

Statement by Dr. Yohei Sasakawa
Chairman, The Nippon Foundation of Japan
On the occasion of
World Oceans Day and the marking of the 30th Anniversary of UNCLOS
United Nations Headquarters, New York

*The importance of human capacity in the implementation
of the Convention and beyond*

Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs – the Legal Counsel,
Chairpersons,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great honour that I received an invitation to participate in this very important event marking the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention, which is appropriately taking place on June eighth: Oceans Day.

The Legal Counsel has eloquently outlined the importance of the Convention as the constitution of the Ocean, and we will hear from the distinguished Panellists each of whom represent an institution established by the Convention and working on its implementation.

We now must take stock of our accomplishments during the last thirty years, so as to effectively address the lacunas at all levels and across all disciplines with our next steps.

Allow me to contribute to this important reflection a few remarks from the civil-society and donor perspective, particularly with respect to human capacity-development.

Ocean affairs and the law of the sea is a multi-disciplinary and ever expanding field which requires constant and deliberate attention from all of us, including: diplomats, law and policy makers, civil servants, managers, scientists, and civil society.

We are all challenged by the unique nature and fundamental importance of the Ocean. Meanwhile, with the world population currently exceeding 7 billion, we are becoming increasingly dependent upon the ocean, while simultaneously taxing it to its limits. Moreover, national interests are also coming to the surface on the seas, straining the security of the international community.

The Nippon Foundation's vision in this regard is one which accepts a shared responsibility required to effectively address the challenges, and recognizes that we are all interconnected and, as individuals, we each form the fundamental building blocks of the solutions. We seek to learn from our past as we assume responsibility today for the future so as to ensure we pass on to the next generations a sustainable ocean.

Despite the fact that the world's oceans and the problems affecting them are interrelated and that an international coalition among states and institutions is necessary to protect the oceans, I submit that currently there is no such coalition; at least one effecting the necessary positive changes.

It is thus the Nippon Foundation's view that in order to facilitate this international coalition, it is essential for all of us to develop professionals who possess a global and multi-disciplinary vision to take us beyond the existing framework.

To this end, the Nippon Foundation already cooperates with the United Nations System, research institutes, universities, Governments and NGOs to offer a portfolio of human resource development programs.

This portfolio of programs aims at the creation and nurturing of a new generation of ocean professionals who will provide leadership to change people's awareness and behavior. This approach is paralleled by a second objective which is the construction of a network through which professionals engaged in ocean-related issues are able to cooperate and collaborate beyond their respective context.

I am pleased to report that the Nippon Foundation has thus far trained over 700 maritime law and policy experts from over 100 countries, and has fostered the development of a network of these individuals thereby reinforcing their ability to effectively address ocean problems.

A tangible example of these efforts lies amongst you, the diplomatic and international civil service corps concerned with ocean issues, in the form of the very successful United Nations – Nippon Foundation Fellowship Programme which is implemented in collaboration with DOALOS. This Programme works in partnership with universities throughout the world to provide capacity-building opportunities for government officials and maritime affairs professionals from developing States. It provides a unique and rich opportunity for the fellows, by combining an individualized academic research curriculum with a second phase providing practical exposure to the multilateral process here at the UN Headquarters.

For the last eight years, this Programme has clearly contributed to the building of a new generation of ocean diplomats and professionals: So far, 70 fellows from 45 countries have taken the program and are now actively engaged in multidisciplinary and cross-border networking through alumni activities.

We remain strongly committed to supporting these types of initiatives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the spirit of shared responsibility and commitment to pass a sustainable ocean to the next generations, I am pleased to announce, for the first time, that the Nippon Foundation will significantly expand its contribution to global human capacity-building. We will introduce a new initiative to identify maritime issues through a ten year, high-level dialogue process, and establish new capacity-building programs in response to needs

identified by such a process. It is our hope that this initiative will contribute to the implementation of international ocean commitments at conventions and commitments such as Rio+20.

It is through this humble commitment that the Nippon Foundation will continue to support the universal and effective implementation of the Ocean Constitution so as to ensure that our future generations inherit a sustainable ocean.

I thank you for the opportunity to address this important meeting, and in closing I invite the international community to actively participate in this initiative.

Thank you.