

**Asia – Pacific Water Ministerial Meeting**  
**On the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum**

17:00 – 18:00

March 20, 2006

**Opening Address**

Ryutaro Hashimoto

President of the Japan Water Forum

It is a great honor and pleasure for me, as president of the Japan Water Forum, to be given this opportunity to deliver a speech at the Asia-Pacific Water Ministerial Meeting. I would like to thank all of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to actively participate in this meeting.

The Japan Water Forum worked as coordinator for the Asia-Pacific region in the preparations for the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum. We divided the Asia-Pacific region into five sub-regions and had energetic discussions in each region. Also all of the sub-regional coordinators gathered in Tokyo last October to bring discussions into their final stage.

The Asia-Pacific region, geographically widespread and home to about 60% of the world's population, is rich in diversity, and therefore water issues in this region are also diverse. Fortunately, during this regional preparatory process, we have come to realize that the diversity of this region is not an obstacle but rather a valuable asset in addressing water issues and facilitating solutions. We have also realized that there are several common water-related issues and challenges in this region that we should tackle collectively.

As His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito mentioned in his speech, we have come to share the common understanding that all stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific community must work together for the resolution of water issues. I am very pleased that, during the preparatory process, it was proposed that we form an Asia-Pacific Water Forum Initiative. This is to be a new network of stakeholders designed to address regional water issues.

At this meeting, I hope all of you will contribute actively to the discussions on the Asia-Pacific Water Forum Initiative. I look forward to a fruitful dialogue.

Thank you.