

Message from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan



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Thank you very much for the introduction. Miyagi University of Education is organizing this meeting and Miyagi Education Board and Sendai City Education Board are also co-organizing this International Symposium on Environment Education. I was given this opportunity to speak few words and would like to thank you all very much for inviting me as well. I would like to express my sincere congratulations to you on this occasion. We have distinguished foreign participants as well this time. Let me take this opportunity to say few words on this. Japan is trying to become a nation based upon science and technology, and we would like to emphasize both education and science & technology. Especially, with regard to science & technology, we are now promoting the second phase of the Science & Technology Basic Plan. Amid these plans, we have different priority areas of science & technology to be promoted as “system innovation” is being promoted. What are the priority areas? Life science is one of the areas; nanotechnology, material science as well as information, but the environment, of course, is one of those priority areas that we emphasize. With regard to system innovation, for example, the science & technology budget has been doubled, but one of the initiatives is to enhance the understanding of science & technology among the youth. We would like to make great efforts. That’s one of the important pillars of our system reform. Japanese science & technology as well as the academic level need to be improved and heightened, and we have different measures to achieve this goal, and holding international symposia at university level is one of those important measures. This symposium is part of a program to support school education for the sake of environmental education because the environment is a global issue and challenge, and this is an international symposium to deal with education within the context of school education. I believe this is a unique symposium, and therefore we decided to assist in hosting this symposium. That is the backdrop for us assisting this program. I said that one of our priorities is the environment, and the environment is a major challenge globally. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in Johannesburg just in August this year, and in 2005 the United Nations will start the Decade of Environmental Education for Sustainable Development at the United Nations level. Thus, there is a globally-heightened interest and expectation toward environmental education. As President Yokosuka mentioned earlier, in Japan as well under the implementation of the new course of study by the Japanese government, there are new hours dedicated for comprehensive studies. So, environmental education is now being promoted, but I understand they are facing many challenges and difficulties and there is still room for improvement and issues to be solved. Sendai City of Miyagi Prefecture is a local government which is very actively engaged in initiatives related to the environment as a Prefecture and as a City. I understand that the schools are actively promoting environmental education and different activities as well. I hope that through this type of symposium, you could really have the opportunity to convey your messages

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to Japan and the rest of the world. In other words, we can reconfirm environmental issues globally and how we can use such information for school education. We Japanese people seem to be bit discouraged—we lost confidence. However in the last three years, we can say that four Japanese nationals became the Nobel laureates. One of those people actually studied at Tohoku University here in Sendai. Mr. Tanaka is the new Nobel Prize Laureate. It is a hundred years since the foundation of this Nobel Prize. In Stockholm, there is the Nobel Museum for the prize, and if you visit this museum, you can see the “culture of creativity” that is their slogan depicted there. Creativity is the challenge for the 21st century for Japan and for the century of this knowledge, but the keyword “creativity” was written there. There are different keywords. Let me quote in English for example “meeting”, “communication”, “contact”, “networking”, “combination”, “diversity” and “slump”. It’s very interesting that the word “slump” is included and “chaos” is also included. That being said, to enhance such creativity, this symposium today is held under the auspices of Miyagi University of Education. I hope that you could serve as the center for networking and center of excellence for these people who are enthusiastic about environmental education promotion. I hope this is not the end of it. I hope this will be the starting point to create the networking of that sort, and I hope that this will become a triggering event for that. With these wishes expressed, I would like to conclude my opening speech. Thank you.