

Address & Guest Speech

Address by His Majesty the Emperor

Opening Ceremony, 14 December, 2020

I am delighted that the Global Environmental Action (GEA) International Conference 2020 is being held with participating experts from both Japan and overseas.

It is an urgent challenge for us to preserve the global environment from climate change and other planetary threats. For instance, in the field of hydrology, or water issues, which I have been involved in for years, researchers have found that the remote cause in recent days of the frequent occurrence of water-related disasters lies in climate change. We need immediate and adequate action to stop the serious increase of damage.

Another difficult challenge for humankind at this point in time is the spread of COVID-19 - a disease which is currently running rampant around the world. To overcome this trying situation, it is important for all of us to work together, more united than ever. At the same time, the difficulties of this infectious disease, I believe, have given us opportunities to reflect anew on our daily lives and our society.

Under these circumstances, with the theme of “Integration of the Environment and Economy: Towards a Virtuous Cycle of Environment and Growth,” this year’s conference is an invaluable opportunity to bring together the world’s wisdom in order for us to work together across national boundaries and different perspectives with the aim of creating sustainable society. 2020 is an important year. This year marks the beginning of the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015, and also the beginning of the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. With the whole world being required to promote earnest efforts toward achieving these goals, each and every one of us should be responsible to consider how to strive for the future to which we aspire.

I understand that experts from a variety of fields have been invited to this year’s conference to engage in discussions on such topics as national and corporate strategies and the roles of science and technology, and finance in a wide range of issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, biodiversity conservation, and the circular economy.

I expect that through this conference lively discussions will be conducted and a message will be delivered to people around the world, in pursuit of realizing a future in which we, as the humankind, our descendants, and all living things can enjoy the blessings of the global environment everlastingly. I also hope that we overcome the challenge of COVID-19 and that concrete initiatives for the creation of sustainable societies are further promoted.

Thank you.

SUGA Yoshihide

Prime Minister of Japan

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In the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress, I would like to offer a few words on this occasion of the 12th Global Environmental Action International Conference being held here today.

Global environmental issues, such as the increasing effects of climate change, are becoming a major threat to the international community. In order to address these issues, bold actions by all nations are essential. At my policy speech in October, I declared that Japan will aim to realize a carbon-neutral society by 2050. This is a goal that we must definitely achieve in order for Japan to catch up with and stay ahead of global trends. Addressing environmental issues is no longer a constraint on economic growth, but is a driver of overall economic and social transformation that generates significant growth.

In order to adjust our mindset to such a virtuous cycle of environment and growth, under our current economic measures, we will create an unprecedented fund of 2 trillion yen to provide ongoing support over the next 10 years to companies taking on the challenge of developing ambitious innovations. The fund will, for example, accelerate the practical implementation of advanced technologies, such as extremely thin, light and efficient next-generation solar power technology that can be installed on walls; technology that captures carbon dioxide and converts it into building material or fuel; technology that produces and distributes hydrogen on a large scale inexpensively to be used as fuel in airplanes and other vehicles; and low-cost, ultra-efficient storage battery technology. At the same time, we will establish systems and regulations to maximize the adoption of electric vehicles and so on with the aim of reducing carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles to zero.

In January this year, we also established the Global Zero Emission Research Center (GZR), and welcomed Dr. YOSHINO Akira, who will be speaking today, to serve as its director. Through research and development with a focus on practical implementation, we will lead the world's green industries and create a virtuous cycle of the economy and the environment.

In addition, it is also important that we realize the "Osaka Blue Ocean Vision," a framework that was shared at last year's G20 Osaka Summit, and which is now endorsed by 86 countries. With an aim to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050, we are going to provide technical assistance to developing countries. Passing on our beautiful planet to the next generation is our current generation's responsibility. I have great hopes that fruitful and spirited discussions will take place at this Global Environmental Action International Conference to find simultaneous solutions for environmental, economic, and social issues.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you here today good health and great success in your endeavors.

December 14, 2020, Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide. Congratulations.