

**Second Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network
17 October 2003, Weihai, China
Opening Remarks**

Professor Hidefumi Imura
Institute for Global Environmental Strategies

Honourable Mayors, distinguished delegates, guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I am honoured to be present today at the Mayors' Segment of the Second Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network and to have an opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies.

The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, under the guidance of UNESCAP and the Government of Japan, provides professional, financial and secretariat support for the implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative. Established in 1998 as a non-profit, non-governmental research institute, IGES provides input on topics of critical importance, including climate policy, forest conservation, environmental education, and urban environmental management.

Support for the Kitakyushu Initiative is mainly conducted under the Urban Environmental Management Project. The Kitakyushu Initiative is an important focal point of our research--by providing timely research output to local governments, we are able to receive important feedback from local and national governments. This is a mutually beneficial relationship; by providing research institutes with information critical to the development of policy recommendations in urban environmental management, local governments will be able to obtain information necessary to their work in environment and sustainable development areas.

With our extensive network of experts and organisations, IGES is strategically positioned to facilitate support for activities under the Kitakyushu Initiative from local and international agencies, including the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Kitakyushu International Techno-Cooperative Association (KITA), the City of Kitakyushu, and others.

With timely and effective guidance from ESCAP, the members of the Urban Environmental Management project have made substantial contributions to the implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative, including the collection and analysis of successful practices, support for the implementation of pilot activities in member cities, and development of the Network.

With active participation from cities, we have facilitated the creation of a broad and interactive network. This is most visible in the organisation of thematic seminars, in which we have witnessed fruitful discussions and exchange of information, as well as identification of issues critical to local governments. Meetings are beginnings; they are not a means to an end. These meetings provide momentum for the further enhancement of collaboration between local governments and the various stakeholders in the region.

In the process of the implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative, we have seen that every city has experiences to share and that every city, regardless of its environmental stage, has something to learn. We have seen the importance of the involvement of stakeholders in all stages of project development, from decision-making to implementation to evaluation, which has been eloquently demonstrated by so many cities in the Network. We have witnessed the blossoming of new cooperation and exchange between local governments as they have learned about similar experiences and activities in related areas.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the Mayor and Executive Mayor of Weihai and the City of Weihai for their role as host of this year's Network Meeting. They have guided their city to achieve high environmental standards within a short timeframe, while maintaining high economic growth. This is a tribute to the city's dedication in placing priority on the environment.

We are also indebted to the State Environmental Protection Administration of China for their role in the support of the implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative, as well as the Government of Japan and other national and international collaborators.

IGES is honoured to have an opportunity to provide continued support to UNESCAP in the implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative and looks forward to the continued improvement of the environment in our Region, through cooperation with all collaborators.

Once again, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Mayor, the Executive Mayor, and the City of Weihai for their role in bringing about the success of the Second Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative. I look forward to the successful conclusion of today's segment to continue to strengthen future Network activities.

Thank you.