

Address & Guest Speech

Address by H.I.H. the Crown Prince

Opening Ceremony, October 18, 2013

I am most pleased that the Global Environmental Action (GEA) International Conference 2013 is being held with so many experts from Japan and overseas participating.

Global warming and declining biodiversity are two ongoing real-world problems. As the world economy experiences rapid growth focused on emerging nations, and as it is expected to develop further in the future, achieving sustainable development while preventing environmental degradation that accompanies this economic progress has become a global goal.

Under these circumstances, with a theme of “Starting from Rio+20: Toward a Sustainable Future,” this year’s conference is an invaluable opportunity to bring together the world’s wisdom for sustainable development. In June last year, twenty years after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was once again held in Rio de Janeiro, and consensus was reached by 188 member states on the document “The Future We Want.” What matters now are the actions each and every one of us takes toward the sustainable future for which we aspire.

I understand that the world’s foremost authorities in a variety of fields related to sustainable development, including science and technology, urban development, energy, the economy and finance, have been invited to this conference to engage in discussion.

I expect that this conference will see lively discussions and deliver a message to people around the world, in pursuit of a future in which 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.

Shinzo Abe (Prime Minister, Japan)

[Delivered by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato]

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Prime Minister Abe had planned to attend this conference today, but he is unable to attend because of a plenary session of the Upper House and party representatives' questions. I will read this address on his behalf.

I am honored to make this address in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Crown Princess, on the occasion of this Global Environmental Action conference.

This conference began when the prime minister at that time, Mr. Takeshita, held an "Eminent Persons Meeting on the Global Environment" in Tokyo, aimed at the global summit that was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Twenty years later in 2012, a United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) was again held in Rio de Janeiro, and it is very significant that as a result of that conference this Global Environmental Action conference is now being held here in Tokyo.

Last week, representatives from about 140 countries, including ministers from about 60 countries, gathered in Minamata and signed the "Minamata Convention on Mercury." Taking a lesson from the serious industrial pollution such as Minamata disease, each of the countries reached an agreement to prevent mercury pollution. It is necessary to gradually accumulate these kinds of efforts and move forward with sustainable development on a global scale.

The issue of global warming is a momentous challenge for a sustainable future. The world's average temperature has risen 0.85 degrees centigrade in the last 130 years, and extreme weather is occurring frequently throughout the world. Global warming is an immediate crisis, and prompt actions on a global scale are required.

At the Heiligendamm Summit that was held in 2007, I called for a long-term goal of reduction of the world's total amount of greenhouse gas emissions by half by the year 2050. One of the keys to sustainable growth of the world economy is technology. Towards this goal, Japan is leading the world in technology. We are of course using cutting-edge technologies to control domestic emissions to the fullest extent possible, and we are also expanding technologies that Japan is proud of, onto the world stage, and extending a low-carbon society throughout the world.

In order to expand energy conservation technologies, renewable energy technologies, and low-carbon infrastructure technologies in light of the characteristics of each developing country, Japan is actively providing technical cooperation and conducting technology transfers. For example, Japan is using a "bilateral credit" mechanism that provides funds, low-carbon technologies, and know-how to developing countries and reduces greenhouse gases. We have already reached agreements with eight countries, including Indonesia and Vietnam, about utilizing "bilateral credit." Through this mechanism, Japanese private-sector companies and the government will work together to accelerate the transfer of low-carbon technologies to developing countries.

Our lives and economies have been made possible because of a rich environment. Economic growth is not possible without a rich environment. I would like to not only balance economic growth with environmental preservation, but also build a future in which environmental technologies and environmental business play leading roles in economic growth. I hope that productive discussions will be held at this conference, in order to bring about this kind of sustainable future. Thank you.