

The 11th Kobe University Brussels European Centre Symposium
“Green Horizons, Sustainable Futures:
EU and Japan Research for Climate-Prepared, Resilient Societies” (20 Oct 2021)
Organised jointly with the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

Opening Address

MASAKI, Yasushi

Ambassador of Japan to the European Union

Prof. Masato FUJISAWA, President of Kobe University,

Prof. Caroline PAUWELS, Rector, Vrije Universiteit Brussel,

**Ms. Signe RATSO, Deputy Director-General for Research and
Innovation, European Commission,**

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to give my remarks at this opening session.

As you know well, this symposium takes place today in a hybrid format after a 2-year break caused by Covid-19 restrictions. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who made the organisation of this symposium possible.

(Global challenges)

We are currently facing many global challenges. Last year, due to the pandemic, many conferences and events including this symposium were cancelled or postponed. Even now, many around the world are still suffering from COVID-19. We also recognise that climate change is now the biggest challenge facing all living things on Earth including mankind. We saw that advances in vaccine technology made a great impact on combating the coronavirus. We

must now mobilise all kinds of knowledge and technologies to tackle such global challenges.

Today's timely symposium will pick up on various areas linked to climate research, from natural sciences to human and social sciences. From the viewpoint of the Japan-EU policy relationship, this global topic covers a lot of our issues of interest.

(Carbon neutral society)

Last April, the Leaders' Summit on Climate was held. The then Japanese Prime Minister attended it and declared that Japan aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, setting an ambitious target which is aligned with the long-term goal of net-zero by 2050. Of course, we are all well aware that the EU aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 as well through the "European Green Deal". In order to achieve our ambitious goal, Japan and the EU need advances in knowledge, technology and innovation related to tackling climate change.

(Green Alliance)

On 27 May, at the EU – Japan Summit, Japan and the EU announced their intention to form a "Green Alliance" to accelerate the transition of their economies towards becoming climate-neutral, circular and resource-efficient in the coming decades, and to cooperate in supporting developing countries' transition toward a climate neutral society. In this regard, Japan and the EU affirmed their collaboration in research and development as one of their priority areas.

(Nobel Prize in Physics 2021)

As for climate research, I would like to celebrate here with you this year's Nobel Prize in Physics which was given to one Japanese scientist; Dr. MANABE, one German scientist; Dr. HASSELMANN and

one Italian scientist; Dr. PARISI. Their research laid the foundation for forecasts about the future of the planet, and are bases to understand complex Earth climate systems. Now we can discuss our policies to address climate change based on their past scientific contributions. For the future, we will need more excellent international research collaboration to deal with global challenges. It is therefore important to build and maintain good and efficient research networks to be well prepared for future unknown challenges.

(Launch of “Horizon Europe” and “6th STI Basic Plan” of Japan)

This year, in Europe, “Horizon Europe”, which is a 7-year European research and innovation framework programme has been launched. In Japan, the 5-year “6th Science, Technology and Innovation Basic Plan” has also started. In both of Japan and the EU, science and innovation frameworks have started at approximately the same time. Moreover, this year also marks the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the Japan-EU Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement.

On such occasions, Japan and the EU should join forces to enhance our research cooperation by creating synergies between both frameworks. There are various options in front of us. It is important for both of us to pursue practical and substantial collaboration to build, maintain, and strengthen the knowledge and technology ties between us.

(New Japan PM Mr. KISHIDA’s policy)

At the beginning of this month, Mr. KISHIDA Fumio took office as the 100th Prime-Minister of Japan. In the past, he has worked as Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy, which was his first time serving as a cabinet member. Later, he also served as Minister for Foreign Affairs for 4 and a half years. In 2015, while he

was Minister for Foreign Affairs, he established “the Advisory Board for the Promotion of Science and Technology Diplomacy” and appointed the first Science and Technology Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

On 8 October, in his first general policy speech as Prime-Minister at the Diet session, he identified science and technology as the first pillar of his growth strategy. Therefore, the KISHIDA Cabinet is expected to focus on science diplomacy and international science, technology and innovation policy. It should also be noted that, in the same speech, he expressed his intention to formulate a clean energy strategy which would tie global warming mitigation to growth, and his willingness to vigorously promote that strategy for the purpose of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

(Closing)

Japan and the EU share global challenges such as climate change. We also share an advanced science and technology capability, as well as common values and principles, such as democracy; the rule of law; human rights; and fundamental freedoms. A common understanding of fundamental principles and values is essential for sharing science, technology, and innovation. This is why we believe that Japan and the EU should be excellent partners in research to the benefit of both Japanese and European citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by wishing *the 11th Kobe University Brussels European Centre Symposium* a conclusive success in contributing to closer research partnerships between Japan and Europe.

Thank you very much for your attention.

(End)