

2nd International Symposium on the Law of the Sea
“International Law for the Resources of the Sea:
Scientific Advances, Preservation of Environment,
Equity in Benefit Sharing
Closing Remarks by Mr. Hitoshi Kikawada, Parliamentary Vice-Minister
for Foreign Affairs

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the keynote speaker, the coordinators, and the panelists. The comments in the closing session assured me that discussions during the symposium were very fruitful. As mentioned by the panelists, young staffs and the members of the Foreign Ministry have worked hard behind the scenes. I would like to extend my appreciation to all the people who were engaged in the planning and organization of the symposium, as well as to those who participated in the discussions.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, for Japan, to promote “the rule of law at sea” is very important. It is one of the major diplomatic goals of the Abe Administration. However, the international laws and conventions are not perfect, as the panelists suggested. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) still needs to be developed and there are new issues such as the marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (BBNJ) which was not taken into account when UNCLOS was first drafted. So, we need to continuously study and discuss the issues related to “the rule of law at sea” and relevant laws and conventions. For that reason, we would like to have people engage in these discussions so that we can build international order at sea together through such occasions as this symposium.

The other day, I was at the Munich Security Summit. In the session on China, China made a statement that the international order that we see today is something established by the United States and the Western countries. The Speaker posed a question that although China is following this order, whether it needs to follow the order made by the United States. My thoughts are different. China participated in the drafting of UNCLOS and now China is one of the states parties to UNCLOS. Talking about the rule of law at sea, we have spent the past 20 years discussing the issues related to interpretation and application of

UNCLOS, and made progress along the way together. Through the discussions as those held during this symposium, we would like to establish a better “rule of law at sea” and we hope that you will also participate in fora like this to deepen our discussions.

Today, at this symposium, we had experts mainly from the field of law to come and speak on the theme of “the rule of law at sea”. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we also held a study group today on the ocean and the Arctic Sea. In this study group, we listened to the views of scientific experts in various fields, such as the observation of the sea or the biological research, to think about how we can use or conserve the ocean better. One thing that was raised was that UNCLOS made it difficult for scientists to conduct researches, because under UNCLOS, they need to submit a lot of documents to coastal states. That is why the researchers tend to work on the research limited within their own State, which requires less complicated administrative work. With UNCLOS, the researchers need to submit documents to the coastal states, and there are opinions that this may be impeding their work. I hope that you, who are engaged in drafting and developing international laws, would pay attention to such voices as well.

Now, coming back to the topic of BBNJ. The freedom of the high seas is exercised in the high seas. In view of that, there is concern among some researchers that the range of research may be narrowed as a result of further discussions on BBNJ. I hope the legal experts would also bear that in mind when they engage in discussions with regards to UNCLOS including BBNJ, when they are involved in further developing the UNCLOS. Once again, the Japanese Government would continue to provide a forum like this symposium to promote the rule of law, and to build a better international order of the sea. I would like to sincerely ask for your kind cooperation and understanding. With this I would like to end my closing remarks. Thank you very much.