

Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW) 2015

Speech

April 27th, 2015

Mr. Takashi UTO

Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs

Your Imperial Highness Princess Takamado,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Takashi UTO, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is my honor to say a few words of greetings on this auspicious occasion, representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Having the pleasure of the attendance of Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado, I am particularly pleased to see the convening of Arctic Science Summit Week

2015 here in Japan, with the participation of a number of most-renowned researchers and representatives of Arctic research institutions.

I think there is a common understanding among us that the Arctic is now undergoing rapid environmental changes caused by global warming. New opportunities attract interests of the international community, such as utilization of the Arctic Sea Routes and exploitation of natural resources. But we have to face up to various issues emerging due to these changes, which include, to name a few, acceleration of global warming, ocean acidification and possible impact of expanding human activities on vulnerable Arctic environment. It is thus legitimate to consider that the environmental changes in the Arctic are global issues in nature, in a sense that they could have significant

impact not only within the Arctic region but also on the entire global environment.

Japan upholds the banner of “Proactive Contribution to Peace” based on the principle of international cooperation. This represents our determination to address global issues even more proactively. Obviously, Japan’s efforts to tackle emerging issues in the Arctic are no exception.

The question then arises: how should we address them? According to Japan’s view, there are two major challenges ahead. The first one is to grasp, based upon scientific research, what is going on in the Arctic and its impact on the global environment. We need to precisely predict further changes and take necessary measures to tackle negative impact. Second, the

international community has to reach a common understanding on appropriate manners of economic use of the Arctic.

In addressing these two challenges, “science” and “international cooperation” are the keywords. Scientific data is essential for substantial discussion on the Arctic. However, as State Minister Fujii clearly pointed out earlier, there are countless mysteries surrounding the Arctic yet to be revealed, whereas what can be achieved by one country alone has a clear limitation. This is why a wide range of international cooperation is indispensable for demystifying the Arctic.

The ASSW is, in this sense, a valuable forum, where researchers gather from all over the world to discuss cross-cutting cooperation

on the Arctic research, thereby satisfying the demand for “science” and “international cooperation”. In particular, I am informed that the Third International Conference on Arctic Research Planning will be held as part of this Symposium, with a view to offering direction for the international Arctic research for the next decade. Hoping that “science” will play an even larger role in the international efforts to address the environmental changes in the Arctic, I would like to conclude my remarks.

Thank you for your kind attention.