

*Session 1 (Plenary)*

## Identifying National Innovation Systems— Diversity or Common Challenge?

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Session 1 focuses on comparative examination of national innovation systems. Innovation is brought about as a result of a complex set of relationships among various actors, which include enterprises, universities and public research institutes. The network of institutions within the borders of a national innovation system, with its peculiar incentive structures and competences, will have a significant influence on the rate and direction of technological learning in a country and, consequently, the innovative performance of national firms.

This session consists of presentations from 6 countries, including large, market-oriented industrialized countries (Japan and the U.S.), a small, high-income country (Sweden), and a number of newly industrializing countries in Asia (South Korea, China, and Vietnam). The primary purpose of this session is to illuminate the institutions and mechanisms supporting innovation in the countries with diverse backgrounds and to examine the role of stakeholders such as government, business, academia, and citizens. The session is expected to address the similarities and differences across national innovation systems and to initiate discussions on how the differences in the size, culture, and stage of economic development would affect the innovative capabilities of countries.

The growing interest in innovation in the business as well as policy communities reflects recent phenomena in the world, including, among others, the slowdown of growth since the early 1990s in Japan, the recovery of the United States in science-based innovation, widespread policy concerns in Europe about the innovative prowess of national firms, and the rise of Asian countries as major economic and technological powers. The enhanced technical sophistication of Korea, for instance, has promoted other nations having a weak science-based innovation today to consider seriously how they could emulate the performance of the successful newly industrializing country. At the same time, there has emerged a strong interest in national innovation systems of ex-socialist countries like China and Vietnam to understand to what extent their evolving innovation systems would explain the current and future of their economic performance.

This session is also aimed at addressing common challenges across countries. There clearly is a new spirit of “sustainable development,” which emphasizes that economic growth has to be balanced with environmental protection across national and regional boundaries. For making a right step towards the common goal, it will be indispensable to combine a clear understanding that the technological capabilities of firms are a key source of national competitive prowess with a strong belief that these capabilities need to be utilized globally for protecting the environment. Participants in this session are expected to discuss economic, technical, and institutional conditions of innovation systems in which actors with diverse interests and backgrounds are willing to collaborate for promoting global sustainability.