Visitor Salutations

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I would like to offer some words of welcome on the staging of the “International Symposium on Environmental Endocrine Disrupters 2002,” the fifth installment in this series.

The progress ushered in by modern science has definitely helped to make our lives richer in many ways. The evolution of human civilization and culture has, at the same time, been the history of scientific development and advancement.

The 20th century may be regarded as the age in which physics, chemistry, and life science reached their pinnacles. While the fruits of science have enriched human life, they have also presented some new problems for humankind along with a rise in the scope and scale of their use. These problems may be exemplified by global warming, the need to assure the peaceful and safe utilization of nuclear energy, and difficulties associated with waste disposal of chemical products. In the 21st century, we must find a way to reap the fruits of science within the bounds of safeguarding a wealthy and peaceful lifestyle for all.

The healthiness of our lifestyle depends heavily on our life environment. We are, indeed, children of the environment. Moderate temperatures, clean air and water, and safe food amounts to the security of our very subsistence.

Our life activities are greatly affected by chemical substances. This is because it is chemicals that constitute and activate our bodies. Our physical activities are all supported by chemical reactions. In addition, we utilize a vast diversity of chemical products to enrich our lives. These chemical products and the waste from them can very possibly exert a significant influence on the chemical reactions within our bodies. Our nervous system and endocrine (or hormone) system control these chemical reactions and effect an overall harmony among them. Recent advances in life science have revealed that many chemical substances can have an impact on the endocrine system. Such substances are collectively known as "endocrine disrupters."

In the case of animals other than human beings, the chemical reactions of the body are naturally also affected by these endocrine disrupters. The changes induced by endocrine disrupters in wild animals provide precious data for studies of the prospective influence on the human body. The data for frogs, fish, birds, and other such animals familiar to us are of particular value. This is behind the rapidly rising concern in society as a whole about the influence of endocrine disrupters on such wildlife.

Hiroshima University is recognized worldwide as a center of frog research. In 1967, it established a research facility for frogs and other amphibians (Institute for Amphibian Biology, Hiroshima University Graduate School of Science) without parallel anywhere else in the world, on the foundation laid by the achievements of ex-President Tomojiro Kawamura. The facility is a venue of comprehensive research related to frogs in all aspects, including ecology, classification, physiology, heredity, and development. It is the world's only research facility with four departments devoted to work with frogs.

As President of the university housing this facility, it gave me great joy and pride to learn about the decision to stage this fifth installment of the Symposium here in Hiroshima, a global center of frog research.

I earnestly hope that the Symposium will further deepen our understanding of endocrine disrupters and make a vital contribution to our acquisition of the wisdom needed to prevent scientific advancement from jeopardizing human life and health.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Ministry of the Environment, researchers, and concerned members of Hiroshima Prefectural Government for their hard

work on behalf of the Symposium, as well as to all of those gathered here for it, along with my fervent wishes that it will be a highly productive one.

Thank you very much.