

**Statement by the Honorable Jiro Aichi,
Senior Vice Minister of Finance, Government of Japan
At the Fifth Assembly of the Global Environment Facility
May 29, 2014**

1. Introduction

Mr. Co-chair, madam CEO, heads of delegations, representatives of international organizations, representatives of non-governmental organizations, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the kind hospitalities by the Government of Mexico in hosting this Assembly and warm welcome by the people of Cancun.

Around three years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake. I am from Sendai City in Miyagi prefecture, one of the regions devastated by the earthquake and the tsunami. I serve not only as Senior Vice Minister of Finance but also as Senior Vice Minister for Reconstruction. Since the disaster, we have received kind support and words of encouragement from Mexico, the host country of this Assembly, other GEF member countries and GEF staff. Allow me to use this occasion to express our thanks once again on behalf of the people of the disaster area and Japan.

2. Evaluation and Expectation for the GEF

(1) The Sixth Replenishment and Japan's cooperation

At this Assembly, we have been reviewing policy directions of the GEF. Before touching upon our thoughts on such policy directions of the GEF, I would like to first congratulate ourselves on the successful conclusion of the sixth replenishment of the GEF. It marked a record amount of donor contributions to fund the activities for the next four years, reflecting a broad support, in particular substantial increases of contributions by wide-ranging contributors including Mexico and other middle income countries. The successful completion of the GEF replenishment must be reflecting the broad support for the GEF's reform efforts and long-term vision as presented by 'the integrated approach programs' and 'strategy 2020'; and the strong expectation that the GEF will engage in even more effective and efficient activities.

Japan has decided to contribute 607 million dollars, despite our severe financial situation, marking an increase of roughly 20% over the previous replenishment. The decision was made with our high expectations for the leadership of CEO Ishii and innovative activities to be made by the GEF. Our increased contribution also reflects our firm resolution to strive toward preservation of global environment working with the GEF as a top donor.

Let me now turn to the specific areas of the GEF activities that we particularly appreciated in making the decision to substantially increase our contributions.

(2) Climate Change

First, climate change. It is a global environment challenge and requires global solution. The GEF continues to have the important role to play in disseminating its knowledge and expertise globally as well as catalyzing the global efforts.

Japan believes that the GEF and the new financial mechanism for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Green Climate Fund, should complement each other to achieve their aims. Meanwhile, Japan is of the view that it should make realistic choices and concrete contributions to the GEF, which is the only active financial mechanism at this moment, given that the GCF is not yet operational.

(3) Biodiversity and Aichi Targets

Next, Japan also has a strong interest in biodiversity, since people in Japan have long lived in good harmony with nature. In this area, the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10) in Aichi city in 2010 adopted the Aichi targets for countries in addressing biodiversity. The GEF has already been a strong impetus for achieving the targets, and is expected to be even more active in its efforts in the future.

In this context, I would like to note that a broad range of activities is needed to preserve biodiversity. For instance, I have been assisting preservation of biodiversity by working with my fellow member of the Diet to expand the wetlands protected under the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat. The Convention is already in cooperation with the GEF under the shared objective. We expect that the GEF continues to expand its cooperation with other relevant activities such as with the Ramsar Convention and thereby makes its activities more effective and broad-based.

(4) Chemical and Minamata Convention

In addition, Japan has been accumulating knowledge and expertise in addressing environmental pollution. In particular, we are fully aware of the need to take every possible measure to tackle the issue of chemical substances that remain in environment, as they affect human and ecosystem health in various ways. In this area, in order to globally address mercury pollution, which Japan has long been tackling, the Minamata convention was adopted and opened for signature at a diplomatic conference in October 2013 in Minamata city in Kumamoto prefecture, Japan.

The GEF has been designated as a financial mechanism of the Minamata Convention to provide financial assistance to developing countries under the convention. Japan expects that the GEF will actively support the efforts to implement the Minamata Convention.

3. Conclusion

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The GEF has a clear mission, being designated as the financial mechanisms of several multilateral conventions on global environment. With over 20 years of experience and its extensive track record, the GEF is expected to become the catalyst for environmental finance, eliciting investment by donor countries and international organizations, and leading the way to tackling global environment issues through its innovative programs. We highly praise the GEF for the efforts it is making to fulfill its mission even more effectively and efficiently under the strong leadership of CEO Ishii.

The preservation of the global environment needs to be strongly pursued as collective efforts through cooperation between developing countries and developed countries. I would like to conclude by saying that Japan expects the GEF to fulfil its mission by making the most efficient use of the limited resources under the strong leadership of CEO Ishii.

Thank you very much.