

Speech of H.I.H. Princess Takamado
in
the Opening Session of Science Symposium ISAR-4/ICARPIII
of
Arctic Science Summit Week 2015

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It is a great pleasure for me to be able to join you for the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW) in Toyama. There are many faces that I recognize and, of course, many new. To all of you from countries other than Japan, a non-Arctic warm welcome to you all. Each time, I attend a gathering of Arctic and Antarctic bodies, I find myself bemused by the many acronyms by which the organisations and meetings are known, and Toyama is fast proving to be yet another one of those occasions.

My first experience of the Arctic was in the late 1990s when my late husband and I visited the Canadian north a couple of times as well as Greenland. Then, in 1998, I decided to write a children's book about an iceberg. I was keen that the book should be "educational" — I was in the middle of bringing up 3 children — and one that scientists would wish to buy for their children or grand-children. I needed to contact many scientists in order to get accurate information. One of them was Peter Wadhams and, it was through his introduction, that I, as well as the children, became frequent visitors to the National Institute of Polar Research. The book is called "Lulie the Iceberg", and depicts the journey of a "young" iceberg from Greenland who sets off on a journey to meet the elders in the Antarctic ice. You will be pleased to know that, in the glossary, I mention ice coring and comment on the amazing amount of knowledge that is trapped in the ice.

We have all seen how the Arctic has undergone a drastic transformation in recent years, rapid changes in the environment are taking a heavy toll on both arctic wildlife and on indigenous peoples whose lifestyles are grounded in coexistence with the natural world. We must be quicker and more organized in the way we take action.

Recently, I had the opportunity to look through the Conservation of Arctic Fauna and Flora's recent Arctic biodiversity assessment. One of the urgent priorities seems to be to maximize the resilience of Arctic ecosystems in the face of what might come. In terms of arctic wildlife, effective protection of habitat, but in sufficiently large tracts of land, is a must. Global warming is opening up the arctic to resource extraction and shipping, and these cannot but lead to habitat destruction, pollution and hunting. We must ensure that the human race does not end up looting its own bank and losing all the earth's reserves.

I serve as the honorary president of BirdLife International. Birds are indicators for the environment as they are often visible or audible and, in many cases, scientific data is more readily available or attainable than for other species. All countries of the world are ecologically linked to the Arctic by Arctic-breeding migratory birds. These birds may act as the canary in the coal mine as to conditions in the Arctic. By looking after arctic birds during their annual migratory visits as well as by ensuring that any activities undertaken in the arctic by businesses meet high environmental standards, the ecology of the arctic may be conserved. Over-zealous and short-sighted development would lead to horrifying results, and it is imperative that leading organizations and nations show deep commitment and a clear-sighted sense of balance.

In this effort, science obviously plays a vital role. Scientists all over the world must pool their knowledge and wisdom to gain the clearest possible understanding of changes affecting the Arctic and the planet as a whole, of what should be mitigated and of what adaptations to change are necessary. However, science alone cannot solve the problem. All stakeholders—and that means everybody, including scientists, politicians, industry, governments and non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples, and us, the average man in the street—need to share information and insights and work together. And let us remember. No one organization, nor one country will be able to solve the various issues, but then one organization or one country is better than none. Less efficient, but better.

This year is a milestone year, with ASSW2015 marking 25 years since the

establishment of IASC, and the scheduled ICARP III conference, which will determine the course of the next 10 years of Arctic research. You have gathered to address the various issues facing the Arctic region and to explore the various ways in which you may carry out, support and facilitate Arctic research and ensure that there is international coordination, collaboration and cooperation in all fields of Arctic science.

The eyes of the world are looking northward. I do hope that this meeting of minds will bring about many fruitful results and I take this opportunity to express my most fervent hopes for further progress in Arctic studies on a global scale, and accelerated efforts to resolve the issues facing this crucial region of our planet.