

# **Speeches by Hosts**

# TAKESHITA Wataru

Chairman, Global Environmental Action (GEA)

Opening Ceremony, 14 December, 2020

Good morning, everyone. I am afraid my voice is a little hoarse, so I hope you will forgive me if parts of it are difficult to hear.

In the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress, and with the participation of Prime Minister Suga and other members of his Cabinet, it is a great honor for us to host this GEA international conference. At the same time, I am acutely aware of the weight of that responsibility.

In hosting this year's international conference in particular, we have taken the impact of the new coronavirus very seriously and have had to take all possible measures against COVID-19. Regrettably, this means we have had to limit the number of participants, and it has resulted in much inconvenience to you all, including avoiding the three Cs and maintaining social distance inside the conference venue. I would ask for your patience in this respect.

I feel that our actual experience over the past few years has been that we are experiencing changes in the global environment on a daily basis. In any case, hot places are getting hotter, cold places are getting colder, and every day, we are literally feeling the various changes enveloping our planet in a major way. In this context, I believe that we are at a point in time when we have to reconsider the question of how we can protect this planet to the end—what we must do now, not just for ourselves, but also for the sake of our children and grandchildren and for the people living on Earth in 100 years and 200 years from now.

Various parts of the world are currently exhibiting aspects of antagonism. Rather than confrontation, conflict and division, however, what we must do is engage in thorough discussion and take firm measures. If we look around the world, there are people and nations that venture out under banners of freedom, democracy, philanthropy and so on even in difficult or dangerous regions. One of these people is Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, a doctor who fell victim in Afghanistan some time ago. I envisage that a time will come when people and nations that venture out to all parts of this harsh planet will surely play an active role under the banner of the global environment. However, each region has its own history and its own culture. Perhaps not everything can pass muster under a banner of the global environment alone. I feel certain that people who play an active role under the two banners of culture and maintaining the global environment will do a proper job of protecting the Earth.

I am delighted that we are able to hold an international conference like this again this year. Gathering wisdom and great scholars from around the world, we will engage in in-depth discussions over the next two days, after which we will make recommendations to the world. We are holding this international conference again this year in the hope that our toil can be of some small help to the future of the Earth. In concluding my opening remarks as Chairman, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to you all for coming, and express my sincere hope that everyone here can engage in exhaustive discussions and make substantive contributions for the future. Thank you.

# UTO Takashi

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan

Luncheon, 14 December, 2020

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, as announced, Minister for Foreign Affairs Motegi is currently away on business in Africa, so I will be speaking on his behalf. My name is Uto Takashi and I am the State Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Global Environmental Action (GEA) has contributed significantly toward the resolution of global environmental and sustainable development issues over the last 30 years, with this conference being one of the most important, enduring legacies of GEA's activities to date. It is, indeed, a great privilege to have this opportunity to speak to you here today.

I would first like to offer my congratulations for the successful opening of the face-to-face GEA International Conference this morning in the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress and with the attendance of Prime Minister Suga, amid the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19.

The theme for this year's conference, "Integration of the Environment and Economy: Towards a Virtuous Cycle of Environment and Growth," in our view, is timely and in line with the pillar of our new growth strategy presented by Prime Minister, to pursue a virtuous cycle of the economy and the environment.

As mentioned in Prime Minister Suga's speech today, recently, the Suga administration signaled that the most urgent task for us is to tackle global issues such as climate change, leading to a declaration that, by 2050, Japan seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero.

My birthplace in Kagoshima prefecture, located in southwestern Japan, has been a victim of such climate change: In over a half century from 1951 to this year, as many as 41 typhoons have made landfall in Kagoshima, far exceeding the 26 landfalls in second-ranked Kochi Prefecture. We cannot eliminate typhoons, but it may be possible to reduce the damage caused by typhoons and heavy rains if we can promote disaster prevention and mitigation efforts to help prevent the rise in seawater temperature. This may be possible if we unite with the world in promoting global-warming countermeasures through multilateral mechanisms such as the Paris Agreement.

In order to pass on a healthy and beautiful natural landscape to our future generations, as State Minister for Foreign Affairs, my desire is to address global issues such as climate change, in concert with other nations around the world.

In closing, I would again like to express my appreciation to all of you who have dedicated yourselves in preparing for this conference, and wish the conference every success.

Thank you very much.

# MUNEKIYO Kouichi

Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan

Luncheon, 14 December, 2020

As introduced, my name is Munekiyo Koichi and I am a Parliamentary Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. I would like to offer a few words on behalf of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

First, I would like to express my sincere respect for GEA's many years of contributions toward resolving global environmental issues and realizing a sustainable society.

During his policy speech at the most recent Diet session, Prime Minister Suga announced his policy of "aiming to realize a carbon-neutral, decarbonized society by 2050."

The issue of climate change is now a pressing issue for all of humanity. Many countries around the world are moving toward a goal of carbon neutrality. Japan is taking on the challenge of carbon neutrality as a growth strategy, and is aiming to get through this crisis by expanding business opportunities through innovation creation.

Needless to say, achieving carbon neutrality is not an easy task. It requires the concerted efforts of the whole of Japan. High goals and aspirational visions must be set, and industry, academia and government must all work together in earnest.

To this end, by the end of this month, we plan to finalize an action plan that incorporates specific targets and timeframes, as well as regulations, standardization and other institutional developments, plus support measures to promote social implementation in areas that are essential for aspiring for carbon neutrality, including hydrogen, storage batteries, offshore wind power and carbon recycling.

As the flag waver for the industrial world, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is seeking to create a virtuous cycle between the economy and the environment through long-term support measures by maximizing its commitment of all manner of resources.

That experts from Japan and abroad having been invited to the GEA International Conference 2020 to engage in discussion on this year's theme of "Integration of the Environment and Economy: *Towards a Virtuous Cycle of Environment and Growth*" makes this conference very timely. I have high hopes that this conference will serve as an opportunity leading to the sustainable development of the entire world.

In concluding my brief remarks, I would like to express my sincere wishes for the success of today's meetings and for the continued good health and successful endeavors of everyone present. Thank you.

# NAKAGAWA Toshio

Senior Advisor, Global Environmental Action (GEA)  
President, Japan Medical Association

Luncheon, 14 December, 2020

The COVID-19 is seriously affecting people's lives, health, social life, and economy worldwide, even now.

In Japan, its outbreak demanded us to incorporate infection control measures into our daily lives -- for example, keeping distance between people, wearing masks, through hand hygiene, avoiding "3Cs," and adapting to a so-called "new lifestyle." The country is faced with a difficult task of achieving infection control, saving our economy, and relieving people's anxiety all at the same time; on the other hand, it is unexpectedly giving us an opportunity to face and seriously reevaluate our previous lifestyle, work style, and values.

The Japan Medical Association (JMA) has been working on what is needed to maintain the healthcare system for the COVID-19 as well as other diseases, with the cooperation of the prefectural and municipal medical associations.

We also hold online meetings with those medical associations to understand the problems they face in local medical practice and make necessary requests to the national government.

Right now, the mental and physical fatigue of physicians, nurses, and other healthcare workers is reaching its peak, and an apprehension that some will start to withdraw from the front line due to exhausting work is becoming a reality. Medical institutions and facilities are paying close attention to infection control, but there is a limit to it when anyone can be infected.

An increase in the number of the infected will lead to an increase in the number of seriously ill patients. If the number of the infected continues to rise, medical care delivery will become even more difficult than it is now. Compensation for healthcare workers and securing human resources will require government support; however, the most precious support is not to increase the number of the infected.

From our standpoint as medical professionals, the first priority is to protect the lives and health of the people, and, we believe that through infection prevention measures will be the best economic measures in the end.

JMA continuously send out information through our press conferences and website, encouraging people to judge and act calmly and correctly.

At a recent press conference, we stated that it is important to first understand that "there are many unknowns that are yet unclarified." Up till now, most people in Japan have taken preventative measures against infection. As a result, the number of influenza patients drastically dropped, but the COVID-19 situation still remains. In other words, the power of infectivity of the COVID-19 is

threatening, and the situation will only get worse if we are to resume our previous lifestyle. As we have been pleading with people, the basic infection prevention measures are the key.

We are also aware that some people who have regular outpatient appointments or feel ill due to major changes in lifestyle or those who are expected to receive vaccinations or undergo health screening are withholding or postponing a visit to a physician in fear of infection risk. JMA is issuing 18,000 "*Everyone Can Feel Safe Signs*" since August 7th for medical institutions with through infection prevention measures so that patients can feel safe when seeking medical care.

Japan is about to enter the full-scale winter, and soon the New Year holiday season will come. We are currently receiving help from many medical institutions nationwide to prepare a system for professional consultation and care for patients with fever, while maintaining daily practice, vaccinations, and health screening.

We are also hoping that the COVID-19 vaccine will take effect. The vaccination is expected to start next spring, but establishing a system for vaccination will be an issue from now on.

It is said that COVID-19 may never completely "end" -- and even if it "converges," the remote work style will likely take hold, and we would never resume our previous lifestyle entirely. Due to various effects associated with COVID-19, we should anticipate a change in future disease structure as well. We need to pay close attention to such change, which may require us to take a different approach in healthcare unlike the ones before.

JMA will continue to strive for maintaining the community healthcare system and protecting the lives and health of the people in Japan.

Thank you.

# TAKAHASHI Hinako

State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan

Luncheon, 15 December, 2020

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is TAKAHASHI Hinako, and I am the State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. I would like to say a few words, but please, continue with your meals.

First, I would like to pay tribute to everyone participating in this conference who is working on global environmental issues both in Japan and overseas, and to Chairman Takeshita Wataru, Vice Chairman Wakamatsu Kaneshige and all the members of the Organizing Committee and Secretariat for their efforts in organizing this conference.

With respect to global environmental issues, Japan too is entering a new phase, demonstrated, for example, by the policy announced by Prime Minister Suga in October for “realization of a carbon-neutral, decarbonized society by 2050” as a new target for reducing greenhouse gases, as well as by the “Climate Emergency Declaration” which was adopted by both Houses.

Based on a theme of “Integration of the Environment and Economy: *Towards a Virtuous Cycle of Environment and Growth*,” I believe that the discussions at this year’s GEA International Conference 2020 have been very timely as they are aimed at facilitating the creation and revitalization of innovation for decarbonization and strengthening measures to achieve the targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases which were agreed to in the Paris Agreement.

As discussed at this conference, I believe it is important for academia, industry and all other sectors to work together under a framework of international consultation in tackling climate change in order to achieve the reduction targets for greenhouse gases that were established in the Paris Agreement and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recently, extreme weather phenomena such as torrential rains and heat waves have been occurring in various parts of the world, and there are concerns that these extreme events will increase in the intensity and frequency due to global warming. In these circumstances, I believe that the role of science and technology is becoming increasingly important.

Based on international and domestic trends and in light of the suggestions made at this international conference, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology will continue contributing to the building of a sustainable society, working on research into climate change prediction, development of observation technologies and research and development into innovative energy technologies necessary for adaptation to and mitigation of global warming.

In closing, I wish this conference continued success so that humankind can realize a sustainable future. Thank you.

# IWAI Shigeki

State Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Japan

Luncheon, 15 December, 2020

Good afternoon, everyone. As introduced, my name is IWAI Shigeki, and I am the State Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. I would like to take the opportunity of this amiable luncheon at the GEA International Conference 2020 to say a few words.

I would like to wholeheartedly welcome everyone from Japan and abroad who has gathered here for the GEA International Conference 2020. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to members of Global Environmental Action and to all those involved in preparations for this conference.

In recent years, the impact of climate change on society and the economy has been quite sizeable, with natural disasters becoming more frequent and more intense. In such a context, I believe that measures to combat global warming cannot be taken soon enough. In my view, Japan as a whole needs to take a strategic approach to global warming countermeasures in order to “realize a carbon-neutral, decarbonized society by 2050” as announced by Prime Minister Suga.

At the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, with an aim of decarbonizing the transportation, business and household sectors, which account for about 50% of Japan’s CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, in cooperation with other relevant ministries and agencies, we will further promote the dissemination of electric cars and other next-generation vehicles, greater use of public transportation and improvements in logistics efficiency, and better energy conservation in homes and buildings.

Furthermore, by utilizing ports and harbors, sewage systems and other social infrastructure, we will also work to contribute to the broader use of renewable energies, such as offshore wind power and biomass, as well as next-generation energy sources such as hydrogen.

In addition to these measures for mitigating global warming, we also need to redouble our efforts for climate change adaptation measures. Entrusted with the important mission of protecting the lives and livelihoods of our citizens from natural disasters, in July this year, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism announced the “Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Project.” Taking a bird’s-eye view of whole river basins, we will work hard in collaboration with all stakeholders to realize a safe and secure society in which disaster management and mitigation are mainstream, such as shifting to river basin flood control involving both physical and non-physical flood control measures.

In closing, I hope that the outcomes of active discussions among experts on global environmental issues from Japan and overseas will contribute greatly to the sustainable future of our planet. In addition, I wish you all good health and I hope that the COVID-19 pandemic ends as soon as possible. Thank you.



# KUMANO Seishi

Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan

Luncheon, 15 December, 2020

My name is Kumano Seishi, and I am the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In addition to extending a heartfelt welcome to everyone here today, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Chairman Takeshita and all those involved in organizing the GEA International Conference 2020.

The agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries form the foundations of our nation, providing a stable supply of food to the people together with the food industry, supporting local economies and communities, and through these activities, playing a role in the conservation of national land. Along with developing the agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries, I believe it is important to protect the rich and beautiful agricultural, mountain and fishing villages, which are archetypal images of Japan.

On the other hand, Japan's food, agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries are facing challenges such as the impacts of natural disasters and climate change, as well as the weakening of the production base due in part to a decrease in producers. Therefore, a pressing need now is to build sustainable food systems that also take into account the future of the agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries and the future of regional areas.

Furthermore, as the importance of the SDGs and the environment grows in Japan and overseas, I believe that this will also lead to better appreciation of products made in Japan. In order to realize a carbon-neutral society by 2050, we are currently considering a new strategy for achieving both productivity improvements and sustainability of Japan's food, agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries through innovation, called "Japan's Strategy for Sustainable Food Systems."

The strategy aims to strike a balance between the global environment and a stable supply of food in Japan plus the sustainable development of our agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries. It also aims to increase employment, raise income levels in local areas and achieve rich diets. We are committed to formulating and implementing a strategy that accords with the virtuous cycle of the environment and growth for which the GEA is aspiring.

In closing, I would like to offer my best wishes for the continued good health and success to everyone gathered here today, and I pray that this conference is fruitful for the protection of a sustainable and beautiful planet. Thank you.