

Official Launching Ceremony of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum

16:45 – 17:45 September 27th, 2006

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President, Japan Water Forum

I am pleased to deliver this speech as president of the Japan Water Forum at the official launching ceremony marking the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum. I am profoundly grateful to all participating members.

Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, former president of the Japan Water Forum, passed away suddenly in July. He had dedicated all his energy to the resolution of global water problems. I feel a deep sense of loss and would like to offer my sincere condolences to his family.

He concentrated all his efforts on water issues after retiring from politics. I firmly believe that we must not waste either the extraordinary efforts he put forth towards the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum or his legacy of persistent and indomitable spirit in solving global water problems.

I assumed this post hoping that I would be able to use the knowledge and experiences which I accumulated through my career as Prime Minister of Japan, Minister of Education, Minister of International Trade and Industry, and Minister of Construction, in order to fulfill part of Mr. Hashimoto's cherished desire to contribute to the resolution of global water problems.

I myself am committed to ridding the world of infectious diseases. At the Okinawa G8 Summit in 2000, we discussed for the first time, as a major agenda item, how to fight infectious diseases, and released the Okinawa Infectious Diseases Initiative. In 2002, I made efforts towards the launch of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and I am now serving as president of Friends of the Global Fund, Japan.

These infectious diseases are widespread throughout Asia. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance regional collaboration in the fight against them. I believe that the solution of water problems will lead to victory in the war on infectious diseases, as these are closely linked to water.

Furthermore, I hear that all those who participated in the 4th World Water Forum held in Mexico in March have reaffirmed that the Asia-Pacific region, which houses almost 60% of the world's population, is rich in diversity. They have gained profound awareness of the fact that the diversity of this region is not an obstacle but an asset to the resolution of water issues. Representatives of the Asia-Pacific region have agreed that they have many common water-related challenges to address.

Today we have gathered here to celebrate the launch of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum. This is a regional network dedicated to the resolution of water issues through dialogue among member countries. I am proud to be a member of this Forum.

One of the most important roles of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum is to hold the Asia-Pacific Water Summit, where ministers from member countries can share a common understanding of water issues and reaffirm their determination to address these issues.

It is a great pleasure to be able to host the first summit, to be held in 2007 in Japan. We will prepare for it in cooperation with the Japanese government. We eagerly anticipate a large attendance of heads of governments and companies at the summit.

By the way, I am a lifelong rugby enthusiast and I sometimes play rugby. The rugby spirit is "all for one and one for all". All fifteen players cooperate in order to score. Every effort such as a tackle or a save is made in the spirit of self-sacrifice. We enthusiastically scrum down with our fellow players and carry the ball towards the goal. Let all of us exert our best endeavors in the universal spirit of rugby players: all for one and one for all, and successfully develop the Asia-Pacific Water Forum for the resolution of water problems.

I promise that the Japan Water Forum will continue to serve as a secretariat of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum. We will do our best to live up to our responsibilities. Your continued support and encouragement will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your kind attention.