

## Opening Address

President of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum  
Former Prime Minister of Japan  
Yoshiro Mori

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for being here at the Asia-Pacific Region Commitment Session.

It is already one year since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami struck the country on the 11th of last March. Prior to the disaster, we had thought that Japan was well prepared for earthquakes and tsunamis. The terrible power of nature, however, is beyond our imagination, and natural disasters always happen when we least expect them. Since the earthquake, all Japanese people have become more aware of the value of life and the bond between family members. We have learnt to appreciate our foreign friends, who gave us kind assistance. Moreover, we have reaffirmed the importance of disaster preparedness. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our friends not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but also across the world for their valuable assistance. Your kind help has encouraged us to stand up again and proceed step by step on the path towards reconstruction.

In the Asia-Pacific region, where we live, further efforts are required to improve water and sanitation. This region is especially vulnerable to water-related disasters, and has suffered immense damage in the past. The flooding that ravaged Bangkok last autumn had a serious impact on Japan and the rest of the world. Water problems in other countries and regions are no longer someone else's concern.

As regional coordinator, the APWF has been involved in the preparatory process for the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, in cooperation with Lead Organizations, Sub-regional Coordinators and stakeholders from this region, for the past year and a half. We hope that we will be able to disseminate to the world our experiences and the knowledge we have accumulated, including current water challenges in the region and their solutions. I would like to express special thanks to the following organizations for their great contributions as target coordinators: ESCAP, UN-HABITAT, FAO, ICIMOD, KWF, UNESCO and ICWC.

In the first half of this session, the target coordinators, each of which has organized its own session at this Forum, will present specific targets for addressing water problems in the region, as well as some successful solutions. In the latter half, we will hold a discussion on our recommendations to national leaders who will be present at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit. Mr. Ravi Narayanan and I will serve as co-chairs to facilitate the discussion.

I thank you in advance for your kind cooperation.