

Statements from Rovaniemi 2018 Observer Special Session: Observer States

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Statement of Mr. Eiji Yamamoto
Ambassador in charge of Arctic Affairs of Japan
at the Arctic Council SAO Meeting
2 November 2018, Rovaniemi

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, let me share with you some of the recent developments of Japan's involvement in the Arctic affairs. Just two weeks ago, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kono delivered a keynote speech on Japan's Arctic policy at the Arctic Circle held in Reykjavik. In which, he stressed the importance of compatibility between "the respect for the ecosystem and the life of indigenous peoples" and "sustainable economic activities" in the Arctic.

At the Second Arctic Science Ministerial held in Berlin, it was approved that Japan and Iceland will co-host the Third Ministerial Meeting in Japan in 2020. I thank you for your support. I hope we could also discuss biodiversity issue in that meeting.

I believe we all are concerned about negative impacts global warming has been posing on biodiversity. Warming in the Arctic will provide us with opportunities. But at the same time, it causes directly or indirectly challenges such as pollution, waste, methane emission, affecting the livelihoods of indigenous peoples.

We should clarify how the Arctic environment has been changing and what impacts these changes have on human communities and ecosystems. In this regard, monitoring and understanding the mechanisms of the Arctic's environmental change are essential. And then, as necessary we have to take action to tackle our challenges to our environment and ecosystems.

Actually Japan suffered a lot from serious pollution caused by the rapid economic growth in the past decades. In response, we have successfully developed most effective waste management system, and environmentally friendly culture is now widespread, including the practice of reduce, reuse and recycle (3Rs). Such expertise and technology may be utilized in solution of environmental challenges in the Arctic.

Recently, there was a promising development in respect of the Arctic Ocean. Japan, together with other stakeholders, agreed last month on a new international legal instrument to restrict unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean. I think this is a good preventive measure, contributing to biodiversity in the region. We will continue to actively participate in the rule making for the Arctic.

In order to monitor the environmental change and to make its accurate predictions in the

Arctic, Japan has been promoting among others its national flagship research project “Arctic Challenge for Sustainability” so called “ArCS”. One of its main themes is “Arctic ecosystem”. Under the project, we have been conducting collaborative projects to investigate animal behavior such as seabirds and reindeer in cooperation with indigenous peoples. Japanese scientists sent through the ArCS have been contributing to the work of the Arctic Council including CAFF and AMBI, in particular.

Before closing, I would like to briefly mention Arctic breeding migratory birds, as they are deeply related with indigenous peoples’ life and are a symbol of transnational cooperation.

In order to conserve migratory waterbirds, their habitats and the livelihoods of people dependent upon wetlands, Japan has engaged in the efforts through the “East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership” launched with the initiative of Japan and Australia. We also work with other countries in the Flyway such as China, Russia, the United States and the Republic of Korea.

Lastly, let me stress that conservation of biodiversity requires transboundary cooperation. I hope that Arctic States, non-Arctic States and the communities in the region will work together to advance our common agenda.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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