

**Arctic Frontiers 2014
Uit, Tromso Norway
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**Statement
by
Ambassador in charge of the Arctic Affairs of Japan
Mr. Toshio Kunikata**

Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to extend my appreciation to the organizing body of the Arctic Frontiers 2014 for providing me with the opportunity to give a presentation at this renowned annual meeting.

Japan, as a maritime state that is surrounded by the sea, is highly interested in changes and opportunities in the Arctic from various perspectives including the environment. Recent changes in the Arctic due to climate change and the consequential opportunities and challenges are much taken up by the media, and are attracting people's close attention in Japan now. In addition to efforts by the government of Japan, which I will touch upon later on, parliamentarians have recently formed groups to study issues and to promote policy related to the Arctic.

Recognizing the importance of addressing internationally issues caused by human activities, including influences on the environment as well as on life and health of the people living in the Arctic, Japan is determined to actively participate in the international discussions on the Arctic.

<Relevant efforts made by the Government of Japan>

Let me introduce some updates on the relevant efforts made by the Government of Japan. In April last year, the Government developed as cabinet decision new Basic Plan on Ocean Policy, which for the first time incorporated policy measures regarding the Arctic. Given changes in the Arctic Ocean caused by climate change, recognizing that there exist diverse issues to study and address, Japan is to take comprehensive and strategic measures to cope with these issues.

The Government of Japan will consult and coordinate with relevant states for observation and research in the Arctic, while we promote examination of feasibility and technical and economic issues of the Arctic Sea Routes, liaising with relevant states and private companies.

Regarding the foreign policy on the Arctic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, taking cognizance of the nature of the issue that requires cross-regional and cross-sectional work, developed a basis for addressing the foreign policy on the Arctic comprehensively and continuously, including establishing the Arctic Task Force within the Ministry in September 2010, and appointment of a new post of Ambassador in charge of the Arctic Affairs in March last year, which I assumed in the subsequent September.

<International Law>

Japan is convinced that oceans, as the commons for all the people of the world, should be free, open and safe. Japan also sees the importance of promoting settlement of disputes by peaceful means based on universal principles of international law including United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Let us reiterate our support to the view expressed in the Ilulissat Declaration that an extensive international legal framework, including the law of the sea, applies to the Arctic Ocean. In committing this legal framework, it is needless to say that Japan recognizes and respects sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction of the Members of the Arctic Council. Japan also attaches great importance to the observance of relevant international law and the assurance of freedom and safety of navigation in the Arctic Ocean.

<Cooperation with the Arctic Council>

Japan was granted observer status to the Arctic Council last year. I would like to express our gratitude again to the Members and the Permanent Participants to the Council for their support. I would like to reiterate our determination to further contribute to the Arctic Council by sharing our expertise built upon its years of research and observation of the Arctic, enjoying more stable status than ad-hoc one.

Just to take an immediate example, Japan is to attend the Working Group meeting for Conservation in the Arctic of the Flora and Fauna, to be held in February. This is going to be the first occasion for us to participate in this Working Group, which will be the third Working Group under the Council for us to attend, followed by Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme and Sustainable Development Working Group.

<The Arctic Sea Routes>

The Honorable Chairs,

Decrease of sea-ice in the Arctic Ocean increases the navigable days of the Arctic Sea Routes. So far, one cruise in 2012 and three cruises in 2013 shipped energy resources to Japan via the Arctic Sea Routes.

The Arctic Sea Routes shortens the navigational distance between Europe and major ports in Japan by up to 40 percent than that of south routes via the Suez Canal. The Arctic Sea Routes, however, still have problems to overcome; for example, it requires ice-breakers preceding cargo vessels in almost all cases; there are shallow waters on the sea lanes; operational conditions such as sea ice distribution are hard to predict due to severe weather conditions.

Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan, or MLIT, established a study group on the Arctic Sea Routes, setting as its basic position to seize the present situation and to more precisely predict conditions in the near future of technical, institutional and economic issues as well as influences caused by the use of the Routes, putting together varied expertise. In addition, MLIT is sorting out and analysing basic information towards the use of the Routes, while participating in the efforts by the International Maritime Organization, IMO, and promoting cooperation with the Russian authorities. In next April, MLIT is to establish a joint committee that combines efforts both by private companies and the Government so that the companies are able to make sound business decisions to use and utilize the Arctic Sea Routes.

To introduce efforts at municipal level, in Hokkaido, the northernmost and largest prefecture of Japan, examination on possibility and potential usage of the Arctic Sea Routes has been under way with the relevant public and private sectors involved. Tomakomai and Wakkanai ports have potentials to become transit and stopping points on the routes. All of these are connected to the “Northeast Asia Terminal Initiative”, advanced by the Governor of Hokkaido.

At its 7th Ministerial Meeting in 2011, Members of the Arctic Council signed the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic as its first legally binding agreement. Japan considers this as another example of the Council to take concrete action.

Japan, as a maritime state, has experiences of cooperating with non-Arctic States including search and rescue joint exercise based on Agreements on Search and Rescue Regions. With the use of the Arctic Sea Routes increasing, Japan considers that such cooperation with Arctic States will be more and more beneficial for building reliable search and rescue arrangements in the Arctic Ocean.

<Natural Resources>

The Arctic Ocean and the surrounding waters are thought to be promising fishing grounds blessed with rich phytoplankton. As to non-living resources, ten percent of the unexplored crude oil and thirty percent of the unexplored natural gas is said to lie in the Arctic. The exploitation and use of both of living and non-living resources is expected to increase.

Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC) has been a member of the geophysical data collection program offshore Greenland. In last December, two exploration licenses in northeastern part of offshore Greenland were awarded to Greenland Petroleum Exploration Co., Ltd, financed by JOGMEC. JOGMEC will continue to be involved towards further explorations.

Having said that, I would also like to reiterate that Japan shares with Arctic states the principles of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources, observance of relevant international law and respect for rights of indigenous peoples living in the Arctic. Japan is determined to contribute to the region through the Arctic Council as well as bilateral cooperation so that developments in the Arctic will be conducted in accordance with international law and in the way that the environment and peoples' rights are fully protected.

<Observation and Research in the Arctic>

The Honorable Chairs,

The observation and research activities by Japan in the Arctic date back to as early as the 1950s, and cover broad fields such as land, waters, atmosphere and ecosystem now. Achievements through these activities reveal impacts that changes in the Arctic due to climate change will have on non-Arctic States including Japan, not to mention on Arctic States. In addition, it is prospected that they can be applied in various fields such as prediction of navigation conditions and measuring on life and health of people living in the Arctic. Japan is determined to make contributions across regions and fields by conducting observation and research activities in the Arctic.

In FY 2011, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology initiated the Green Network of Excellence Program, in which competent universities and other institutions collaborate strategically by the research field of importance in environment and energy so that the world's highest level of research activities and human resources development are comprehensively pursued. More than 300 scientists from over 35 organizations participate in the "Arctic Climate Change Research Project" within the framework of the Program, where they are conducting research on whole of the Arctic under

international cooperation.

Let me go through some of the Japan's observation and research institutions and their major achievement. First, by using simulation model based on observation data collected at number of points in the Arctic, GRENE Arctic Program aims to help understand the mechanism of warming amplification in the Arctic, where climate change proceeds about twice as rapid as the global average. In addition, the program is also working toward building of "Arctic Navigator", a navigation support system providing information and simulation models on prediction of sea-ice thickness and distribution, combining data obtained by satellites and on-site observations. Second, National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR), which plays a major role in the GRENE Program, after establishing Arctic Observation Centre in 1990, has been running Arctic Environment Research Center in Ny-Alesund, Svalbard, since 1991 when they initiated activities such as successive observation of greenhouse gas. NIPR has experiences of joint research programs with Arctic States including participation in the European Incoherent Scatter Scientific Association, EISCAT, where we set up the observation radars in Longyearbyen in Svalbard and here in Tromso to conduct observations. Third, Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology, JAMSTEC, has been conducting integrated observations of the Arctic Ocean using Research Vessel *Mirai*, icebreakers and drifting buoys to clarify changes in atmosphere, sea ice and ocean as well as interactions between them while conducting observation of cryosphere variations, the hydrological cycle and the influence of climate change in the Arctic region on climate systems around the world. Analysis of the meteorological data has revealed that decrease in the sea-ice in the Barents Sea influences climate change in the Middle latitude areas including Japan. Fourth, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, JAXA, contributes to clarify causes and mechanism of climate change to prevent it by providing data obtained from satellites. Based on the data obtained from Advanced Land Observing Satellite "DAICHI.", Japan Coast Guard publishes sea ice condition chart. "

Japan is willing to contribute to the international society primarily by participating in the work of the Arctic Council based on the scientific expertise and observation methods built upon the years of research and observation experiences in the Arctic.

In closing my speech, let me take this opportunity to invite you to the Arctic Science Summit Week 2015, which will be held in Japan in April next year. As you know, the Summit Week, organized by the International Arctic Science Summit, or IASSC, is an annual gathering, where research cooperation in the Arctic is discussed. During the summit week next year, on the occasion of 25th anniversary of IASSC, there will be additional meetings alongside working meetings such as the 3rd International Conference on Arctic Research Planning, where projects of Arctic research in the next decade will be discussed, and the 4th International Symposium on the Arctic Research. We are looking forward to welcoming you

all in Japan.

Thank you very much for your kind attention and I wish every success for this conference.