Opening Speech

**PROF. DR. ULRICH RADTKE**
Rector, University of Duisburg-Essen

Dear Prof. Osawa, Dear Prof. Yu, Dear Prof. Christiansen, Dear Prof. Shire, Dear Prof. Heberer, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With great pleasure I welcome you at the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE) today to the Mercator Fellowship Awards Ceremony for Prof. Mari Osawa and Prof. Keping Yu. Prof. Osawa, Prof. Yu, I would like to congratulate you both for receiving the prestigious Mercator Fellowship awards. Your participation as Mercator Fellows is a great honour for our Research Training Group *Risk and East Asia*.

Although both of you already know our university well, I would like to give a short overview: We are one of the ten biggest universities in Germany with nearly 41,000 students, 16% of which are international students. The UDE is located in two cities, merged from two former universities. We are one of the youngest universities in Germany – we celebrated our 10th anniversary in 2013 – and have a fresh way of looking at things. In our 11 faculties we are working to develop ideas with a future. We are strong on research and teaching, embrace diversity, promote academic potential and fight for genuine educational equality. The successful development of our university is reflected in its positions in international university rankings: in the 2015 Times Higher Education “100 under 50” ranking for universities younger than 50 years, for example, the UDE is on rank 59 – as second youngest university in the ranking.

The transformation of our region from heavy industry to service- and knowledgebased industrial sectors still continues. During this process, the region has developed a strong and dynamic academic landscape. In 2007, the University of Duisburg-Essen, the Ruhr University Bochum, and the TU Dortmund University joined forces and founded the University Alliance Ruhr (UAR) with more than 110,000 students and 8,000 researchers. By collaboration the UAR extends its top-level research activities and broadens its spectrum of high quality study programmes, providing an open gateway for national and international students and researchers.

Our Institute of East Asian Studies (IN-EAST) at the UDE is a great example of highly successful interdisciplinary research, covering Business Administration, Social and Political Sciences. The institute has many partners worldwide, but also in the region, for example the *Confucius Institute Metropolis Ruhr*. Together with the Faculty of East Asian Studies
at the Ruhr University Bochum, we are one of the major centres for East Asian Studies in Europe and are putting effort into intensifying our collaborations.

The Mercator Fellow program of the German Research Foundation aims to establish extensive and long-term exchange between German projects founded by the German Research Foundation, as our Research Training Group, and scientists from abroad. The program supports integration and intensive participation of the Mercator Fellows in a research network, which goes beyond the participation of a "visiting scientist". It is important for all research projects to have an international perspective, but in fields like East Asian Studies an international research network is crucial for success.

Ladies and Gentleman, I am very glad that today our Institute for East Asian Studies welcomes two highly renowned researchers as Mercator Fellows. Both Prof. Mari Osawa and Prof. Keping Yu have been intensively collaborating with IN-EAST researchers for many years: Prof. Osawa, who is Director of the prestigious Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo has pursued several research projects in collaboration with IN-EAST focusing on comparative gender studies in the area of social policies. Prof. Osawa knows Germany very well, since she has worked at different German universities and research institutions: in 1992, she was guest professor at the Free University of Berlin; in 1994 Maria Jahoda Professor at the Ruhr University Bochum, in 2006 Fellow of the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg, and has many collaborations with IN-EAST. Prof. Yu is Professor and Founding Director of the China Center for Comparative Politics & Economics in Beijing. He is a pioneer scholar in comparative politics, globalization and civil society, political philosophy and governance. His essays, for example Democracy is a good thing are widely recognised. And he was named one of the 100 most influential global thinkers in 2011 by the journal Foreign Policy. In 2008, he received an honorary doctorate of the UDE and has frequently visited IN-EAST, for example as guest professor in 2000, 2007 and 2012.

Now, Prof. Shire and Prof. Heberer will introduce our two Mercator Fellows in more detail. Congratulations to you, Prof. Osawa and Prof. Yu; I hope you will enjoy your stay at our university and exciting collaborations! I would like to especially encourage the junior scientists and PhD students to use this opportunity to share and discuss their research with two very renowned experts. And I would like to thank all organisers of this meeting and wish you a very lively workshop and fruitful discussions.