

“High-level Symposium on Sustainable Cities: Connecting People, Environment and Technology”

Co-convened by the United Nations and Toyota City  
Greetings from State Minister of the Environment Shigeo Kitamura

I am Shigeo Kitamura, State Minister of the Environment, who was just introduced.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for being invited today to the “High-level Symposium on Sustainable Cities: Connecting People, Environment and Technology,” Co-convened by the United Nations and Toyota City, and given the opportunity to offer my words of welcome.

I would also like to express my esteem for and gratitude towards all the people involved, including the Honorable Toshihiko Ota, Mayor of Toyota City, and all of you who have come together to participate in this event.

The subject of the symposium is “Sustainable Cities.” According to the UN statistics, the human population has been progressively concentrated in urban areas worldwide. Particularly in Asia, the population has been concentrating in urban areas more rapidly than in the developed countries, and the urbanization rate is expected to reach over 65% in 2050.

Asia is also expected to continue to enjoy high economic growth.

As high economic growth continues, existing environmental issues such as air pollution and waste disposal will become even more evident, while urban activities may become the main source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Given the situation, we assume that dealing with the “environment” will be an important key for thinking about “Sustainable Cities.”

Allow me to talk a little about international efforts of the Ministry of the Environment. We are currently collaborating with the ASEAN member countries in an effort to create “environmentally sustainable cities” in East Asia.

Specifically, we are supporting the implementation of the “ASEAN ESC Model Cities Program,” in which ASEAN cities realize the ideas that they plan and propose on their own initiative. We also have held “High Level Seminars on Environmentally Sustainable Cities” since 2009. This year, the Seminar will be held in Malaysia in February.

We, together with the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) and host countries, hold the “Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific” in order to promote the 3Rs, “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,” in the Asia-Pacific area. This year, we are scheduled to hold the sixth session in the Maldives.

In the past, Japan suffered from pollution and other environmental problems in the process of achieving high growth. Through the historical process of overcoming urban environmental problems, we have accumulated technology and knowhow for the reduction of the environmental load in areas such as the preservation of the water and air environments, energy conservation, and the 3Rs including waste reduction and recycling. We firmly believe that they will surely be useful for the urban populations of Asia and elsewhere around the world.

For example, right here, Toyota City, has adopted as the key concept “Hybrid City,” where humans and environmental technology are integrated towards the achievement of a low-carbon society, to focus on measures in five areas—“Transportation,” “Industry,” “Woodlands,” “Citizens,” and “City Center.” Toyota City is also actively collaborating on the disposal of polychlorinated biphenyl waste, under the international framework. Toyota City is one of the top role model cities of Asia.

It is our hope that by holding this conference in Aichi Prefecture and Toyota City, where Japanese industrial technology is concentrated, its programs will promote the understanding and sharing of knowledge and wisdom on “Connecting People,

Environment and Technology” and that our latest environmental technology will make contributions worldwide.

One of the mechanisms that support the dissemination of such technology is the Joint Credit Mechanism, or JCM for short. JCM is a bilateral credit system in which low-carbon technology and countermeasures are implemented in countries with which Japan has concluded memorandums of understanding and the resultant reduction of carbon emissions is used by Japan to achieve its reduction targets. We have signed JCM agreements with 12 countries so far.

In developing projects, we do not limit ourselves to just a survey on the feasibility of the introduction of a given technology; we emphasize inter-city collaboration and cooperation in order to apply the experience, knowledge and wisdom of Japanese cities to the cities throughout Asia. The Ministry of the Environment will continue to support for development of such inter-city cooperation and to contribute to the creation of sustainable cities.

Last but not least, Toyota City has declared this week the “Toyota World Environment Week” and is conducting many activities, with a central focus on this symposium.

I wish to conclude my words by expressing my hope that this

symposium will provide a major impetus in further promoting cutting-edge efforts towards a low-carbon society through collaboration between business, government and academia and will accelerate efforts towards the realization of environmentally sustainable cities worldwide.

Thank you for your kind attention.