

Address & Guest Speech

Address by H.I.H. the Crown Prince

Opening Ceremony, October 14, 2011

Before starting my address, I would like to pray for the repose of the souls of the people who died in the Great East Japan Earthquake last March. I would also like to express my condolences to the bereaved and all the others who were affected by this unspeakable natural disaster. Finally, I would like to offer my hope for reconstruction and a steady recovery from the calamity. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the people overseas for the warm encouragement and support they offered our nation on the occasion of this great disaster.

I am most pleased that the GEA International Conference 2011 is being held with so many experts from Japan and overseas participating.

I understand that one of the goals of this conference is to take a fresh look at what we should do and what efforts we should make to prevent further deterioration of the global environment, which is the foundation of human survival, and to secure a sustainable future.

The theme of this year's conference is "Building Sustainable Societies through Reconstruction," and I am confident that this is a valuable opportunity for Japan to share, with people who are active in various fields throughout the world, our experience of reconstruction after the unprecedented disaster that recently struck our nation.

It is most significant that we have present here for this conference Adnan Amin, who will give the keynote speech in a few minutes, as well as many others who are working to create a sustainable society and are leaders of their individual fields, including the development of low-carbon technologies, the creation of efficient recycling systems, and the use of natural resources, which are all indispensable for creating sustainable societies.

I am confident that this conference will see dynamic discussions and deliver their conclusions to people around the world, so that we can hand down to the next generation a healthy global environment where the people of the world can enjoy prosperity and health, and so that we, our descendants, and all living things can enjoy the blessings of the global environment forever. I also hope that concrete initiatives for the creation of sustainable societies will be further promoted.

Thank you.

Yoshihiko Noda (Prime Minister, Japan)

Opening Ceremony, October 14, 2011

I am honored to say a few words at the start of the GEA International Conference 2011, being held with the attendance of H.I.H. the Crown Prince Naruhito.

First, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the many people who have travelled to Japan from overseas to attend today's conference and particularly to Adnan Amin, director general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, who will give the keynote speech in a few minutes. On behalf of the Japanese people, I would like to express once again my sincere appreciation for the warm encouragement and support that people around the world have offered Japan since the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11.

The earthquake has presented us with questions from various perspectives regarding what the sustainability of society is. Japan is now searching intently for answers to the questions that have been raised as we focus every effort on traveling the road of recovery and reconstruction from the disaster. In return for the support we have received from throughout the world, I believe that Japan is called to communicate what it learns from this experience to the international community and share this wisdom with all humanity.

First, there is the question about how to prepare for massive natural disasters that exceed usual estimates. The tsunami that hit the Tohoku district had a maximum vertical height onshore above sea level of 40 meters. We must think about disaster preparedness based on the assumption that the unexpected may happen. Measures that address both physical and mental preparedness are crucial. Not only is protecting ourselves by creating strong buildings and other structures important, but it is also vital that we heighten resident awareness that they must first head to higher ground in the event of a tsunami alert. Japan will hold an international conference in the disaster-stricken Tohoku region next year to boost international cooperation on coping with natural disasters, and our nation would like to take a leading role in the international community in creating a disaster-resistant society.

Second, in light of the nuclear accidents, there is the question of what role science and technology should play in the sustainability of society. Needless to say, the accidents at the Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations continue to have a tremendous impact on Japanese society today. Japan has done its utmost to achieve the earliest possible settlement of the accidents in the more than six months since they occurred. The cold shutdown of nuclear reactors and the large-scale decontamination of released radioactive materials are challenges that humankind has never experienced before. None of these issues can be overcome without bringing together the insight of people from throughout the world and applying the fruits of science and technology. How should we

interpret this situation where nuclear power—which harnesses technologies that are said to bring together the best of science and technology—has triggered accidents that now must be resolved by using science and technology? At the very least, we cannot entirely deny the role to be played by science and technology. In light of the recent accidents, we must reconsider the role of science and technology as the cornerstone of a sustainable society.

Third, there is the question of how to implement an environmental and energy policy to support the sustainability of society. In light of the recent nuclear accidents, Japan should work toward reducing its dependence on nuclear power as much as possible over the medium to long term. We will consider the issue in a level-headed fashion while listening to the views of people from every part of society about what energy supply composition the Japanese people can be comfortable with over the medium to long term. The key here will be how well we can promote energy conservation and renewable energy, including the aspect of costs. These are things we must do to promote global warming countermeasures and create a low-carbon society as well. The disaster-hit Tohoku region has great latent potential for renewable energy, and realizing that potential will be a major driver behind the reconstruction of the entire region. Japan has outstanding technological strength in the environmental and energy field, including energy-efficient housing and home appliances as well as electric vehicles. Japan will make a statement to the world by bringing together the strengths of the public and private sectors to create and implement an environmental and energy policy that will support the sustainability of society.

Rio+20 is scheduled to be held in June 2012 and sustainability, including the various questions raised by the recent disaster, will be a major focus of the discussions among the international community. This GEA International Conference truly meets the needs of the times because it brings together the insights of experts from around the world to discuss the theme of “Building Sustainable Societies through Reconstruction.” I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Chair Juro Saito and the others at Global Environmental Action for their discernment and effort.

As president of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10) held last year, Japan led the gathering in agreeing on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Japan already has experience in spearheading the international community’s efforts to create sustainable societies by securing biological diversity. “Working with the International Community for Regenerating Japan,” which is the subtheme of today’s conference succinctly expresses the direction of the policies that my administration is taking. Japan has the will and ability to continue to contribute to the creation of an even better future for humankind around the world by achieving a dynamic reconstruction from the recent disaster. I hope that this conference is a forum where you reconfirm that and engage in meaningful and constructive discussions that will produce outcomes that contribute to next year’s Rio+20.