

EMECS12
The Students and Schools Partnership Program Declaration

United by the Ocean

This declaration is the collaborative efforts of 17 student representatives, teachers, and scientists from Japan and Thailand, who participated in the 12th International Conference on Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas or EMECS12. The theme of this year's conference is "Cooperative stewardship for integrated management toward resilient coastal seas". This, truly, is appropriate based on the circumstances and issues that we are facing today. We are separated by political boundaries, dividing us into citizens of different countries. However, we are ultimately connected by one ocean. What unite us are the environmental issues and the similar sense of uncertainty for our future.

We have long noticed that the coastal areas near our schools and local communities are littered with trash of all kinds, some of which are composed of harmful materials. Not only is it aesthetically not pleasing to the eyes, the trickle-down effects of such pollutants are potentially harmful to the marine lives, including economically important and endangered species. We have realized that terrestrial activities can induce harmful effects in canals and rivers, which will eventually prove to be detrimental to the marine environments. We have considered the physiological effects resulting from the consumption of contaminated food on our bodies and the eventuality of such effects on our children. We have stood by the beach, feeling apprehensive about swimming in the ocean. We have recognized that what occurs along the coastlines of our countries, can, and will, affect citizens of other countries.

Regardless of whether or not we are part of the problems, we certainly want to be part of the solutions. Some of us are actively involved in beach clean-ups, raising awareness among the local communities, and related research projects. Some of us have braced the summer sun and the winter cold, to pick up trash, piece by piece, in hopes of seeing a beach that once was. Some of us have tried to convince the governing bodies in our schools and local communities to sort and properly dispose of trash. We have experimented on innovative methods to recycle and convert fishery byproducts and reducing waste.

Despite our efforts, we sometimes feel dejected and discouraged. Every so often, it appears that our efforts are in vain. We feel that the problem of trash in the ocean is not widely recognized by the general public. In places where the problem is apparent and persistent, only a small group of people are involved in the conservation movements. We strongly believe that it is necessary to raise awareness among larger groups of individuals, to promote environmental education in schools, and to encourage the general public to get involved and be part of the solutions. Ocean trash is a global environmental issue, which requires worldwide collaborative efforts. The citizens of the world must travel on the same journey toward cleaner marine environments and better quality of life for the future generations.

Lastly, on behalf of the participants of the EMECS Students and Schools Partnership Program, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the hosts and the organizing committees for giving us this opportunity to exchange ideas and perspectives. In the past few days, we've been inspired by the people we've met and the experiences we've shared. Through our trials and tribulations, we feel a renewed sense of hope and togetherness, as well as courage to face future challenges.