

# Speeches by hosts

## **Juro Saito** (Chair, Global Environmental Action)

Opening Speech, October 14, 2011

It is a great honor to hold the GEA International Conference 2011 today with the attendance of H.I.H. the Crown Prince Naruhito as well as the participation of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, Minister of the Environment Goshi Hosono, and other Japanese government ministers. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the experts from both Japan and overseas who have taken valuable time from their busy schedules to attend this international conference. On behalf of the organizers, I would also like once again to thank everyone involved for their efforts in helping us to organize this conference.

First, I would like to express my deepest sympathies to those who have been affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and have had to evacuate their homes. The recent natural disaster also caused unprecedented nuclear accidents, and measures to address radioactive contamination have greatly slowed recovery and reconstruction work in the region. Nuclear incidents that can result in global-scale environmental pollution are not just a domestic problem but constitute an international issue where the entire world shares a sense of crisis. I greatly regret the concern that these accidents in Japan have caused global citizens around the world. At the same time, I wish, as a Japanese, to express my appreciation once again for the warm and encouraging support delivered to us so quickly from around the world in relation to not only the natural disaster but also the nuclear accidents.

This GEA International Conference brings together experts in the various related fields from Japan and overseas to engage in discussions on the theme of “Building Sustainable Societies through Reconstruction: Working with the International Community for Regenerating Japan.” I am confident that this two-day conference will see dynamic debates where we discuss from an international perspective what constitutes a truly rich life in light of the recent disaster and that the conference will offer future directions for a new Japan.

Of course, we will not stop at just words; GEA will make efforts to translate the conference outcomes into meaningful policy proposals and effective measures.

On behalf of the organizers, I would like to extend my best wishes to all participants for a most fruitful conference.

# Goshi Hosono (Minister of the Environment)

Awards Ceremony, Contest for Corporate Activities on Biodiversity, October 14, 2011

Congratulations to all of you on the opening of GEA International Conference 2011. Before we turn to the awards for Corporate Activities on Biodiversity, I want to take a moment to thank everyone here for your truly generous support and cooperation since the events of March 11. I see we have quite a few participants from abroad this year, so I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our gratitude for all the cooperation and aid we have received from overseas.

The members of GEA have earned a reputation as environmental leaders who have helped set the trend for strong action through environmental initiatives geared to their own sector, be it government, business, or academia. We at the Ministry of the Environment were extremely gratified by your choice of this year's theme, Building Sustainable Societies through Reconstruction. There is no question that Japan needs to marshal the world's know-how to surmount the immediate challenges we face today, including the nuclear power crisis. But we need to go about it in a responsible manner, one step at a time, never forgetting the need for sustainability. I am confident that today's conference will yield a variety of useful suggestions on that score, and I want to take this opportunity to promise that I will do my utmost to make the most of those ideas going forward.

Now a word about this year's awards ceremony. From the government's perspective, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10) in Aichi last year was a huge step forward in terms of Japan's commitment to biodiversity. I look on this year's awards ceremony as a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of all those who are working so hard through their businesses or civic groups to support Japan in this undertaking.

This year, as Minister of the Environment, I am pleased to confer two Minister's prizes for corporate activity. The first goes to the people at Toyota Motor Corporation. Toyota is well known in Japan for its longstanding and wide-ranging conservation efforts at Hakusan National Park, carried out through the Toyota Shirakawa-Go Eco-Institute. We are truly indebted to all of you at Toyota for your hard work and your contribution to biodiversity over the years.

The other Environment Minister's prize goes to Suntory Holdings Limited for its environmental initiatives, including its Natural Water Sanctuary Project to expand water-resource forests and its wild bird protection program. I understand that Suntory has put a great deal of effort into environmental education for children in particular. So, to all the people at Suntory Holdings, I want to convey our deepest appreciation.

These are the companies that have garnered the Minister of the Environment Prize this year, but many others are being honored here today for their biodiversity efforts, and I want to thank every one of you—each individual and each company—from the bottom of my heart.

The decade from 2011 through 2020 has been designated the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, and, like the rest of the world, Japan must continue to work toward its biodiversity goals. I would like to ask not only this year's award winners but everyone here today, and indeed everyone in Japan, to lend your assistance to these efforts.

In closing, I want to share my hopes that these kinds of activities will help spread a better understanding and appreciation of biodiversity issues in Japan and around the world. And last but not least, I want to offer my best wishes for the success of GEA International Conference 2011. Congratulations to you all.

## **Nobutaka Tsutsui** (Senior Vice Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)

Awards Ceremony, Contest for Corporate Activities on Biodiversity, October 14, 2011

Allow me to share a few thoughts with you in connection with this year's awards ceremony for Corporate Activities on Biodiversity. First, my warmest compliments to the winners. I congratulate you with all my heart. And I'd like to extend my special commendations to the winners of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Prize: the Shiga Bank and the Women's Liaison Council for Hokkaido Fisheries Cooperative Associations.

Of course, not only the winners of the Minister's prizes but, as Minister Hosono mentioned, everyone being honored here today has worked proactively to preserve biodiversity and foster a sustainable society, and I want to convey my deep appreciation to all of you.

In the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industries, production requires coexistence with nature and obedience to its laws. That is why I strongly believe that the existence of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industries is vital to biodiversity and creation of a sustainable society. And I also believe that the existence of sustainable agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries is contributing in important ways to biodiversity and the development of a sustainable society.

This year, 2011, has been designated International Year of Forests. The function of forests and forestry is not just to produce lumber and forest products, although that is an important purpose. In the past people tended to regard that as their primary function, but in recent years we have come to see that the forests themselves play a crucial role in maintaining and preserving ecosystems, preventing global warming, and protecting the global environment. Today, these latter functions are a primary focus of the ministry's forestry policies and programs.

The Great East Japan Earthquake has affected countless people, and I want to take a moment to offer my condolences to all the victims. I would also note that the area hit by the disaster is one of Japan's major centers of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. The earthquake and tsunami, together with the release of radiation from the stricken nuclear power plant, have caused tremendous damage not only to those industries but to the natural environment as a whole. We are now working at full capacity to speed the rehabilitation in the region on the understanding that this is not only the recovery of the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industries but also the recovery of the natural environment, and that the two are inextricable.

After listening to International Renewable Energy Agency Director General Amin's keynote speech, I am more convinced than ever that reconstruction and rehabilitation must involve more than just restoring things to their previous state. We must redouble our commitment to environmental conservation, and as an essential component of that effort, we need to give renewable energy a key role in the reconstruction process.

In the months and years ahead, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will continue to work in close cooperation with all of you to meet these challenges. Today, please accept my sincere congratulations.

## **Takashi Kii** (Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

Luncheon, October 14, 2011

I am honored to say a few words on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, or MEXT. We are delighted that eminent experts from Japan and around the world who have great awareness of global environmental issues and who are taking concrete steps to address them have gathered here today to exchange views.

As you know, Japan and particularly Eastern Japan suffered extensive damage from the large earthquake and ensuing tsunami that struck the nation in March this year. The Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station was also severely damaged at that time, and efforts to resolve the accident continue to this very day. From the time immediately after the disaster until today, we have received warm support from people throughout the world in the face of this situation that can even be considered a national crisis. On behalf of the people of Japan, I would like to express my deep appreciation.

To repay the world for the support it has offered us, I feel very strongly once again today that Japan must reconstruct with dynamism from the earthquake, tsunami, and the nuclear power station accident.

Japan's New Growth Strategy envisions green innovation and life innovation as pillars for the future growth of our country. Moreover, the Fourth Science and Technology Basic Plan released in August this year places priority not only on the promotion of the two key innovations of green innovation and life innovation, but also on reconstruction and revival from the earthquake. MEXT also intends to put maximum focus on reconstruction and revival from the disaster from the two perspectives of science and technology as well as education and human resources development.

MEXT would like to contribute to green innovation by promoting research and development toward the introduction of renewable energy as well as toward climate change prediction and risk evaluation that accurately assess the state of the earth. We hope to repay the world for the support that we have received, through these initiatives and through successfully creating in Japan a new sustainable society that can broadly serve as an international standard.

I hope that this conference deepens the discussion on building sustainable societies through reconstruction and marks a major step forward in Japan's working with the international community for regenerating our nation.

In closing, I would like to express my great appreciation to GEA Chair Juro Saito and the other members of the Organizing Committee as well as GEA Director General Wakako Hironaka and the other members of the Secretariat for their hard work to arrange this conference. I also wish to thank all the participants for their attendance.

## **Keiro Kitagami** (Vice Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry)

Luncheon, October 14, 2011

I am delighted to say a few words on the occasion of the GEA International Conference 2011. Japan has received much warm encouragement and support from people around the world since the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation.

Japan has initiated a government-wide review of its energy policy in light of the recent natural disaster and the nuclear accident at the Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Energy policy discussions were launched at the beginning of this month with an eye to drafting a New Basic Energy Plan by next summer. We intend to consider the best mix of energy sources for the medium to long term while listening to the views of people from every part of society about what mix the Japanese people can be comfortable. We will also look at global warming countermeasures, recognizing that they are inextricably linked to the review of our energy policy.

The theme of this year's GEA International Conference is "Building Sustainable Societies through Reconstruction," and the key to achieving this is to construct a strong energy system that can serve as the society's core.

Renewable energy is indispensable in creating sustainable societies. Japan will promote the use of renewable energy not only for the reconstruction from the recent disaster, but also for the creation of low-carbon societies around the world. I understand that one of the afternoon sessions will discuss "Realizing Vibrant Low-Carbon Communities Built around Renewable Energy," and I look forward to a productive exchange of views at that session.

In closing, I would like to offer my best wishes to everyone gathered here today for their health and success and to express my hope that the discussions at the GEA International Conference 2011 will open the way to a sustainable, new economy and society.

## **Ryuji Yamane** (Parliamentary Senior Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs)

Welcome Reception, October 14, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen: It is a great pleasure to greet all of you here for the GEA International Conference 2011. I want to extend my sincere gratitude and a warm welcome to all of you who have taken time from your busy schedules and particularly those who have traveled great distances from abroad to attend the conference.

I believe that GEA performs a very important function by providing a valuable forum for the free and unfettered exchange of views on global environmental issues among people with wide range of perspectives. For those of us in the Foreign Ministry, GEA has already proved itself a wellspring of useful ideas.

As all of you are aware, in March Japan experienced a disaster without parallel in our history, the Great East Japan Earthquake. I would like to take this opportunity to convey our deep appreciation for the generous support and the kind messages of sympathy and encouragement we have received from countries around the world.

For many survivors of that disaster, daily life continues to be a severe ordeal. Reconstruction is an urgent priority, and as we tackle it, we face the difficult challenge of rebuilding in such a way as to ensure sustainability over the medium and long term.

We are hoping to incorporate in our reconstruction efforts many of the valuable ideas and overseas initiatives discussed by participants from Japan and abroad at this year's GEA International Conference. As it happens, shifting to a green economy and achieving sustainable development will be the main topics of discussion at the Rio+20 conference scheduled to be held in Rio de Janeiro next June. The Japanese government wants to use the environment summit as an opportunity to report on our nation's reconstruction efforts geared to the development of a society that is friendly to people and the environment alike.

Profiting from the participation of leading figures and experts from around the world, this year's GEA Conference holds the promise of two days filled with lively and productive discussion. I am confident that the result will be a message of genuine value and import from Japan to the rest of the world.