

The 14th Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation (NEAC)
Opening Remark
Hidemitsu SASAYA, Councilor, Global Environment Bureau,
Ministry of the Environment

February 22, 2006

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to say a few words at this opening of the 14th Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation.

As a representative of the Government of Japan, I wish to begin by extending a heartfelt welcome to the missions of China, Mongolia, South Korea, and Russia, who have come great distances to be with us today.

Northeast Asian Region moves forward with economic and social development, and it is also seeing worsening environmental conditions that are a result of this development. We must take even stronger measures to combat environmental problems together, that are common to our region or, in some cases, even extend to the global scale.

The first Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation was held in Niigata City, Japan, in 1992. It served as an important opportunity for frank discussion on sharing of environmental information among governments and on ways in which the many actors involved can cooperate and coordinate toward resolution of environmental problems in the Northeast Asian region. Each conference since then has addressed a variety of topics and worked to deepen mutual understanding by gaining the participation of various parties, beginning with central government ministries and agencies and including local governments, NGOs, and researchers from universities and research institutes.

This year is significant in that it marks the 15th year that a NEAC has been held. At this 14th NEAC, we will analyze and evaluate the achievements of previous conferences. At the same time, we will engage in discussions toward furthering effectiveness and efficiency in the utilization of the conference as a framework for future environmental cooperation in the Northeast Asian region. I believe that such discussions will prove to be extremely significant.

I would like to conclude by expressing my earnest hope that lively discussion at this NEAC will help advance efforts to tackle both environmental problems faced in the Northeast Asian region and those on a global scale.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.