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It is a great honor to hold this international conference to discuss the realization of a sustainable future, and we are graced with the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess, as well as Prime Minister Fukuda and many other participants from Japan and the rest of the world. On behalf of the organizers, I would like to express our profound gratitude to all those who have provided their support to bring about this conference.

First of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Chairman Pachauri, who will give a special speech today, for the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the IPCC. Exactly 10 years ago, regardless of his position at the time as Vice President of the United States, Mr. Al Gore, the other winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, also graciously agreed to give a special speech at the GEA international conference on the "Global Partnership Summit on Environment." As chairman of the GEA, I was moved beyond words. I would like to express my deepest respect for Mr. Gore and the IPCC for their tireless efforts to raise international awareness of the issue of global warming.

The 21st century has been described as the century of the environment. While humankind has enjoyed unprecedented prosperity thanks to phenomenal advances in science and technology during the latter half of the 20th century, we are now sadly having to pay the price for that prosperity. Global environmental problems today threaten the very foundation of our existence. In other words, I believe we should underline our strong determination and desire to use our acquired wisdom and knowledge to solve during this century the negative legacies - of global warming and other environmental problems - that are a legacy of the last century.

During this international conference, we look forward to animated discussions among experts from Japan and abroad who are at the frontline in various fields in order to bring about a sustainable future. I would like to take this opportunity to ask the Prime Minister to reflect the results of this conference in discussions at the Toyako Summit next year. Speaking on behalf of the organizers, it is our sincerest hope that this international conference turns out to be productive and rewarding.