

Annual Report

on the Environment,
the Sound Material-Cycle Society,
and Biodiversity in Japan

2014



Message from the Minister of the Environment

Dear Reader,

Three years and three months have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, but the road to recovery and reconstruction is still not smooth. A concerted effort by government agencies is still needed to handle disposal of disaster waste in Fukushima Prefecture, construction of interim storage facilities, and a number of other issues. Meanwhile, we see steady progress in some areas. For example, disposal of disaster waste in Iwate and Miyagi prefectures was concluded during the previous fiscal term, and decontamination under direct national control has been completed in some municipalities. We will continue to do our utmost to hasten recovery and reconstruction.

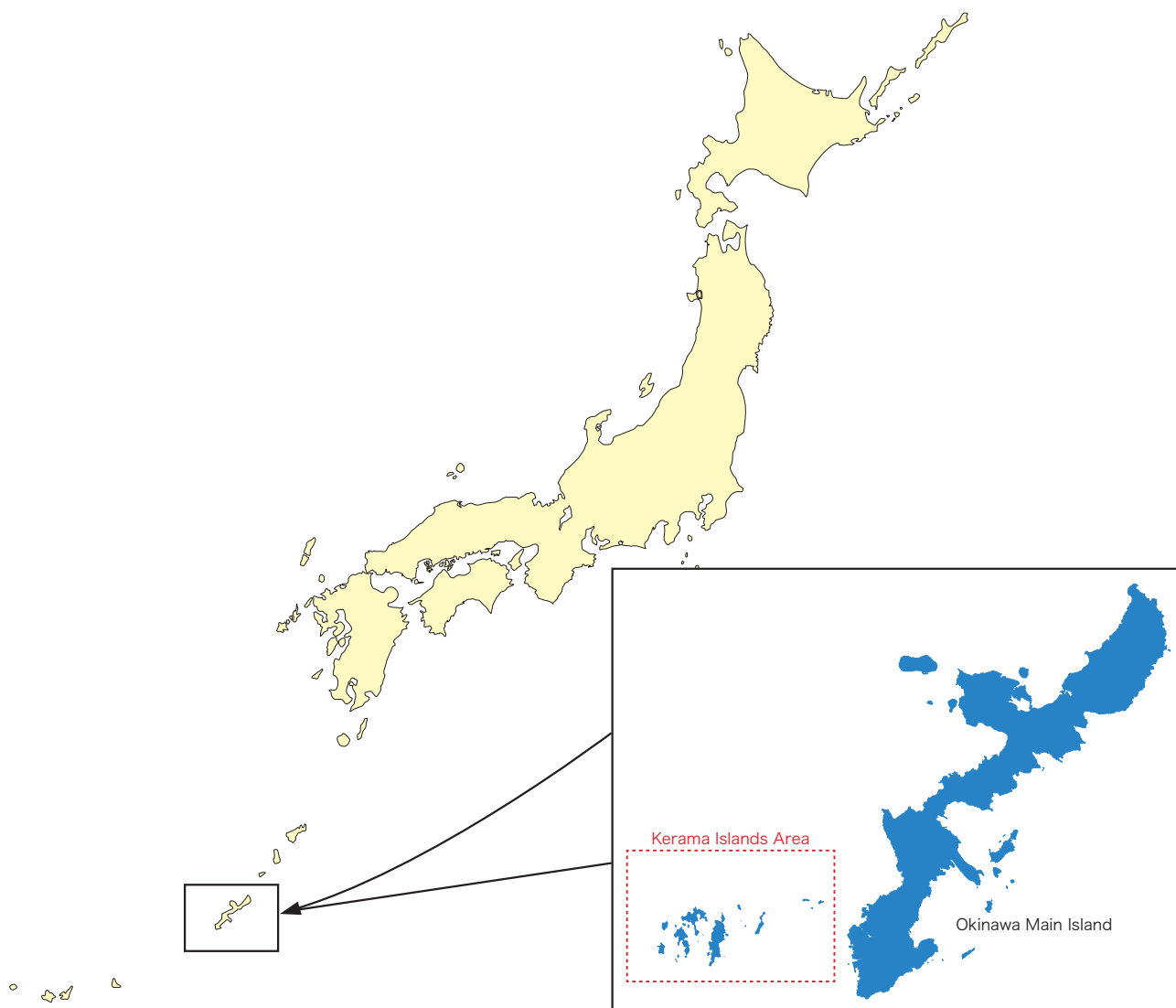


In a series of reports released since last fall, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reconfirmed that global warming is progressing as a result of human activities. Global warming is an issue that poses a major existential threat to the countries of the world, especially to island nations. It is truly a looming crisis. For our own sake and for future generations, we must take even stronger measures to counter global warming. We must also address other urgent issues such as preserving biodiversity and curbing the generation of waste. The Earth's environment serves as the basis for human existence, and sometimes our economic activities result in burdens with a detrimental effect on that environment. Therefore, it is important that we combine economic activity with environmental preservation. In order to resolve these issues we need to promote a *green economy* that aims to achieve economic development simultaneously with a sustainable environment.

It is from this standpoint that we selected the theme of “Japan’s road to a green economy” for this year’s Annual Report on the Environment, the Sound Material-Cycle Society, and Biodiversity. We focus especially on promoting the development of environmentally friendly technologies, on initiatives that contribute to the preservation of the global environment by expanding the use of such technologies worldwide, on securing the funding needed for environmental measures through financial mechanisms, and on environmental financing initiatives that allocate such funds appropriately. Our explanations are accompanied by specific examples of these endeavors.

It is my sincere hope that this environmental report will contribute to the growth of Japan’s green economy.

Best regards,
Nobuteru Ishihara
Minister of the Environment



Keramashoto National Park

The Kerama Islands (Tokashiki and Zamami villages) Area is located 20-40 km west of the main Okinawa Island and composed of about 30 islands in various sizes and of many rocks.

This area, with its diverse coral reef ecosystems, breeding range of humpback whales, highly transparent water called the Kerama blue, archipelago formed by tectonic subsidence and beaches mainly made of white corals, boasts a diverse landscape ranging continuously from the sea to land, which is just superb and representative of Japan. Integrated with the landscape are the terrain and geology that suggest the long history of the earth and the subtropical island ecosystem created thereon, as well as the human landscape that clearly reflects its folk culture formed over a long period of history. In this regard, this area was designated as the 31st National Park in March 2014. It was the first new national park designation since 1987 that was neither by division nor extension of an existing national park.

Note: Maps in this report may not necessarily indicate Japan's territories comprehensively.

Front cover: Coral, Blue-green chromis, and Black-axil chromis

Back cover: Mother and child humpback whales

Photos by Umima-ru



3R

In 1995, to promote the use of recycled paper and raise public awareness, the Waste Reduction Promotion National Council, predecessor of the 3R Promotion Forum, created the R mark as a logo to show the percentage of recycled pulp contained in paper at a glance. Using recycled paper raises the percentage of used paper contained in paper materials, thereby promoting the effective use of valuable resources.

The 3R mark was designed by the 3R Promotion Council with the aim of making 3R activities better known by creating an easy-to-understand image of the three Rs and promoting the active participation and cooperation of as many people as possible. The 3R mark can be freely used by companies, NPOs and local government organizations in their 3R programs as well as PR activities and campaigns.



JECS—Japan Environment and Children Study

The Japan Environment and Children's Study (JECS), a birth cohort study involving 100,000 parent-child pairs, was launched in 2011 in order to evaluate the impact of various environmental factors on children's health and development. The concept plan of JECS was published in March 2010 after three years of development within expert groups and public discussions about the research hypotheses and aims. Pilot studies started in 2008 in four universities, and samples from two preceding cohorts (Hokkaido and Tohoku) are also used for establishing exposure measurement protocols. The recruitment of hundred thousand pregnant women was achieved in March 2014. Health outcomes and exposure measurements will continue until the participating children become 13 years old.



Japan Committee
for UNDB

Japan Committee for UNDB

UNDB-J has been established with the aim of mainstreaming biodiversity through promoting the participation of all stakeholders and their collaboration towards the achievement of the Aichi Targets.

FOR ALL THE LIFE ON EARTH

Biodiversity

FOR ALL THE LIFE ON EARTH

Some say we are facing the sixth wave of mass extinction in the history of the earth, and biodiversity is being lost at an unprecedented rate. Let us save the ecosystems that exist on a most delicate balance. Let us hand over the abundantly diverse forms of life to our future generations. To convey the essence of biodiversity to the public, we have chosen “For all the life on earth” as our motto, with our fervent hope for the future of this planet. Each color in the spectrum represents a different form of life. Various colors come together to form a rainbow, just as diverse forms of life are interwoven and create the texture of our world.

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Japan Committee for UNDB

FOR ALL THE LIFE ON EARTH

Biodiversity



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