

**Oceans Action Day at COP23 Closing Plenary Speech by
Dr. Atsushi Sunami, President
the Ocean Policy Research Institute of Sasakawa Peace Foundation
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First of all, I'd like to say what an honour it is to be included amongst such a distinguished panel. Also, as the new President of the Ocean Policy Research Institute and one of the organizers of the Ocean Action Day, I'd like to express my gratitude to all the speakers and guests for your time and effort in making this event such a success.

Having listened to the discussions throughout the day, two things are abundantly clear. First, climate change and ocean sustainability are inseparable. These two issues are so tightly interlinked, both as environmental and socioeconomic systems, that we cannot hope to resolve one without the other. Second, the challenges of climate change and oceans are diverse, complex and multi-scaled. The themes addressed in the seven concurrent sessions today are by no means exhaustive, yet all must be part of the solution. And we all have a role to play.

As an independent ocean policy think tank, I believe the Ocean Policy Research Institute has a unique role to play. Building on the legacy of the Nippon Foundation and its history of capacity building and investment in people, I believe our institute must continue to build our collective capacity to think and find ways in which the world can attain a sustainable future. Such capacity comes in many shapes and forms, but today I want to mention four: capacity for knowledge, capacity for awareness, capacity for practice and capacity for decision making.

First, capacity for knowledge: climate and ocean policies must be based on science and our understanding of the natural and social systems. As we endeavour to build a new model of ocean-based economy, the "blue" economy, we must do so with scientific evidence. The Ocean Policy Research Institute is committed to building capacity in our research of blue economy policies through a network of experts engaged in cross-disciplinary discussions.

Second, capacity for awareness: unfortunately, oceans remain a foreign environment for many people. Take ocean acidification for example. It is a critical ocean issue, yet its impacts are gradual and invisible. Our institute believes successful policies require public understanding, and public understanding can only be achieved through public awareness. Our programs such as the Marine Crisis Watch, a public information platform on ocean acidification, are our commitment to building the capacity for awareness.

Third, capacity for practice: climate change mitigation and adaptation happen on the ground. It's the local community leaders and fisheries managers that are on the frontline in our fight against climate change. For over a decade, we have been working with

coastal communities around Japan through a number of Integrated Coastal Management projects. We have helped communities see themselves as part of a larger system and created a network for collective learning. And we remain committed to learning from the experiences of these communities throughout our research projects.

Finally, capacity for decision-making: our climate and ocean challenges demand bold decisions. This requires efforts from all of us: researchers, policy makers and stakeholders. We must work collaboratively, communicate, and trust one another. I believe projects like the Roadmap to Oceans and Climate Action Initiatives and the Oceans Action Day are how we make these things happen. And that is why I am delighted to be here today and a part of this growing community.

Thank you again for joining us. I look forward to seeing you all at COP24 and sharing with you the progress we have made.