

Welcoming Speech by Mr. Toshitami Kaihara, Chairman of EMECS Center

The Honorable Birgitta Dahl, Speaker of the Parliament of Sweden; the Honorable Ingemar Ingevik, President of the Stockholm City Council; the Honorable Parris N. Glendening, Governor of Maryland; ladies and gentlemen: it's a great honor for me to speak at this 3rd EMECS Conference, jointly held with the 7th Stockholm Water Symposium in this wonderful city of Stockholm, which is so famous for the beauty of its waterfront.



First, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you here on behalf of the people of Hyogo Prefecture for all the help you offered us in January 1995, when we were hit by a powerful earthquake. The earthquake, which registered 7.2 on the Richter scale, devastated a major part of Kobe, the capital of Hyogo Prefecture, and the surrounding area, seriously affecting more than 4 million people. At that time, we received relief funds and goods from 72 countries and areas of the world which not only helped us sustain our daily lives but also gave us great encouragement. Although we still have a lot of problems to solve, we are determined to overcome those problems and proceed with the reconstruction.

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was first held here in Stockholm on 5th June, 1972. It was then that our commitment to the protection of the global environment began. Twenty-five years on, it is no exaggeration to say that "the environment" is now a key word with a substantial meaning. On the 23rd of June this year, a Special Session of the General Assembly was held with the aim of verifying the progress made in the five years since the opening of Agenda 21.

On the 1st of December, the UNFCCC COP3 will be held in Kyoto, a neighboring city of Kobe, with the object of finding ways to deal with the problem of global warming and determining carbon dioxide reduction targets. Today's conference in Stockholm is also one of the most important conferences addressing a series of global environmental problems.

The 3rd EMECS Conference is an epoch-making event in that this is the first time the Conference has been held jointly with the Stockholm Water Symposium, renowned

worldwide as a very high level symposium on fresh water and water resources.

Enclosed coastal seas are deeply connected with the way we live. If coastal waters are not properly maintained and are contaminated as a result, it takes years of difficult operations to return them to a clean state. In this Conference, researchers of land areas and sea areas will discuss various subjects under the main theme, "With Rivers to the Sea," and I believe it will contribute a great deal to our effort to find out just how we can maintain the rivers and seas in a healthy condition from a global perspective.

I founded the International EMECS Center in 1994 with the support and cooperation of many people around the world who had common concerns. Around the world, with some exceptions, there are still many coastal seas into which huge amounts of contaminated substances are flowing from the inland areas, causing such problems as eutrophication, low oxygenation, toxic substance contamination, and oil contamination. These problems are leading to the deterioration of biological habitats, decreasing both the numbers of species and individuals as well as reducing fish hauls.

Although national and local governments that have interests in enclosed coastal seas are making action plans based on related treaties and agreements in an effort to tackle these problems, there are still many places where improvements haven't been made, or, if at all, are being made very slowly. Coastal areas facing enclosed coastal seas around the world, especially those in the developing countries, will be increasingly populated as they are developed and industrialized. Unless we start taking effective counter-measures, these enclosed coastal seas will only be more contaminated, which will eventually affect the environment on a global scale.

The International EMECS Center has nurtured a human network through the international conferences held in the past. With the help of this resource, we can further increase our investigation and research into what is necessary for the protection of the environment regarding the enclosed coastal seas around the world. We are now thinking of making a system for carrying out this investigation and research and are further committing ourselves to solving the problems.

Last but not least, I'd like to express my most sincere appreciation to those people in Sweden who have made preparations for this joint conference with friendship and dedication over the past one and a half years, especially to Mr. Sven-Erik Skogsfors,

managing director of the Stockholm Water Company; Dr. Malin Falkenmark, chair of the Executive Programme Committee; Dr. Lars Ulmgren, vice chair of the Executive Programme Committee; and all other committee members, staff, and faculty members of the Stockholm Water Symposium and the University of Stockholm; and many other people in Sweden.

I am now thinking of the time in history when the relationship between Sweden and Japan first began. In the 18th century, in 1755 to be exact, / the first man to come to Japan from Sweden arrived on a Dutch ship. The Netherlands was the only foreign nation permitted to send vessels to Japan, which at that time was isolated from the rest of the world. The man was Dr. Carl Per Thunberg, who is still revered in Japan as the father of Japanese botany. After 200 years, the peoples of the two countries still enjoy a strong friendship, sharing a common interest in the field of global environment, for which I'd like to express my deepest appreciation.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.