

## **Welcome Address**

**Shunichi Suzuki**

Minister of the Environment, Japan

My name is Shunichi Suzuki, and I am the Minister of the Environment. I apologize to you for the fact that Diet business prevented me from addressing you yesterday.

As organizer of this symposium, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the many researchers and administrators from Japan and abroad, and the public of Hiroshima Prefecture and Hiroshima City, who hold this International Symposium on Environmental Endocrine Disrupters 2002 on a large scale.

Endocrine disrupters (EDs) have become the focus of great concern among the general public over their adverse effects not only on human beings and wildlife of today but also on those in future. However, we currently lack sufficient scientific knowledge of them.

If we are to respond to such problems and build a safe and reliable society, the environmental administration has a heavy duty to improve our scientific understanding of endocrine disrupter issues, and use it to develop solutions to the problems, making active use of the resources of international cooperation.

The Ministry of the Environment formulated the "Strategic Programs on Environmental Endocrine Disrupters '98," also known by its acronym "SPEED '98," for this purpose, and has been continuously working according to this plan. We have already determined that materials used in some industrial detergents act as endocrine disrupters in fish species. Another of our international cooperation efforts, which form part of our plan, is this International Symposium, held annually since 1998.

The public program yesterday included the special lecture from Professor Tsutsumi, the overview of "Initiatives Abroad and in Japan," and the panel discussion "Environmental risk communication." I hear that the discussions were very lively to tackle the problem. Today and tomorrow, the program for experts will offer presentations on the latest findings from Japan and overseas. This year, time has been set aside for discussion, in order to provide a forum for a more active exchange of ideas. I anticipate that the scientific and specialized point of view will provide a worthwhile discussion.

I hope that this symposium will achieve substantial results, aiding our understanding of endocrine disrupter issues, and also leading to solutions.

And finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to all those involved in the symposium, to all the members of the Japan Society of Endocrine Disrupters Research, and to others who offered their cooperation, including Hiroshima Prefecture, Hiroshima City, Hiroshima University and the researchers who have supported the symposium.