Session 1	Opening Ceremony

Opening Remarks

Shuichi Abe Governor, Nagano Prefecture

Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs despite the pandemic

This year's SDGs National Forum is held in Nagano Prefecture, a rural area surrounded by mountains, taking up the torch from cosmopolitan Kanagawa Prefecture by the sea which held the first forum in 2019. The four major programs of this forum are: 1) sustainable lifestyles and communities in pursuing the SDGs, 2) roles of local governments in implementing the SDGs, 3) new corporate standards, and 4) climate change.

This forum is held online due to Covid-19, but the pandemic certainly does not undermine the need for us to fully commit to the realization of the SDGs. I hope the forum will enable us to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and build a sustainable future for the planet, starting from local communities.

Guest Remarks

Tetsushi Sakamoto Minister appointed by the Cabinet Office (Minister of State for Measures for Declining Birthrate, Minister of State for Regional Revitalization)
Minister for Promoting the Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens
Minister for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan

Applying the SDGs' integrated approach in regional revitalization

Both the SDGs and regional revitalization require all stakeholders such as local governments, corporations, organizations, schools, research institutions, and citizens to act in collaborative partnership. The first SDGs National Forum declared the SDGs Japan Model to pledge that local governments throughout Japan would implement the SDGs. Addressing regional challenges based on the principles of the SDGs will accelerate the national implementation of the SDGs as a whole.

Japan defines the next 10 years from 2020 to 2030 as "the 10 years of action" aiming to fully realize the SDGs. While taking effective countermeasures against Covid-19 and implementing regional revitalization, we must urgently adopt the SDGs' integrated approach to balance the three inseparable dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. I hope this forum will stimulate more active involvement in the SDGs Japan model to bring about regional revitalization.

Guest Remarks

Takashi Uto   State Minister for Foreign Affairs

Local actions on SDGs to inspire the world

The Covid-19 pandemic has utterly transformed the world. People in vulnerable situations are especially suffering from the effects of the pandemic, which has significantly disrupted efforts to achieve the SDGs. In order for us to build forward better, the SDGs with the pledge of "no one left behind" provide indispensable guidelines to follow.

The principles of the SDGs must be disseminated throughout Japan since local governments' actions towards realizing the SDGs will generate positive effects in solving regional challenges such as population decline and economic slowdown. Japanese local governments' approaches to the SDGs are highly regarded around the world. I hope this forum will inspire communities within and outside of Japan to take action to achieve the SDGs.

Guest Remarks

Kaoru Nemoto   Director, United Nations Information Centre
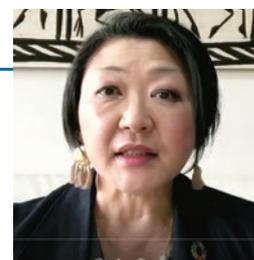
The SDGs as our compass to recover stronger

Soon after we declared the next 10 years from 2020 to 2030 as "the 10 years of action," the Covid-19 calamity struck. This pandemic has exposed many of society's underlying issues, set back progress made on eliminating poverty in recent decades, and delayed our efforts to achieving the SDGs. When we recover from Covid-19, we cannot simply return to our old ways which ultimately caused this crisis. We must recover to build a better, more inclusive, and sustainable society. The SDGs will be our guide, our compass in this journey.

With a strong sense of urgency, the United Nations believes that we cannot pass on this beautiful planet with shared prosperity to future generations if we do not intensify our efforts now. I hope we can move one step forward from simply "knowing" the problems to "acting" to solve the problems.