

2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit

Address on Water Security

by Mr. Yoshiro Mori, President of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum

Plenary Session 9:30-12:00, May 20th, 2013

At Chiang Mai International Convention and Exhibition Center (CMICE)

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased and honored to be here at this Plenary Session of the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit. My name is Yoshiro Mori. I am president of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum, the organizer of the Asia-Pacific Water Summit. I would like to express my profound gratitude to all of you, including heads of state and government, distinguished representatives and academics working on water issues, for participating in the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit. I would like to express my sincere thanks, particularly, to H.E. Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, for her strong leadership in overcoming the enormous damage caused by the severe flooding of 2011. Thanks to her devotion to duty, heads of state and government, and leaders from across the Asia-Pacific region are able to gather at the most fabulous convention center in the world, built to coincide with the summit in the beautiful city of Chiang Mai.

Six and a half years have passed since the Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) was jointly established by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Japan Water Forum (JWF). In this time, the APWF has made a collective effort to highlight the necessity and challenges of regional water security on various occasions, such as the 1st APWS, the World Water Forum, and Singapore International Water Week. In addition, it has created opportunities for regional leaders to get together in order to raise awareness of water issues and initiate concrete actions. Everyone is now aware that water is a priority issue for nations. This awareness is a result of the ceaseless efforts of lead organizations and sub-regional coordinators under the leadership of the chair and vice chairs of the APWF governing council. I would like to express my thanks to them for their contribution to the activities of the APWF. Professor Tommy Koh, who has served as chair of the APWF governing council since the establishment of the

APWF, and vice chair Ms. Erna Witoeler, who has been responsible for the management of its operations, are now stepping down from the council. On behalf of all the regional stakeholders, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to them for their distinguished contributions.

There are only two and a half years to go before the end of 2015, the global target year for accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals. Thanks to the efforts of various people around the world, the target for drinking water has already been met, although there are still approximately eight hundred million people with no access to safe drinking water. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to achieve the sanitation target. There are still 2.5 billion people, or 40% of the global population, with no access to basic sanitation. In the Asia-Pacific region in particular, sanitation problems are serious. More than half of the people around the world who have no access to basic sanitation live in this region.

Due to rapid population growth and industrialization, food and energy problems as well as water contamination are threatening water resources and the water environment. Therefore, it is necessary for us who live in this region to improve water governance through multi-stakeholder engagement and legal and regulatory frameworks. According to the United Nations report in this Plenary Session, the UN is also focusing on this issue. The UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation(UNSGAB) was established by the former secretary-general. His Royal Highness Prince Willem Alexander, who was recently crowned king of the Netherlands, has been serving as chair. His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Japan is also serving as honorary president of the UNSGAB. In early March this year, he attended the Advisory Board's meeting in New York.

Since the first APWS in 2007 in Japan, the leaders of each nation in this region have made very conscious efforts. There are, however, still many challenges to deal with. I keenly feel the pressing need for further efforts.

This region is very vulnerable to all kinds of water-related disasters, such as tsunami triggered by earthquakes, typhoons and hurricanes, and has already suffered serious damage. About 80% of the world's victims of all water-related disasters live in this region. The severe flooding that hit the Bangkok area here

in Thailand, had considerable impact on world economies, including that of Japan. Since the number of natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific region is drastically rising, posing increasing risks to the global economy, the assessment of economic risks arising from climate-related natural disasters is growing in importance.

As you know, on March 11, 2011, Japan experienced a catastrophic disaster on a scale not seen for a thousand years: the Great East Japan Earthquake. As Japan is prone to earthquakes, we had been taking numerous precautions against earthquakes and tsunami for many years. But the size and impact of this disaster was far beyond our imagination, and many precious lives were lost. We should deeply reflect on our traditional measures against natural disasters.

On behalf of the Japanese people, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone across the world for their support and encouragement.

The disaster was certainly a sad experience, but it reminded all Japanese people of the value of human life, family ties and regional cooperation. We felt truly grateful for the help offered from all over the world and began to reconsider how to build resilient communities in the face of climate change and water-related disasters. I would like the story of our experience, our technologies, and our efforts towards reconstruction to be of some help in minimizing human, environmental, and economic losses. Water-related technologies in this region have been remarkably progressing, so each nation should utilize these technologies.

Many researchers from the public and private sectors, as well as academics, are involved in studying the Great East Japan Earthquake from various points of view. Among them are Professor Taikan Oki, from Tokyo University, and his colleagues. At the end of last year, they published an academic book entitled *Let's learn about water that brings both blessings and troubles*. We must understand that on the one hand there is water for drinking or irrigation, but on the other hand there is water that harms us.

Water is an essential issue that affects not only water stakeholders but also the course of nations. Therefore, heads of state and governments should be at

the forefront of addressing it. All nations in the Asia-Pacific region should share the common understanding that continued leadership and commitment are indispensable for the effective solution of water problems. Towards this goal, I am resolved to work with you and push forward the vision of water security in our region.

As I mentioned before, the chair and one of the vice-chairs of the APWF governing council are stepping down, and Mr. Ravi Narayanan, vice-chair of the APWF governing council will take the position of chair. Professor Simon Tay from Singapore and Ms. Changhua Wu from China will become vice-chairs. I hope these young members of the APWF governing council will continue to make efforts towards the resolution of water problems.

Finally, I hope that all of you will have intense discussions at this summit in order to overcome the world's serious water problems so that we can hand over this beautiful planet intact to our children. The new president of the Asian Development Bank, Takehiko Nakao, who will deliver a speech later, is joining us in our fight against water and sanitation problems in the Asia-Pacific region. As Mr. Haruhiko Kuroda, former president of the ADB, has been recalled by the Japanese government, Mr. Nakao has been sent to the ADB. I would like to express my thanks to Mr. Kuroda and call on the new president to work with the APWF. I look forward to a closer friendship and further cooperation with the ADB.

Thank you for your attention.