

## FOREWORD

In 2002 when I was appointed Administrative Vice-Minister of the Environment, Japan signed the Kyoto Protocol and took its first step toward building a sustainable society.

And, two landmark commitments have been made on a global scale. One was the commitment to “the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015. The other was “the Paris Agreement” on climate change countermeasures that entered into force in 2016.

In the face of this global shift to a sustainable society, the environmental administration of the Japanese government should be geared toward providing simultaneous solutions for socio-economic challenges, supported by stronger partnerships with multi-stakeholders such as business, local governments, and citizens.

With recognition that we are in the midst of an epoch-making transformation, the Fifth Basic Environment Plan that was approved by the Cabinet in April 2018 points to the importance of such simultaneous resolutions, by stimulating innovations in a wide range of areas including the socio-economic system, lifestyles, and technology.

Key to all these developments is the creation of a “Regional Circular and Ecological Sphere (Regional CES),” which encourages local regions to fulfill their maximum potential by ensuring the sustainable use of local resources. I am pleased to note that this approach is gaining momentum already.

The Annual Report on the Environment in Japan 2018 features many concrete initiatives that are emerging in various parts of the country to create a Regional CES. It is my earnest hope that this report will help every reader take another step forward to create a sustainable society.



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