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“Online Seminar on Marine Plastic Pollution with HELCOM”

8 March 2021

On 5 March, as a part of Dispatch Program of Japanese experts for JFY 2020 by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, **the Embassy of Japan**, in cooperation with **the HELCOM**, organized an online seminar on marine plastic pollution, lectured by a Japanese leading expert on physical oceanography, **Prof. ISOBE Atsuhiko** from Research Institute for Applied Science of Kyushu University. The HELCOM is the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission know as Helsinki Commission which is as an intergovernmental organization established by the Helsinki Convention, a regional sea convention in the Baltic Sea area. Its secretariat is located in Helsinki.

At this seminar attended by approximately 20 experts from Finland and other Baltic Sea countries including **Mr. Rüdiger Stempel, Executive Secretary of HELCOM**, Japanese Ambassador, **H.E. MURATA Takashi**, expressed his concerns that oceans would contain more plastics than fish by 2050, quoting a report of the World Economic Forum, and stressed that our generation should be responsible for preserving the beautiful oceans and handing over their abundant benefits to the future generations. In his presentation, Prof. Isobe discussed his research findings on numerical forecast after 50 years, suggesting that marine plastic pollution is likely to proceed to a point of no return, beyond which marine organisms will be harmed unless the amount of mismanaged plastic waste is reduced substantially.

Ambassador Murata hoped that the global human networks and international cooperation on tackling the issue of marine plastic litter would further extend for building our sustainable future.

Attachment :

Opening remarks by H.E. Amb Murata

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**Remarks by H.E. MURATA Takashi,
Ambassador of Japan to Finland,
“Online Seminar on Marine Plastic Pollution”
on 5 March 2021**

My name is MURATA Takashi, Ambassador of Japan to Finland. It is my great pleasure to host an online seminar to share Japanese experience with distinguished experts in Finland and Baltic Sea countries on marine environment protection in a challenging COVID-19 pandemic situation. On this opportunity, I wish to say a few words.

First, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Rüdiger Stempel, Executive Secretary of HELCOM and its secretariat for their great support in organizing this online seminar.

My deepest gratitude also goes to Prof. ISOBE Atsuhiko, Research Institute for Applied Mechanics of Kyushu University, for lecturing at this seminar out of his busy schedule.

Prof. Isobe is a Japanese leading expert, who is active domestically and internationally, with physical oceanography as his major field of interest. He is working to elucidate how marine plastic litter is being transported and to predict the amount of floating microplastics in the oceans in 50 years, for the first time in the world, from scientific viewpoint.

Now marine plastic litter is one of global environmental challenges that the international community as a whole should address.

In virtue of its high-level convenience, plastics are said to be the greatest invention of the 20th century. However, maritime pollution by plastic litter has been spread globally and concern has also increased over adverse effects of the floating microplastics on marine environment and ecosystem in the oceans.

The report released by World Economic Forum in 2016 predicted that oceans would contain more plastics than fish by weight by 2050.

Under these circumstances, the international community including the United Nations, G7 and G20 has made a great deal of efforts in recent years. At the 2019 G20 Osaka Summit chaired by Japan, G20 leaders shared “Osaka Blue Ocean Vision” as a common global vision, which aims to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050 and supported “the G20 Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine

Plastic Litter” to promote the international cooperation and the sharing of scientific expertise among and beyond G20 members for effective implementation of the shared vision.

It is our generation that should be responsible for preserving the oceans and handing over their abundant benefits to the future generations.

I sincerely hope this seminar would contribute to expanding global human networks and enhancing international cooperation through active discussion and sharing experience by all participants on marine plastic litter issue toward building a sustainable society for our future generations.

Thank you.

(End)