soesastro. The group agreed that the main objective of the book should be to chronicle the evolution of thoughts on the concept of Pacific cooperation by reviewing the first 25 years of PECC. The focus was to be on the issues PECC has been grappling with; in particular, authors would examine the role it has been playing in the unfolding of trans-Pacific relations, and assess the role it should play in the future evolution of these relations. The group even agreed on a tentative title of the proposed volume: *A History of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council: A Story with an Evolving Future*.

The group in Jeju also discussed the contents of the book, as well as who should and could be contributors for each chapter. In doing so, we identified one major constraint. There was only three months to go before the Seoul General Meeting. We had barely more than two months during which to complete all the writing. Many people who would be ideal as

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contributors might not be available at such short notice for the quick work they would be asked to do. The conclusion was that we should, nonetheless, push the project and just do our best, in order not to lose the momentum and also not to lose more memories with a further passage of time.

There also emerged a potential remedy to these problems. If only we could recruit as the editor of the volume one of the authors of the book, who was not only knowledgeable about PECC's history, but also capable of doing the editing work with both quality and speed, we could alleviate many of the difficulties posed by time and other constraints. The group identified Andrew Elek as such an editor. To our great relief, Andrew agreed to accept the challenging responsibility.

The project was launched this way and has been coordinated since then by Soogil Young. Soogil sought and won the approval of the PECC Standing Committee for the project. He also sought and secured voluntary financial contributions from a number of PECC member committees, namely those of Korea (KOPEC), Japan (JANCPEC), Chinese Taipei (CTPECC), France (FPTPEC), and New Zealand (NZPECC). It is remarkable that Andrew has been able to mobilize the individual authors, organize the publication process, and complete the editing of the whole volume while also finding time to work on his own chapters within the span of just two months or so. The present book is evidence of the success of such hard work by all the contributors.

As the people who promoted the publication of the present anniversary volume on PECC, we would like to acknowledge all those who

have participated in, and contributed to, the present publication. We should begin with Andrew Elek, without whom the present publication would have been impossible. Andrew, in turn, would not have been able to bring this about without the assistance of Betty Chin Ip and Eduardo Pedrosa in the PECC Secretariat and Sue Mathews, our meticulous and professional copy editor. We are also grateful to Christopher Findlay, David Parsons, Robert Scollay, and Kerrin Vautier, who helped round out Chapter 6.

In the course of the project, there has been close consultation between Soogil and Andrew. During this process, they have relied on the very able support of Eunsuk Lee, Assistant Director of KOPEC, for many administrative details. We are very grateful to all those mentioned here for the most valuable support they have provided.

We would like to express our appreciation to the PECC Standing Committee for having authorized and supported this project. And we would like to express our special gratitude to KOPEC, JANCPEC, CTPECC, FPTPEC and NZPECC for the generous voluntary contributions they made to supplement the PECC support.

We are pleased that PECC has been able to release this book on its 25th anniversary. The book comes out at a time when the very idea of a Pacific Community is being questioned. As a result, APEC, the main inter-governmental venue for Pacific economic cooperation, seems to have reached a critical crossroads. It is time for Pacific economies to renew their commitment to a Pacific Community and for PECC to renew its own commitment. It is our

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hope that the present book will serve as a reminder to its readers of these needs.

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