

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's Welcome Remarks

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. First of all, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to you. I'm very pleased to have you all here.

This "3R" originated from Japan's experience of a very rapid economic growth forty years ago, when we used to do a mass consumption, mass production, and mass disposal, and it is on the basis of the soul-searching experience that we have come to promote this 3R. At that time, we thought the economic growth would bring about rich and affluent life to Japanese people, and people felt that prioritization of the environmental protection would result in higher prices of products, and environmental products were not really remarkable in the market. That's why we have not given a lot of importance to the environmental protection in those days. Forty years have past since then, and now we consider that the earth is irreplaceable and the protection of the environment is absolutely important for all of us and for the human being. Therefore, it is the highest priority on the Koizumi Government's agenda to render economic development and environmental protection compatible with each other and achievable at the same time.

One very typical example of the importance that I attach to the environmental protection is a switch from high-polluting vehicles to low-emission ones, as soon after my taking the official post of prime minister of this country. In those days, the Ministry of the Environment was not using low-emission vehicles to a very considerable extent, and I asked the Ministry why they don't use them so much? And the answer was that we don't have an enough budget for that, because low-emission vehicles are more expensive than the other ones.

At that time, all the government offices in this country were using about 7,000 cars. And I made a declaration on that occasion that it's not going to be just Ministry of the Environment but all the ministries and agencies of the government of Japan that should switch all of the official vehicles to low-emission ones within three years, whatever the cost may be.

I was able to switch the total fleet in three years. On the part of the private sector, car-manufactures also felt that the low-mission vehicles could sell so well even at higher cost, then, they started willing to make a capital investment into the manufacturing of low-emission vehicles. If many people buy them, the production cost would certainly come down. Japanese people cooperated in this endeavor too, and at this moment, more than 60% of the new cars bought in the market are these low-emission vehicles.

This is just one example. My new official residence has just been completed, where a lot of

new energy technologies are used, including in particular photovoltaic cells, fuel cells, wind mills and so forth. Therefore, I think I can tell you that I am taking an initiative in this country to promote environmental protection. In all of the government ministries, their restaurants produce a lot of food wastes every day. These wastes are not discarded at all. They are turned into a fertilizer for use by farmers.

Quite recently, Deputy Minister of Environment of Kenya, Prof. Maathai visited Japan. Apparently, Ms. Maathai was very much deeply impressed by Japanese notion of *mottainai*. I thought the Japanese word *mottainai* could not be translated into any other language. And she told me that if it is going to be translated into English, it would be "Don't waste what is valuable." That spirit of "mottainai" is a very important manifestation and it is quite symbolic of the 3R activities.

When I was small, I was told by my parents that you should never leave what is served for you, because all of the foodstuff were created and produced with a lot of labor and work of many people. That is the one example of this notion in spirit of *mottainai*. In another words, you have to use up to the fullest the things you would encounter. In those days, fifty years ago in Japan, there were quit a few people in this country who suffered from and died from malnutrition. But we have an increasing number of people in this country who are overfed to become ill.

Many people discard what is still useable and they discard what is still eatable. I think it's a pity that we continue to do this, and I think if we can follow this spirit and notion of *mottainai* and when it is combined with the science and technology, it can make tremendous differences of rendering environmental protection and economic development mutually compatible and achievable.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to express my gratitude to each and every one of you for participating in this very important Ministerial Conference on the 3R Initiative. I hope that this would be a very important meeting to give us very fruitful outcome. I sincerely hope the success of the Ministerial Conference. Thank you very much.