

Preface

The international trade of recyclable waste has expanded in Asia in recent years. Western countries also have exported huge amounts of waste paper, waste plastics, metal scraps, and other material to Asia. Recyclable waste has helped meet the growing demand for resources that has accompanied rapid economic growth in the Asian region. Economic integration of the region also has led to an increase in the volume of international trade of recyclable waste.

Improving resource efficiency through recycling is emphasized in various international initiatives including the International Resource Panel organized by United Nations Environment Programme and the G8 3R Initiative. While international recycling with environmentally sound technology may be able to contribute resource efficiency, importing countries such as China have been negatively affected by pollution from the recycling industries utilizing the imported waste. On the other hand, the recycling industries with environmentally sound technology in exporting countries face a lack of recyclable waste. Various countries have started to regulate the international trade of recyclable waste in order to maximize the economic benefit of and to minimize negative impact from international recycling. Unilateral efforts tackling these issues on international recycling have not been very effective thus far because of weak enforcement of border controls, limited cooperation between importing and exporting countries, and a lack of knowledge of the characteristics of recyclable waste and the recycling process. These issues should be solved internationally, based on a common understanding of international recycling in Asia.

I have had many chances to talk about the issues related to international recycling with experts, government officers, businessmen, and staff in nongovernmental organizations in Asian countries. I always feel that these stakeholders do not know much of the basic information about international recycling, such as the volume of international trade of recyclable waste, the problems caused by international recycling, and the struggles to properly manage the trade. As a result, there is a lack of common understandings and only limited discussion about creating a society in Asia with a sound material cycle and recycling system. I hope this book facilitates

a common understanding of the issues of international recycling among Asian countries, which can spur effective international and regional cooperation needed to establish a sound material cycle society not just in Asia but worldwide.

In the process of making this book, the authors conducted many interviews with government officers, experts, and businessmen in various countries. On behalf of all of the project members, I would like to thank the many persons who have given us kind support and advice in this research project.

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