

Press Release

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**Statement by
Ms. KOIKE Yuriko, Minister of the Environment of Japan
at the Twelfth Session of the
Commission on Sustainable Development
(April 28, 2004)**

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor to be able to give a few words to the distinguished participants gathered here today on behalf of the Government of Japan.

Japan is rich in water resources and its wisdom on water conservation and use has long been conveyed to the greater public in Japan. However, there is no country in the world which has enjoyed affluence and also accomplished both environmental and economic development objectives simultaneously. Japan experienced significant water quality degradation, which resulted in health hazards such as Minamata Disease. We have learned lessons from this bitter experience and have promoted a number of measures which include the initiation of the most stringent regulations on pollution in the world.

Japan hopes that her friends around the world, especially her friends among developing countries, will learn from her bitter experience, not falling into the same rut that Japan did. In order to address global water issues, the Government of Japan, in addition to supporting the Third World Water Forum (WWF), held in March 2003 in Kyoto and other places in Japan, hosted a Ministerial Conference at which participants adopted a Ministerial Declaration reflecting a mutual recognition of water issues affecting our various countries.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Japan has been promoting effective restrictions on factory effluents by integrating criteria in each region into unified effluent standards and accelerating implementation of measures for domestic wastewater, as a part of measures on wastewater to prevent water contamination in the field of water and sanitation. Also, we have been promoting improvements in sewage systems and the installation of *johkasou*, on-site treatment systems for domestic wastewater. In addition, in urban areas where water resources are scarce, water treated via advanced sewage treatment is recycled for use in flush toilets or as water to supplement river volume or improve the average quality of river water. As the percentage of areas hooked up to the sewage system or using *johkasou* has increased, the water

environment in a large number of rivers, reservoirs and the ocean has been improving.

In the field of water supply, we have accomplished a high dissemination rate of water supply facilities, making positive efforts in establishing a sound water cycle as well as measures to address global warming and waste treatment issues.

In addition to these efforts, we are actively involved in various international efforts, including stipulation of a water environment standard for drinking water as well as the steady undertaking of the implementation of the Initiative for Japan's ODA on Water which we announced at the Third World Water Forum.

Johkasou, created and developed in Japan, are on-site treatment systems for wastewater generated through domestic activities to treat wastewater at its source. This domestic wastewater treatment system is a useful measure to address domestic effluents in areas where there are few houses, and *johkasou* hold the same treatment capability as sewage treatment facilities. This facility draws great attention by developing countries.

Considering the prevention of water contamination, the conservation of water resources, and the conservation of the ecosystem as inseparably linked, the Ministry of the Environment has been undertaking various efforts in order to establish a sound water cycle.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like address to Japan's international efforts with regard to the conservation of the water.

Japan attaches great importance to international cooperation in the area of water issues. The OECD-DAC statistics for the years 1999 to 2001 show that Japan is the largest donor country in the world in the areas of drinking water and sanitation. These statistics also show that Japan accounted for no less than one-third of total world assistance during those three years. Japan has been making efforts to develop desalination technology to address water shortages in regions with scarce natural water resources as well as earth observations which span the entire globe. In addition, we are working on developing an international framework aiming for the sustainable use of irrigation water to secure food security and promote poverty reduction.

At the Ministerial Conference of the Third World Water Forum, the Portfolio of Water Actions (PWA), a portfolio of specific proposals for action as put forth by both individual countries and international institutions to solve water issues of the world, was released on the basis of the proposal of the Government of Japan. As part of this Portfolio, Japan proposed specific actions, including the Water Environmental Partnership in Asia (WEPA). I would like to invite you to the side event on this

Portfolio of Water Actions at noon today, which Japan will host in cooperation with UNDESA and UNESCO.

Water is one of the elements crucial to sustainable development. Countries which fail to conserve water resources will find it impossible to pursue development. I believe that the most important thing is fostering partnerships through the establishment of ownership, in which each individual in the global community is well aware of what should be done, recognizing the importance of water resources.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to conclude today by stating my hope that all participating ministers and relevant guests commit to taking another step forward to solving global problems on water, sanitation and habitat through a frank exchange of views.

Thank you very much.