

# Welcome Address

**Yoriko Kawaguchi**

Minister of the Environment, Government of Japan

As was mentioned in the introduction, my name is Yoriko Kawaguchi, and I am the Minister of the Environment. I would like to say a few things on behalf of the Ministry of the Environment, the organizer of the International Symposium on Environmental Endocrine Disrupters 2001.

It gives me great pleasure to be here in Tsukuba with distinguished members of the science and industrial communities, NGOs and administrators from all over the country and from overseas to participate in this international conference that holds great significance for the future of mankind.

The problem of endocrine disrupters can have a serious effect on future generations, and is therefore the one of the most important environmental conservation themes.

There are still many things that we do not know concerning endocrine disrupters, for example, the methods of determining whether a chemical substance has an endocrine disrupting effect and the methods of assessing risk for such substances have yet to be established. With the cooperation of experts the world over, primarily the OECD, we need to come up with and develop methods of testing chemicals. Advanced countries, including Japan, are cooperating and doing their part in this effort.

- (1) In Japan as well, the Ministry of the Environment has established "Strategic Programs on Environmental Endocrine Disrupters '98," also known by its acronym "SPEED '98," and has begun evaluating environmental risk of substances suspected of being endocrine disrupters. As a result, we compiled a report draft of the test results concerning the effect of nonylphenol and tributyltin on fish in August this year. We were able to pretty much determine that nonylphenol has a strong endocrine disrupting effect on fish.
- (2) The Endocrine Disruptor Research Laboratory was also established at the National Institute for Environmental Studies in Tsukuba City in April this year as a base for dedicated research of the endocrine disrupting effect of chemicals in the environment. We hope the facility will continue to be used for accumulating and disseminating scientific knowledge concerning the endocrine disrupting effect of chemical substances in the environment.
- (3) To solve this problem, furthermore, it will be very important to have the cooperation of researchers the world over. We have therefore held this symposium annually since 1998, having the world's leading researchers offer their expert opinions in quality discussions. Along with conducting cooperative research with the United Kingdom since 1999, we have just concluded an agreement with the Republic of Korea to conduct cooperative research in April this year.

Today's open sessions are intended to deepen awareness of the problem of endocrine disrupters as a problem that affects us all for the people of Japan, including NGOs and industry. We hope these sessions will help everybody to understand this problem a little better and will provide an opportunity to find a way to solve the problem.

Finally, I would like to thank everybody at Japan Society of Endocrine Disrupter Research for their cooperation in holding this event, all the members of the National Diet participating in the symposium. Last but not least, I would like to thank Ibaraki Prefecture, the city of Tsukuba and everyone else involved for their support.