

## THE KOBE-AWAJI DECLARATION

During November 19 through November 22, 2001, more than 1,100 delegates from 41 countries convened in the city of Kobe and on Awaji Island, Japan, to participate in the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas, EMECS 2001. In doing so, we returned to the beautiful shores where the concept of EMECS was born. We returned to this place enriched with knowledge gained by four previous EMECS conferences around the world but with our eyes and hopes on the future.

The theme of EMECS 2001 is, *Toward Coastal Zone Management that Ensures Coexistence between People and Nature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Our perspective is that mankind is an integral part of the coastal environment. That environment has molded our civilizations, our cultural heritage, and our way of life just as we have altered its landscape, plied its waters, and harvested its resources. We are not intruders; we are active participants in the ecology of the world's estuaries, bays, and inland seas. As they benefit from our efforts to restore and protect them, so will our economies prosper and our cultures endure.

We know that coastal seas have long been threatened by water-based activities: waste pollution from dumping and commerce, oil pollution from drilling and transport, island creation by landfill, and over-harvesting of fisheries. We now understand that the byproducts of our activities on coastal watersheds also flow with rivers to the sea: sediments and nutrients from productive agricultural lands and watershed deforestation; oil and toxins from the impervious surfaces of roads and rooftops; direct and indirect atmospheric deposition of chemicals from automobiles and power plants. From an ecosystem perspective, harmful algal blooms, oxygen-free dead zones, loss of sea grasses, declining harvests of commercially valuable fish and shellfish, and loss of biodiversity all reflect fundamental changes in food chains and ecosystem function. Our coastal societies and their resource-dependent economies are inheriting the results.

We applaud the advances nations are making in upgrading waste treatment, controlling the release of toxic chemicals by industry, regulating ship discharges and dumping into coastal waters, and reducing nutrient loads from the watersheds of our enclosed coastal seas. Yet, we are concerned that our lost sea grasses have not returned, oxygen-free dead zones are increasing each summer, and many of our coastal fisheries are declining. We need to recognize that we have not restored the habitats that are necessary to sustain our irreplaceable natural resources. We need more scientific understanding of the relationship between habitat loss and water quality degradation, and we need to adopt new pollution control measures and goals based on that understanding rather than on shorted-sighted beliefs as to what is achievable, convenient, and affordable.

The watersheds of enclosed coastal seas contribute pollutants from both point and non-point sources. Nations that adopt pollution control efforts correctly address point sources first: sewage and industrial waste outfalls, ocean dumping, and ship discharges. As these sources are better controlled through more effective management and technological advances the challenging problem of non-point pollution becomes increasingly significant. To the extent that any of these sources are accepted as unavoidable byproducts of our civilization, coexistence between people and nature is threatened on our enclosed coastal seas. Ecosystem services such as clean water, abundant resources, and environmental beauty must be recognized as fundamental to vitality of our coastal economies. We must accept the challenge to do better in preserving these vital services.

Coexistence between people and nature requires coexistence between people: between individuals, between communities, between local jurisdictions, and between nations regardless of their state of development and their location on the globe. Coexistence is based on trust, on the sharing of information, and, fundamentally, on education. It should not be based on gender; it should not be based on state of economic development. More than ever, advances in scientific understanding need to be communicated clearly and effectively to policy makers and to an increasingly engaged community of concerned citizens and non-governmental organizations. The technologies we apply must be the technologies of peace. The ecosystems that are enclosed coastal seas know no political boundaries. Ultimately, we need to recognize that we as individuals are significant sources of pollution through both our businesses and our daily lives. Industry, non-governmental organizations, citizens, decision-makers, and scientists are all partners, working together for ensured coexistence between people and nature on our enclosed coastal seas.

We, the participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference for Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas, endorse the following principles as policy guidelines for achieving coexistence between people and nature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

1. *A comprehensive ecosystem perspective is essential, recognizing that watersheds, waters, living resources, economic returns, and the cultural well-being of humankind are each integral components of the systems that are our enclosed coastal seas.*
2. *Pollution from both point and non-point sources must be reduced and controlled.*
3. *Sustainable management of living resources and preservation of biodiversity requires preservation and restoration of habitat necessary to support them.*
4. *Communication, trust, and the sharing of information are vital among people, communities, local jurisdictions, and nations in a true global partnership.*
5. *Environmental education must be undertaken to promote a new ethic incorporating a region's cultural heritage; at the same time, it can improve learning in a region's schools through incorporation into existing and new curricula.*

6. *Each individual person must be recognized as part of the problem past and present, and each individual person must be recruited as part of the solution for the future.*

We close the *Kobe-Awaji Declaration* with a reaffirmation of the spirit of cooperation that makes EMECS even more important to us. EMECS is people. It is people working together. And it is people working together around the world that will ultimately save our threatened enclosed coastal seas. From this point of view, we shall promote this spirit in a future EMECS Conference.

All Participants in EMECS 2001  
November 22, 2001