

## Welcome Remarks

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I am very honoured to be here to participate in this seminar, and I want to thank all of you, especially those of you who have in come great distances for helping to enrich the dialogue about this very important topic.

On behalf of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, as well as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), I am very pleased to extend my warmest welcome to all the participants here for the opening of this seminar.

This seminar is one of UNESCO's programmes, specifically the Asia and the Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development, abbreviated as APEID. APEID has been implemented since 1974 to help developing countries to improve their ability to promote educational innovation of their own needs. Japan has been one of the most active participating countries of APEID since its inception. In particular, each of the 7 Associated Centres of APEID in Japan annually organizes international seminars on its respective research area, to which it invites experts from Asia and the Pacific region.

I understand that the Environmental Education Center of the Miyagi University of Education takes the central role in international cooperation of educational institutions in the community by cooperating APEID as an Associated Centre, and also promoting exchanges among schools in Japan and the United States within the framework of the Frubright Memorial Programme. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the staff members of Miyagi University of Education who have devoted themselves to the preparation of the workshop, which is its first large event as an Associated Centre.

The main purpose of this seminar on "Environmental Education for a Sustainable Society" is to recognize the current situation of environmental education in Asia and the Pacific region and to discuss environmental education for the future. Environmental education is one of the major fields of Education for Sustainable Development and needs to be promoted further from now on.

As you may know, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg was held in 2002, as ten years had passed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. This perhaps the most recent large international event concerned with the environment. I accompanied with our Prime Minister Koizumi to attend the Johannesburg Summit, which reconfirmed that international society should cooperate to solve global scale problems such as poverty, human rights, peace and environment, and also to realize sustainable development in each country. Moreover, based on a proposal made by Japan at the Johannesburg Summit, the United Nations General Assembly voted to launch the

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"Decade of Education for Sustainable Development" from 2005. Within the General Assembly's resolution, UNESCO was designated as the lead agency of the Decade.

Nowadays, we often hear the word "Globalization" when economic matters are being discussed. The progress of globalization of today's international society blesses a lot of people with the expansion of economic activities and the free movement of human beings, goods and information. However, on the other hand, we cannot ignore possibilities of serious problems such as gaps between the rich and poor, glowing cultural uniformity and clashes among civilizations. Sustainable Development hinges on three concepts, namely, economic development, social development and environmental protection, and aims for development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. That is to say, it aims to construct a society under which people can have hope for the future.

To contribute towards advancing goal, the General Assembly of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO adopted the proposal for UNESCO concerning the contents of the international implementation scheme for that Decade last July, and sent it to UNESCO. This proposal is based on the philosophy of "Think globally, act locally" and contains several important aspects, including the responsibilities of developing and industrialized countries and the importance of improving the quality of education and teachers.

Countries have to discuss how to promote educational activities for sustainable development based on the international implementation plan of action that will be developed by UNESCO. This seminar is being held in line with such world trends. I expect that we will get fruitful outcomes since the theme of this seminar is in a very timely manner.

Here today, experts from 12 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan, have joined this seminar. I hope you will bring the experiences, methods, and discussions encountered in this seminar back to your respective countries or areas where you live and share them with the people there. It is also my sincere wish that you will strive to promote not only the training teachers concerned with environmental education and the practice of environmental education in schools, but education for sustainable development, too.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the City of Kesennuma, the Kesennuma UNESCO Association and other related organizations for their supports toward the preparation of this seminar. I hope the seminar will be a great success.

Thank you very much.