

**Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto
Prime Minister of Japan**

at the

*High-level Segment Attended by Ministers and Other Heads of Delegation
of the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties
to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*

8 December 1997

Mr. President, Your Excellency Ambassador Estrada-Oyuela, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the people of Japan, I would like to express my heartfelt welcome to all of you who have gathered here for the High-level Segment of The Third Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. At the same time, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone, especially the people of Kyoto Prefecture and Kyoto City, who have been involved in the preparation of this Conference.

Basic Outlook

Throughout time humanity has made use of the earth's natural resources to build prosperity. In particular, since the time of the industrial revolution large amounts of fossil fuels have been consumed in this way. However, the explosive development of recent years has resulted in various contortions in our global environment. Among these, the question of global warming poses a grave threat directly linked to the very existence of humanity.

If we are to truly solve this problem, we must make long-term efforts planned in one-hundred-year steps. Five years have passed since the holding of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and we are now beginning to rise to this daunting challenge.

The Challenges We Face

First of all, it is imperative that we take a firm first step toward a global approach here in Kyoto.

I would like to urge developed country Parties to reach agreement on meaningful, realistic and equitable emission reduction targets which are legally-binding. I would also call on all Parties, including developing country Parties, to voluntarily enhance their measures against the problem.

What is most important is for each country to consider this problem as its own problem, and make not ostensible efforts but truly maximum efforts on this matter.

In order to achieve stringent emission reduction beyond the year 2000, Japan intends to take concrete and effective measures comprehensively as well as systematically. I will exert my leadership, and the Prime Minister's Office will spearhead the implementation of and follow-up to these measures.

Development of a System to Improve Energy Efficiency

Our first approach will be the creation of a system to improve energy efficiency. Specifically, bearing in mind a fairly long-term target period, we will set energy consumption standards at the highest levels technically feasible on a product-category basis in the automobile, electric appliances and other manufactured goods sectors. Moreover, enforcement measures will be determined in order to ensure that these targets are met.

There may be some here who think that establishing strict rules to reduce carbon dioxide emissions will have an adverse effect on the economy. However, I believe that, on the contrary, setting specific rules will trigger innovation, resulting in higher-quality products and a reduction in the cost of production. As a result, this will promote capital investment, create new demand, give rise to new industries, and furthermore, bring an end to the

trade-off between global environmental conservation and economic development.

In fact, since the oil crisis, Japan has improved energy efficiency by 30% through energy conservation, and we have become one of the most energy efficient countries in the world. Moreover, during this period Japan has achieved continuous economic growth averaging 3.3% each year.

Long-term Challenges

Our second approach to the solving the problem of global warming is to take a long-term view.

As stated by Chairman Emeritus Bert Bolin of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, on the first day of this Kyoto Conference, "it will be necessary to reduce global per capita carbon dioxide emissions to one carbon equivalent ton by the year 2100 in order to stabilize the concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere at 550 ppm or less." This means that developed countries will have to reduce their emissions to a third of the current level. In order to achieve this goal, we need to accelerate the development of innovative technologies through international cooperation, as I emphasized in my proposal for the Green Initiative at the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Environment and Development held this June.

Based on a long-range perspective, Japan has striven to introduce energy conservation technologies and non-fossil energies such as nuclear power. In addition, we have focused on advancing fundamental research on various and more innovative technologies, including the fixation of carbon dioxide. If such technologies are put to practical use, we will achieve a major breakthrough in our battle against global warming.

Developing Countries Issue

In order to assist developing countries in their efforts to prevent global warming, Japan announced the Kyoto Initiative at the APEC meetings last month. This initiative consists of three pillars: cooperation for capacity development; Official Development Assistance loans with the most concessional terms; and the transfer of technology and know-how.

Furthermore, Japan has just recently decided to expand the range of anti-global-warming projects eligible to receive ODA loans, and to further cut the interest rate on loans for projects implemented by upper-middle-income countries, which are important in addressing the problem of global warming. At the same time, Japan will continue to support environment-related activities by multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, as well as the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environmental Programme.

I would also like to ask other developed countries to enhance their assistance to developing countries' efforts, taking into account the achievement of this Kyoto Conference.

What I would really like the representatives of developing countries to understand is that, as I pointed out earlier by way of describing Japan's experiences, there is a way to make efforts to prevent global warming advantageous for economic development as well. Specifically, by determining appropriate rules, we can simultaneously achieve both economic growth and a reduction of carbon dioxide emissions through improvements in energy efficiency.

Conclusion

We must face the reality that this three-day High-level Segment beginning today is the final chapter of this Kyoto Conference. Through the consultation process which has taken place thus far, the positions of each party have come

into shape. Still, given the true nature of the challenge we face and the difficulties which we must overcome, only high-level political decisiveness will produce concrete results. I sincerely hope that during these three days, the representatives gathered here will strive with hope and enthusiasm to reach an agreement which can be handed down to future generations with pride.

I myself intend to directly urge leaders of all countries to act decisively with political decisions.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the many participants who have come here from all over the world, representing governments, non-governmental organizations, and the industrial sector. Let me also strongly urge you to unite all of your wisdom together here in Kyoto.

I close my opening remarks today with a strong and forceful wish that here in this ancient capital of Kyoto, the High-level Segment of the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will succeed in the final negotiations toward solving the problem of global warming -- the newest direct challenge facing humanity.

Thank you for your attention.

* on Kyoto