



Endocrine disruptors (EDs) have become the focus of great concern among the general public over their adverse effects on human beings and wildlife, but there is still much to be explored scientifically, making EDs a key environmental safety issue. Therefore, the Ministry of the Environment, Japan, developed a program entitled "Strategic Programs on Environmental Endocrine Disrupters '98" (SPEED '98) in May 1998 and initiated environmental monitoring and risk assessment throughout the country. In addition, we are currently engaged in the exchange of information with other countries and international organizations under a framework of international coordination.

As a part of these activities, the Ministry has held International Symposiums on Environmental Endocrine Disrupters since 1998. The past symposiums brought together leading scientists from all over the world. Their productive discussions were highly appreciated on an international level.

The theme for this year's Symposium will be "Chemicals in the Century of the Environment - Many-sided Approaches to Endocrine Disrupters." In commemoration of the completion of the new ED-research facility (Environmental Hormone Research Building) at the National Institute for Environmental Studies (Tsukuba City) in March, we will hold the Symposium in Tsukuba City in December.

There are three major aims for the Symposium:

- to inform the international community of current activities in Japan on ED-related issues;
- to discuss the direction of future research on endocrine disrupters through international cooperation; and
- to provide an opportunity for a multi-sided exchange of opinions on various chemicals that may pose problems at a global as well as local level.

I earnestly hope that it will be a valuable conference for scientists, administrators, industry representatives and the general public around the world.

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