

Statement by State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan TAKEI Shunsuke
at the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Environment Programme(UNEP)-
International Environment Technology Centre(IETC)

Ms. Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme,
Mr. MATSUI Mayor of Osaka,
Distinguished participants,

I am TAKEI Shunsuke, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. First of all, I would like to express my sincere congratulations on the 30th anniversary of the UNEP-IETC in Osaka.

As our daily lives become increasingly convenient, we are inevitably producing waste. Some waste is recycled, but some remains in the environment and is accidentally swallowed by animals, while the rest is ultimately disposed of in the ocean. The amount of waste created is increasing year after year on a global scale, posing a hidden threat to the ecosystem and human health. This is a serious environmental crisis affecting all corners of the world.

The IETC was established in Osaka in 1992 as a global centre of excellence dedicated to waste management. It has been surveying the actual circumstances surrounding the handling of waste in developing countries, assisting with the forging of policies suitable for each country's circumstances, and promoting the necessary technology transfer. For these activities, it has also drawn on the city of Osaka's experience in overcoming environmental pollution. Based on its experience in approximately 150 countries, the IETC has made a significant contribution as a core player in this field, including by publishing its "Global Waste Management Outlook" that summarized the current worldwide situation regarding waste management, and working on further improvements in this regard in various countries.

For the past three decades, the IETC has tackled the global and universal issue of waste management and shared its timely solutions with the world, taking into account each

country's particular circumstances.

In the waste management area, plastic pollution has been drawing notable international attention as an especially daunting problem. A shocking estimate suggests that, without any countermeasures, the volume of plastic in the oceans will outweigh that of fish by 2050.

Plastic does not degrade easily in the natural environment, and persists for decades once discharged into the ocean. On the other hand, since it is difficult to collect, plastic litter has an adverse impact on global marine ecosystems, and its impact causes sanitary and economic problems. With plastic pollution flowing from one country to the next, insufficient waste management in a number of developing nations has emerged as a contributing factor to this challenging issue.

Japan has been actively tackling plastic pollution. At the G20 Summit held here in Osaka in 2019, Japan proposed the "Osaka Blue Ocean Vision", which aims to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050. In addition, placing emphasis on engagement with countries that discharge plastic litter, Japan launched its own "MARINE Initiative" to support developing countries. Taking into account the on-site surveys and advice provided by the IETC, Japan has supported capacity building and infrastructure development based on local needs, and provided training for more than 17,000 people in the field of waste management.

The world's concern about plastic pollution led to concrete action at the United Nations Environment Assembly in March this year. Buoyed by the world's determination to end plastic pollution, the Assembly decided to launch negotiations to draw up a treaty. As the host country, Japan strongly hopes that the IETC will contribute to the negotiations by utilizing its accumulated knowledge and technology concerning waste management.

Japan is resolved to play a leadership role in addressing plastic pollution by taking advantage of its environmental technology. In close cooperation with Executive Director Ms. Andersen, the UNEP and the IETC, Japan will continue to make every effort to contribute to the negotiations for a treaty and to the realization of effective and progressive action.

Waste management, on which the IETC is focusing, is a significant agenda item linked to one of the themes of Expo 2025, to be held in Osaka, Kansai, which is to create new values that will help to tackle some of the pressing global issues and build a sustainable future. I am looking forward to the IETC's efforts to broadly share its knowledge and solutions with a variety of participants from around the world at the Expo in 2025, with a view to creating "a zero waste society".

Lastly, I would like to conclude my opening remarks by expressing my sincere hope that the IETC will continue to play a leading role in dealing with waste management issues across the globe.

Thank you for your attention.