

Address to the Plenary Session of the 21st Pacific Science Congress By Her Royal Highness Princess Takamado of Japan

Okinawa, Japan
13 June 2007

I am delighted to be with you on the occasion of the 21st Pacific Science Congress and extend a warm welcome to those of you especially from abroad. I am particularly pleased that you have chosen Okinawa in which to gather together to discuss your chosen theme “Diversity and Change: Challenges and Opportunities for Managing Natural and Social Systems in Asia-Pacific” - a topic of global significance and import. I feel that Okinawa, with its rich, complex culture and fascinatingly bio-diverse ecosystem, is a most appropriate venue and setting for this topic.

The Asia-Pacific is a dynamic region that offers great hope and opportunity for its peoples. Whilst development has been socially and geographically uneven, the pace of economic growth is fast by global standards, and, in parallel, there has been an increasing urgent need to ensure that the development is sustainable. The demand for land and raw materials has placed Asia's forests, wetlands and grasslands under great stress and climate change has become a major issue for the Pacific island states. Each and every one of us should not be averse to voicing our thoughts on these issues that confront us. Nothing could be more damaging for our future than collective inertia or a mass disinclination to take action.

Today, “diversity”, in terms of both the natural and social order, is the key word in all fields and disciplines. And, it is the key word to getting things right. Today, diverse minds, specializing in an amazing array of

subjects, are gathered together in order to discuss the major issues that confront our global society. I am sure that this international and interdisciplinary meeting of scientific minds will lead to collaboration and communication with counterparts throughout the world, that will in turn lead to improvement in quality of life for not only the inhabitants of the Asia-Pacific region but of the whole world. I also look forward to important advice being given and steps taken to identify and prioritise conservation measures on the basis of scientific analysis. Society (policy makers, and myself, included) need scientific, but simple to understand guidelines!

Finally, while giving praise to the scientific endeavours of our forefathers and the sheer intelligence and enthusiasm that led them along the path of scientific discovery, and while giving thanks for the many benefits and comforts we enjoy in our daily lives as a result, we must realise that, as a species, we have taken more than our share from the earth's ecosystem. Somewhere along the way, *Homo sapiens* ceased to be ruled by *sapientia*, that is to say “wisdom”, and chose to be ruled by greed. Perhaps now, as the species grows older, we will gain the wisdom to understand that life on earth is based on maintaining rich diversity, and on achieving harmony and balance, not just among ourselves, but among all life forms on this planet.

I wish you all a successful Congress.