

**Second Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network
15-17 October 2003, Weihai, China
Opening Remarks**

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Distinguished delegates, guests, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, it is an honour to have this opportunity to deliver these words of welcome in the beautiful city of Weihai on this most auspicious occasion of the Second Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network.

Since the Initiative's inception at the First Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network held in Kitakyushu in November 2001, we have seen the Network expand to include cities from around the Asia-Pacific region, all of which are motivated to not only improve the environment in their own cities but to also share their experiences and expertise with other cities.

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 provide input on topics of critical importance, including climate policy, forest conservation, environmental education, and urban environmental management.

Within IGES, support for the Kitakyushu Initiative is mainly conducted under the Urban Environmental Management Project, which has identified capacity building of local governments as its major focus. In this way, the Kitakyushu Initiative is an important focal point of our research—by providing timely research output to local governments on issues such as air and water quality, solid waste management, creation of resource recycling societies, and financial mechanisms for environmental protection, we are able to receive important feedback from local and national governments which has a direct impact on the enhancement of future research in these areas. 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.

The First Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network in 2001 recommended that activities focus on the collection and analysis of successful practices in urban environmental management to improve capacity of local governments, implementation of pilot activities in selected cities to determine the effectiveness and transferability of different approaches in urban environmental improvement; and development of the Network, including enhanced interaction among stakeholders and promotion of information exchange and dissemination.

In order to respond to the recommendations of the First Network Meeting, the Kitakyushu Initiative has been conducting analysis on various environmental practices of local governments to facilitate the formulation of future projects for the replication of successful practices in the region, as well as the formulation of new action programmes to address critical issues. Pilot activities have also been a major focus in identifying and reviewing different approaches and targets in urban environmental management. Finally, capacity building seminars and trainings have also been organized to facilitate interaction and information exchange among 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 Honourable Mayor of Weihai and the City of Weihai for the excellent arrangements made in the organization of this meeting, which is a tribute to the city's dedication in sharing their experiences with others. 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 for such an ambitious and historical programme and looks forward to working together with local and national governments to improve the environment in our Region.

Once again, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Honourable Mayor and City of Weihai for their role as gracious hosts for the Second Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network. I look forward to the success of this Meeting and to developing a future roadmap for the improvement of the environment in our cities.

Thank you.