

Preface

The National Institute for Environmental Studies (NIES - Japan), the National Institute of Environmental Research (NIER - Korea) and the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences (CRAES - China), in their capacities as the leading environmental institutes in their respective countries, have played major roles in addressing and mitigating national, regional and global environmental issues. Unprecedented economic growth and accompanying urbanization in the Asian region has brought with it an array of environmental issues. The nature of many of these environmental issues is such that their effects are felt on region-wide scales, meaning that they cannot be effectively tackled discreetly. In addition, whether or not particular environmental issues transcend borders, the exchange of technical information, know-how and personnel among countries confronted with similar problems remains essential in order to effectively address a broad range of issues.

The Tripartite Presidents Meeting among NIES, NIER and CRAES (TPM), first convened in 2004, has played a significant role in enriching research collaboration; facilitating the exchange of resources and personnel; increasing our mutual friendship and understanding; and encouraging the sharing of technical and logistical know-how, among the three hub institutions and their countries. In the context of the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011, and the other unprecedented disasters with which all three countries have been faced in recent times, I believe that the decision to specifically address the question of environmental issues originating from disasters is among the most important and timely commitments made at TPM8. Collaborative activities amongst the three institutions will seek to address environmental issues caused by disasters by means of strengthened exchange and the instigation of dedicated projects on all relevant fronts and as a matter of utmost priority.

In addition to the commitment to specifically address environmental issues originating from disasters at TPM, there are two further points to emerge from the proceedings of the meeting which are of particular note. In the light of the broadening geographical scope and the evolving and interrelated nature of environmental issues, the suggestion at TPM8 to invite researchers and other concerned parties from countries other than those which the TPM mechanism currently encompasses, and for whom the issues being discussed and tackled at TPM are of concern, is one which I strongly feel should be

pursued. The environmental issues which affect the Northeast Asian region are also global issues. In further acknowledgement of the evolving nature of such global environmental issues, another key outcome of the discussions at TPM8 was the decision to refine the names and focus of the TPM8 Priority Research Areas to reflect these changing circumstances.

The beautiful surroundings of Okinawa where TPM8 was conducted, and the environmental facilities - including those dedicated to the preservation of the region's biodiversity - which we visited during the study tour following the main meeting and the international workshop, both served as reminders of our institutes underlying missions: to preserve our regional environments for the benefit of all. It was a genuine privilege to host all the delegates from NIER and CRAES as well as researchers and officials from Japanese local and national bodies – including the Okinawa Prefectural Government; Nago City; Okinawa Prefectural Institute of Health and Environment; the Naha Regional Office for Nature Conservation, Ministry of the Environment Japan; and University of the Ryukyus - at the workshop. To conclude, I would like to express my utmost satisfaction with the outcomes of the meeting and to offer my heartfelt thanks to President PARK and President MENG for their valuable contributions to ensuring the success of TPM8.

March, 2012

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shinichiro Ohgaki', written in a cursive style.

OHGAKI Shinichiro, D.Eng.

President, National Institute for Environmental Studies, Japan