

Workshop 2009 of the Asian Network for Prevention of Illegal Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes

20 January 2009, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Opening Remarks by Dr. Ryutaro Yatsu

Director General, Waste Management and Recycling Department,
Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan

Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome all of you to the Workshop 2009 of the Asian Network for Prevention of Illegal Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes. I am pleased with your participation in the workshop held here in Kuala Lumpur which is a beautiful and exciting city.

First of all, I would like to look back at the progress of the past Asian Network workshops which have annually been organized since 2004. In the past workshops, we had valuable discussions on how to prevent illegal transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and how to promote the environmentally sound management of those wastes. The agreements in the past workshops and concrete actions built upon them have assisted us to strengthen the coherence of our network in order to address common challenges we face in our region for the successful implementation of the Basel Convention. I appreciate your continuous contribution to the workshop and the Asian Network.

Last year, three remarkable events took place in the region in the context of global waste management. The first one was the G8 Environment Ministers Meeting held in Japan. G8 Ministers discussed the progress of the 3R Initiative and agreed upon the Kobe 3R Action Plan that promotes the sound waste management and effective resource utilization through international collaboration. In this Action Plan, the prevention of illegal transboundary movement of wastes and recyclable resources was recognized as one of critical safeguards for the establishment of an international sound material-cycle society. Our activities through the Asian Network increase their importance in this context.

The second event was the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention held in Indonesia. We covered a variety of issues in the meeting and the agenda to be discussed in the session 3 of tomorrow's workshop has its base upon one of the most heated discussions in the COP9. The World Forum on Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood was also held during the COP9, and we adopted the Bali Declaration recognizing that full and effective action to implement the Basel Convention will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, notably internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition, we reaffirmed our commitment to the Basel Convention Partnership for the Environmentally Sound Management of E-waste that we will mainly discuss in the session 4 tomorrow. I would like to note that Japan has made its voluntary

financial contribution totalling 1,300,000 USD to the partnership including 400,000 USD in the fiscal year 2008 as promised in the COP9.

The third noteworthy event was a dramatic economic downturn we observed in the last few months of 2008. There was a bloated demand of recyclable resources in the region due to the rapid economic growth of the Asian countries in the past several years. However, this situation was drastically changed after the world financial crisis beginning in the United States. For example, the commodity price of metal scrap was downed to one seventh within couples of months only. The metal scrap which was once declared to be exported is currently piled up at ports and may become wastes to be disposed of. Since the serious economic downturn continues even this year, we may face an unprecedented situation with regard to the dynamics of demand and supply of wastes and recyclable resources. I believe that sharing the latest information on statistics and control measures is indispensable to take prompt and appropriate actions for coping with the changing situation at every moment.

Our decisions and actions at this important time attract the worldwide attention. I do hope that this workshop will provide a significant forum to discuss our concerted efforts to address current challenges in the global waste management.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.