

Address & Guest Speech

Address by His Majesty the Emperor

[Tentative Translation]

Opening Ceremony, 23 October, 2024

I am delighted that the Global Environmental Action (GEA) International Conference 2024 is being held with participating experts from both Japan and overseas.

This year, many areas around the world have been struck by major disasters, such as storms and floods caused by typhoons and hurricanes, as well as severe droughts and large wildfires. In Japan, the summer heat was very intense, and heavy rains caused extensive damage in many areas, including areas that had been hit by the Noto Peninsula Earthquake.

According to a report released by the World Meteorological Organization in March this year, 2023 was the hottest year on record for annual global average temperatures. It is also said that climate change is intertwined with biodiversity, which is being lost at a rate that is unprecedented in human history, and with the mounting challenge of pollution. Addressing global environmental issues, protecting our precious planet, and passing it on to future generations are urgent issues that we must tackle. It is up to each and every one of us to consider the future of the Earth and how we will act accordingly.

At the United Nations Summit of the Future held last month, I understand that there was international discussion on what our future should look like and what we can do now to achieve it. Global efforts need to be promoted to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015. And to transform into a sustainable economy and society, it would be necessary for us to strive to resolve multiple issues in an integrated manner and to promote synergistic efforts on a global scale.

In this context, with a theme of “Promoting Measures to Simultaneously Decarbonize and Achieve the SDGs: Overcoming the Triple Crisis of Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Pollution,” this international conference is an invaluable opportunity to unite the wisdom of the world for us to work together in building sustainable societies, transcending national borders and differences in position. This year’s conference is expected to bring together experts from various fields to engage in lively discussions on strategic initiatives for a decarbonized society, measures addressing biodiversity loss and marine pollution issues, and harnessing synergies from these efforts.

I would like to conclude by expressing my hope that, through these discussions, this conference will be an important step toward a future in which we humankind, our descendants, and all life on Earth can enjoy the blessings of the global environment forevermore.

ISHIBA Shigeru

Prime Minister of Japan

Opening Ceremony, 23 October 2024

Honored by the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress, I would like to offer a few words on this occasion of the opening of the Global Environmental Action (GEA) International Conference 2024.

We humankind are facing serious environmental crises. At last year's G7 Hiroshima Summit chaired by Japan, we shared with the leaders of other countries the recognition that our planet is facing the triple global crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Japan is committed to spearheading a progressive approach to tackling these common global issues.

First, in the area of climate change, major economic and social reforms need to be promoted toward the realization of net-zero emissions by 2050. We intend to draw up the "GX2040 Vision" for the realization of green transformation (GX), while revising our Strategic Energy Plan and the Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures, thereby presenting Japan's path toward net-zero emissions.

On the international front, the Asia Zero-Emission Community (AZEC) Leaders Meeting, which I chaired, was held in Lao PDR on October 11. At the meeting, the leaders agreed on a joint statement with an action plan for the next decade to realize net-zero emissions through various pathways, taking into account each country's national circumstances such as industrial structure and energy mix, with a view to simultaneously achieving decarbonization, economic growth, and energy security in Asia. Japan will continue to work hand-in-hand with partner countries to push ahead with the decarbonization of Asia.

Second, with regard to biodiversity, following the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in December 2022, it is becoming increasingly important to realize "nature positive" (nature revitalization), that is, to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. In Japan, we will leverage the Act on Promoting Activities to Enhance Regional Biodiversity, which was enacted this year, to promote the certification of and support for Nationally Certified Sustainably Managed Natural Sites, or areas where the private sector and other partners are taking action for biodiversity conservation. Through this approach, we will accelerate efforts to meet the "30by30 target," aiming to conserve at least 30 percent of land and sea areas.

Third, plastic pollution is acknowledged as a global issue that needs to be addressed at the global level due to concerns about its adverse effects on ecosystems and so forth. Japan will lead discussions on the formulation of a treaty to combat plastic pollution, which is nearing the final stage of negotiations. Within Japan, we will not only address environmental pollution, but also promote

transition to a circular economy, which has the potential to be a catalyst for new growth and regional revitalization in our country. Specifically, at a ministerial meeting on the circular economy, we will compile a concrete policy package for transitioning to a circular economy, including promotion of a Reiwa era model of local production for local consumption through support for advanced regional models, as well as development of a system for recycling solar panels.

In March this year, Japan proposed a resolution on the promotion of synergies at the United Nations Environment Assembly, which was subsequently adopted. Going forward, Japan will lead efforts toward an integrated solution of the triple global crisis, by working with the international community to promote implementation of this resolution both at home and abroad, so that we can confront the various intertwined global issues and carve out a future for our planet.

Finally, I wish all of you here today good health and continued success in your endeavors.