

Statement by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs
MIYAKE Shingo at a High level dialogue on plastic pollution
– next steps to end plastic pollution –
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(ESCAP)

Your excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased that Japan and Thailand are co-hosting this high-level dialogue entitled, “Next Steps to End Plastic Pollution” on this occasion of the 78th Session of ESCAP.

Plastic pollution in marine and other environments has become an urgent issue facing all ESCAP countries, which affects the ecological environment across borders. To promote global efforts to address this issue, Japan took the initiative to share the “Osaka Blue Ocean Vision” at the 2019 G20 Summit. This vision aims to reduce to zero additional pollution by marine plastic litter by 2050. The concept of this vision is now shared by 87 countries and regions, including all ESCAP members.

But a vision is meaningless if only proposed and not implemented. Under the “Osaka Blue Ocean Vision,” Japan has contributed to compiling measures against marine plastic litter submitted by 42 countries. We also support the steady implementation of these measures, taking into account national circumstances. Furthermore, Japan has supported capacity building and infrastructure development based on local needs in collaboration with international organisations such as ESCAP, UNEP and UNEP International Environmental Technology Centre. For instance, Japan has achieved steady results, including training over 6,000 people engaging in waste management worldwide.

In the course of providing this support, Japan has put to use its advanced technologies. Japan has been supporting projects in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia by utilising artificial intelligence to monitor plastic litter discharged into rivers and identify discharging points. These projects have been contributing to areas where the world needs to accumulate scientific knowledge, such as the mechanism and measurement of plastic litter discharge from rivers into oceans.

In March of this year, the United Nations Environment Assembly adopted a resolution entitled, “End Plastic Pollution” related to the marine environment, and negotiations for an internationally legally binding instrument will begin in the second half of this year. I am convinced that Japan’s experience will help promote effective plastic pollution countermeasures worldwide through the negotiations. In partnership with ESCAP, Japan intends to actively contribute to the negotiations with the participation of major emitters and consuming countries of plastics, to encourage measures that meet the circumstances of each country throughout the entire lifecycle of plastics.

Additionally, to contribute to the negotiations by drawing on Japan’s experience, Japan has nominated Mr. ONO Hiroshi, Director-General of the Global Environment Bureau, Ministry of the Environment, as a candidate for Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. Mr. Ono has an abundance of professional expertise, has long been involved in the planning and implementation of circular economy policies, including waste management. He also played a significant role in compiling the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision at the G20, which I have just shared with you. After hearing him speak later, I am sure that all participants here will be convinced that Mr. Ono will make a substantial contribution to the negotiations if appointed Co-Chair.

By utilising Japanese environmental technology, Japan will contribute to solving the problem of plastic pollution and encourage international discussion. Prime Minister Kishida himself has indicated that this is the way Japan will take leadership to resolve global issues. Therefore, Japan will continue to actively promote efforts in this area, including treaty negotiations, in line with this policy.

Finally, I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my hope that the discussions among you all from government, industry, academia and non-governmental stakeholders during today’s dialogue will be fruitful in providing the “next steps” for ESCAP efforts and the treaty negotiations.

Thank you very much for your attention.