

Speeches by hosts

Juro Saito

(Chairman of GEA)

Opening Ceremony, October 18, 2013

We are most honored by the pleasure of company of His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince and Her Imperial Highness the Crown Princess at the opening of GEA International Conference, and as the host representative, I would like to express our gratitude to all of the persons who kindly cooperated toward the conference.

This year, abnormal weather phenomena were observed worldwide. This country, too, suffered from frequent tornadoes and unprecedented rainstorms that greatly affected people's lives. The 5th Assessment Report published very recently by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) also points out that warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and that human activities are very likely to be the main cause of warming.

If our activities endanger global environment – the very foundations of human survival, then we must concentrate the wisdom of mankind and make every possible effort to avert the crisis.

This GEA International Conference is devoted to finding ways toward a sustainable future, based on the results of Rio+20 where leaders from around the world met to discuss solutions to the global environmental problems.

The Conference invited key experts from around the world to hold discussions with Japanese authorities in various fields, and to literally “concentrate the wisdom of mankind”. We hope that lively discussions to be held in this two-day conference will point directions to brightening prospects for the future of mankind.

In closing, on behalf of the organizers, I would like again to express our gratitude to all participants of the Conference, both from home and abroad.

Nobuteru Ishihara

(Minister of the Environment)

Luncheon, October 18, 2013

As Minister of the Environment and on behalf of the Japanese government, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to everyone here participating in GEA International Conference 2013.

As you probably know, GEA was established in 1991, with former Prime Minister Takeshita playing the main role, as an organization to encourage world opinions and provide advice toward the resolution of global environmental problems through collaboration with political, academic, and financial communities.

The conference has been regularly held with the participation of those in the world's top-level research organizations and international organizations, as well as those influential toward shaping of world opinions. I also heard from Chair Saito today that the distinguished Professor Lee, who has received a Nobel Prize, gave a keynote address. I am very grateful for that.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who has made this international conference aimed at sustainable development happen, including GEA Chair Juro Saito and members of the Organizing Committee of GEA, for their efforts.

Serious impacts due to progressing global warming have been pointed out throughout the world. In Japan, we have also experienced violent heat and tornadoes, and many natural disasters such as typhoon No.26, which killed many people this week. The IPCC report that was released this September even reported the possibility of sea-level rise by 82cm by the end of this century.

I have recently visited Tuvalu, which has the risk of being one of the first lands to be submerged if sea levels rise due to global warming. I witnessed the realities of an island on which the shore has actually been eroded, where at high tide sea water surges close to houses and it is necessary to walk through water. The experience has made me strongly re-acknowledge our vulnerability against impacts due to climate change, and the kinds of contributions that Japan should make toward them. COP19 will be held in Warsaw in November. We hope to proactively demonstrate leadership toward the establishment of a fair and effective new international framework for 2020 and after, in which all countries will participate.

In addition, we will promote measures to realize an autonomously distributed and low-carbon energy society by using renewable energy as the core in Japan. Furthermore, we intend to proactively deploy to other countries Japan's outstanding environmental technologies through the Joint Crediting Mechanism, etc. and contribute to low carbonization on a global scale.

Finally, I would like to conclude my greeting with wishing that this conference will be productive and that the results will be transmitted to international society. Thank you.

Kazuyoshi Akaba

(State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry)

Luncheon, October 18, 2013

Hello everyone. As just kindly introduced, my name is Kazuyoshi Akaba, and I am a Komeito member of the House of Representatives and serve as State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry. Today I am very nervous because many senior members of the political world who have provided me with guidance since I was first elected are present. However, I have been appointed and therefore I will make this greeting on behalf of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

First, I would like to express my sincere respect to you for your valuable contributions concerning resolution of environmental problems and sustainable development, which have been one of the most important themes of humanity since 1991.

It is my understanding that at sessions such as “Science and Technology that Support Green Economy” and “Sustainable Energy for All” at this GEA International Conference 2013, experts from countries throughout the world and international organizations will hold lively discussions aimed at balancing the world’s environment and the economy. I am in great hopes that this conference will be fruitful.

For effective resolution of measures against global warming, I think that development and dissemination of technologies for controlling greenhouse gas emissions are important. One example of Japanese technology is high-strength carbon fiber composite materials that can replace the iron used in automobiles. By introducing this carbon fiber, it is possible to reduce vehicle weight by 60 percent and significantly cut down the amount of fuel consumption. The IEA has estimated that it will be possible to reduce the amount of CO₂ emission by 4.7 billion tons by 2050. In addition, a technology currently under development is CCS (or Carbon Capture and Storage), which is a technology that minimizes release of CO₂ into the atmosphere and prevents global warming by separating and capturing waste CO₂ and then depositing it underground over a long period of time.

In order to internationally disseminate these outstanding technologies, Japan is working to create a Joint Credit Mechanism and international standards. This year alone, the Joint Credit Mechanism has been signed by eight countries, including major Asian countries such as Mongolia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. In addition, Minister Motegi of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and I visited Vietnam, which was the first signatory country from ASEAN, and directly conducted negotiations.

As for creation of international standards, for example, Japan proposed a method of appropriately evaluating CO₂ emission efficiency in the steel manufacturing process, and it was standardized internationally. We anticipate that from now on by utilizing such international standards, technologies developed in Japan will be disseminated and consequently worldwide emissions reduction will be realized.

In September of this year, an “Innovation Plan for Environmental Energy Technology” that lists these specific efforts was decided upon. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry will collaborate with the private sector, cooperate with various countries, and conduct even more proactive undertakings, in order to develop and disseminate innovative technologies to contribute to overcoming sustainable energy issues.

In addition, as proposed by Prime Minister Abe on October 5, Japan plans to host a new international conference called the “World Energy and Environment Innovation Forum” once a year beginning in October of next year, in order to bring together wisdom from throughout the world and use innovation to resolve global warming problems.

In closing, I would like to say once again that I hope that this GEA International Conference 2013 will serve as an opportunity to produce significant results aimed at combining economic development and consideration for the earth’s environment on a global-scale. Thank you.

Yoshitaka Sakurada

(Senior Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

Luncheon, October 18, 2013

My name is Yoshitaka Sakurada, and I am the Senior Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. I will give a greeting on behalf of the Ministry. As a co-host, we are extremely pleased to be able to hold this important congress, with the participation of all of you distinguished guests from inside and outside of Japan who are highly conscious and active on global environmental issues.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is conducting research and development related to the environment and energy, and working to overcome global-scale tasks from the aspects of science and technology in order to create a sustainable society.

In particular, a recent summary of the report by the “Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change” (IPCC) came to a scientific conclusion that warming of the climate system is an unequivocal fact, and therefore it is currently one of the most important challenges to be addressed by the international society.

It is said that the progression of global warming changes the earth’s environment and it leads to sea level rise and increased extreme weather events such as floods and droughts which is a major threat to the creation of a sustainable society.

In order to deal with these threats, it is important for the international community to cooperate, and for academic, industrial, and other fields to work together to bring about “science and technology in society and for society.”

I have heard that President Lee of the International Council for Science (ICSU), who gave a speech during the opening ceremony earlier, is aiming to link scientists with society and is constructing an international framework called “Future Earth”.

In light of such international movements, we will work to create and disseminate the science and technology innovations that are necessary for adaptation to global warming and significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and make contributions to international society.

In closing, I hope that this conference will serve as a major step for humans to create a sustainable future.

I would like to express my sincere respect and appreciation to Chair Saito and Director General Hironaka, who have made tremendous efforts in a variety of forms despite their busy schedules, as well as the members of the GEA Organizing Committee and the Secretariat. This concludes my greeting. Thank you.

Tsuyoshi Takagi

(Senior Vice Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism)

Luncheon, October 18, 2013

My name is Tsuyoshi Takagi, and I am the Senior Vice Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. First, I would like to extend a sincere welcome to all of you who have come from throughout Japan and other countries to attend today's GEA International Conference 2013. I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of the members of GEA and those who were involved in the preparations.

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism considers the formation of hard and soft basis as its mission, in order to bring about lifestyles in which people are vibrant, a dynamic economy and society that supports such lifestyles, safe livelihood, a beautiful and good environment, and diverse regions. In the environmental field, we are taking a wide variety of measures in order to maintain and create good environments and a beautiful Japan that citizens can be proud of, with the aim of building a "low-carbon society," a "society in harmony with nature," and a "recycling-oriented society."

In particular, the amount of CO₂ emissions from sectors related to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, such as transportation and household and buildings, account for approximately half of the nation's total amount of emission. In this regard, we think that we have an extremely important role to play in realizing a low-carbon society. Therefore, in addition to individual measures such as development and promotion of environment-responsive next-generation automobiles, and improving the efficiency of commodity distribution and the energy-saving abilities of household and buildings, we are also working proactively on promoting low-carbon cities through consolidating city functions in the medium and long terms.

In closing, at today's GEA International Conference 2013 I hope that the lively discussions on the global environmental issues by experts from Japan and other countries will contribute greatly to a sustainable future. Thank you.

Takamori Yoshikawa

(Senior Vice Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)

Luncheon, October 18, 2013

Hello everyone. As just kindly introduced, my name is Takamori Yoshikawa and I am the Senior Vice Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. My greeting is the last one, so please feel free to enjoy your meal.

I would like to express my sincere respect for the efforts of Chair Saito and all the other people involved in organizing the GEA International Conference 2013. Please allow me for making this greeting on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. I have deep respect for all of you here for taking a leading role and working proactively on a daily basis in order to pass on to the next generation an outstanding global environment in which all the people can enjoy prosperity and health.

On the 27th of September, a summary of the IPCC WGI Fifth Assessment Report was made public. It stated that the numbers of hot days and heavy precipitation events are increasing on a global scale, and that there is an extremely high possibility that the main cause of such changes is human activity. As Environment Minister Ishihara mentioned in his greeting earlier, Japan too experienced extreme weather events such as high temperature and intense rainfalls this summer.

Amid such circumstances, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is proceeding with forest maintenance such as tree thinning, in order to contribute to measures against global warming. We also conduct a “*movement to use trees efficiently*,” which facilitates material recycle of forests by planting trees, growing them, harvesting them, and then using them efficiently through promoting use of domestic timber which allows us to return funds necessary for forest maintenance.

In addition, as confirmed at Rio+20, sustainable agriculture, forestry, and fishery industries eradicate poverty and at the same time bear an important role in strengthening resilience against climate change and natural disasters. For that reason, it is necessary to improve a function that agriculture, forestry, and fishery industries inherently have which enhances and manages the natural environments. Japan is working to create robust and competitive agriculture, forestry, and fishery industries, as well as beautiful and vibrant rural areas. Such efforts include promotion of a recycling-oriented society, such as introduction of next-generation horticultural facilities that use biomass energy, and expanded use of lumber for public buildings. This conference, which aspires for sustainable economic growth, provides valuable hints for such Japanese undertakings and draws the major interest of us.

Finally, I would like to conclude my greeting with hope that this meeting will be productive in creating a sustainable and beautiful earth.

Let's protect the irreplaceable Earth. Thank you.

Norio Mitsuya

(Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs)

Welcome Reception hosted by Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs
Norio Mitsuya, October 18, 2013

I am truly delighted to welcome you all to this reception on the occasion of the GEA International Conference 2013. In particular, I would like to bid a warm welcome and hearty thanks to those of you who have travelled from many different places, including overseas, to attend the conference.

I understand that there were much lively discussions at today's international conference on the topic of sustainability in the areas of consumption and production, urban development, and energy. Each of these is vitally important element for the "transition to a green economy," which was the central theme at last June's Rio+20 conference.

In addition to providing ODA, Japan is also contributing to the transition to a green economy by making the most of a wide range of tools, such as the export of infrastructure systems that employ environmental technology. Japan will also host an international conference the day after tomorrow in the city of Kitakyushu with an aim of discussing the shape of sustainable urban development. I sincerely hope that these kinds of efforts by Japan will aid in realizing sustainable development.

My hometown is Ise City in Mie Prefecture. Ise is home to the Grand Shrine of Ise, or *Ise Jingu*, and this year marks a commemorative year called *Shikinen Sengu*. This practice involves dismantling and rebuilding the house of the deity once every 20 years. In fact, the shrines were relocated and rededicated just the other day. "Why am I mentioning this?" I hear you ask. I believe that this ritual ceremony embodies Japan's sustainable society. The timber that is used to build the shrines is supposed to be felled from within the grounds of *Ise Jingu*. However, since it takes 80 years before each tree is ready to be used in constructing the shrines, trees continually need to be planted in anticipation of future rebuilding. For hundreds of years, *Ise Jingu* has been repeating the cycle of planting and felling of trees and construction in order to carry out the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony once every 20 years. I see this as nothing less than sustainability.

Many people with great insight into the various disciplines that support global sustainable development are gathered here today. While benefitting from your expertise, our government will pull together with the international community in striving to find answers to the issues that currently facing the world.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my heartfelt thanks to you all for attending today's reception.