

THE STUDENT AND SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP DECLARATION

Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas

EMECS 9

August 31, 2011

Embracing an Uncertain Future

This declaration is made by the more than 15 students, teachers, and environmental scientists from Japan, Peru, Ireland, and the USA who have participated in the fourth Students and Schools Partnership program at the EMECS 9 conference in Baltimore, Maryland. EMECS has brought us together and provided us with an outstanding learning experience. We are deeply grateful.

This is a changing world. Electronic media now enables us to experience this almost in real time in our personal lives, in our homes, and in our classrooms. And we have experienced it again through the sessions and excursions that took place under the EMECS Students and Schools Partnership. This changing world is exciting to us, but it also brings uncertainty. As observers today who will inherit the future you leave to us, we do not believe that scientists, policy makers, and even educators are comfortable with that uncertainty. We feel it is more of an inconvenience to you, something that you would reduce to a set of facts and truths for us accept as blueprints for our future. To us, uncertainty is opportunity. We should be involved in shaping the future, but too often we find that opportunities to participate are inaccessible to us. The so-called generation gap is more like a window with reduced transparency. What passes through in either direction is useful and informative, but it is also selective.

We hunger for greater collaboration and communication among scientists, policy makers and public officials, educators, coastal communities, and youth. It is our strong opinion that these efforts will result in the needed knowledge, tools, and, additionally, a deeper commitment to improve our coastal systems.

We hunger for scientists to share their excitement of discovery with us rather than just making information more available on the Internet and in publications. Too often the findings are negative – this fishery is declining, this pollutant is increasing, this coastal sea has received a low grade. What are your successes? Share them with each other and with us. Come to our classrooms, lead us into the field, and advocate for more opportunities for us to work with you.

We hunger for policy makers and public officials who are honest with us, who will tell us the real causes of a failing program or oil spill disaster rather than attributing them to the uncertainty of prediction. We would rather hear of leadership that brings people together to collaborate not only to address coastal seas problems, but all environmental issues. And we would love to participate.

We hunger for educators who have opportunities to teach us more than facts. Uncertainty requires that we are also taught skills that will help us to teach ourselves to make sense out of a growing sea of information. Show us how to navigate the waters and find the answers.

We hunger for coastal communities that recognize that they are part of the sea on which they are located. So often they act as if they were separate from nature and able to use technology to solve all their environmental problems. To us, they are raising the risk that an uncertain event will result in a disaster. Thank you, but we would prefer not to live in such communities and we will work not only to change them but to ensure that change is lasting.

We hunger for young people who are more responsible and involved, who can have constructive discourse with their parents, peers, and neighbors who want to participate more in community affairs, and who strive to make a positive difference in the world they will inherit. We must continue to work together to realize the opportunities that uncertainty provides us. We must realize our responsibility to be part of the solution.

We will continue explore, propose, and implement solutions to the environmental problems in our coastal communities. We are grateful for the health, shelter, and protection that your hard work and loving care has given us. We ask that all of you together help us shatter the cloudy window between our generations. Reach through and take us by the hand. We will build upon your hard work as we embrace the uncertain future.

Thank you very much.