



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

**United Nations – Nippon Foundation
Fellowship Programme Global Alumni Meeting 2014**

Statement

By

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Excellencies,

Chairman Sasakawa,

Distinguished Professors,

Alumni,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct honor to join Chairman Sasakawa today in opening the first global meeting of the Alumni of the United Nations - The Nippon Foundation of Japan Fellowship Programme, on the 10th anniversary of the Fellowship and the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea – which is often referred to as the “Constitution for the oceans”.

The events we mark today are deeply interlinked.

On the one hand, we celebrate the results of the international community’s engagement to secure a universal Constitution for the oceans, which serves as the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

As such, the implementation of this instrument is central to the peaceful and sustainable development of the oceans and seas.

On the other hand, the commitment of the Nippon Foundation of Japan and the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations to provide developing States with capacity-building and assistance in the implementation of the same Constitution, so as to ensure that they may derive benefits therefrom in a peaceful and sustainable manner.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished participants,

Some 13 years ago our organizations shared a common vision on the central importance of human capacity in securing a sustainable future for the oceans. Through this understanding we built the first and – to this day – the only Fellowship Programme of its kind, which strategically reinforces the capacity of developing States in a uniquely customized manner.

The uniqueness of the Programme, and its success, lies in several elements which we have come to fine-tune over the last decade:

the highly competitive selection process, the two-phase Programme structure, the host institution placement and the Alumni Programme component.

Allow me to take a few minutes to highlight the unique structure of this Programme, which is composed of two phases: The first is a three-month practicum hosted in New York by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs, or DOALOS; this is followed by a six-month customized research placement under the guidance and mentorship of an internationally recognized Professor or Researcher. This dual individually customized approach is at the crux of the success of the Programme.

The first phase, hosted by DOALOS, immerses the Fellows in a guided first-hand experience of how ocean issues are being addressed at the United Nations, in particular in the ocean-related multilateral processes, including, *inter alia*, the Meeting of States Parties to the Law of the Sea Convention and the General Assembly's Informal Consultative Process. DOALOS also provides the Fellows with a series of customized lectures ranging from the foundations of ocean affairs and the law of the sea, including legal and institutional frameworks, to contemporary issues at the forefront of the international community's agenda.

These lectures are also supplemented by professional development modules, which build the capacity of the Fellows in such areas as negotiation skills, presentation skills and strategic management.

The second phase of the Programme has the Fellows placed for a six-month research programme with a Host Institution. These customized placements allow the Fellows to directly address, through their research, a critical issue of strategic relevance at the national or regional levels, under the substantive guidance of DOALOS and a recognized international expert in the field. Some examples of recent output of such research include the development of draft national laws and policies, management plans and strategic analysis of current State practice.

I am extremely pleased to note that as we near the end of the tenth cycle of the Fellowship, 100 individuals from 64 developing States have benefitted from this Fellowship, and this past October the Programme Selection Committee selected 10 new Fellows for the 2015 cycle, bringing the total number of States that have benefitted from the Fellowship to 67. It is also important to note that the now 110 awards, which are strictly competitive and merit-based, have an overall gender ratio of half male and half female, making this one of the most successful programmes of the United Nations System in this regard.

Today we also recognize the academic partners of the Programme: the Professors and Researchers, as well as their Academic Institutions, who share our vision and common responsibility to assist developing States in the sustainable governance of the ocean. As I previously mentioned, this relationship is central to the success of the Programme, and it must be recognized that each and every one of the approximately 300 individuals from over 50 institutions world-wide donate their time and knowledge to this Programme. This point cannot be overstated, as each is a world-recognized expert in his or her own specialized field, and has accepted to work directly with the Fellows they host for a period of six months. Therefore, we recognize the Professors present this week, thank them, and through them their colleagues and Institutions for their invaluable contributions.

We also recognize the Alumni, who demonstrated courage and dedication throughout the Fellowship, an experience which can be life changing on both the personal and professional levels. I had the pleasure to meet the current Fellows while they were in New York earlier this year for the first phase of the Programme, and I can attest to their high level of engagement and eagerness to learn, grow and contribute solutions to the plethora of challenges faced by the ocean.

The unique success of the Programme also lies in the recognition that our investment in the individual Fellows must not stop after nine months if we are to truly build a new generation of ocean professionals. The continuing development of the Alumni is built into the Programme so as to accompany each individual as their needs change through their careers and so as to equip them with the latest knowledge in the ever evolving field of ocean affairs and the law of the sea. It also seeks to harness the formidable potential of a global network of like-minded individuals with experience and

knowledge in addressing ocean issues. The Alumni meeting we are opening today is a testament to the success of this approach.

The Alumni's commitment to continuing development and the sharing of knowledge and experiences is exemplary, and their actions speak for themselves as we have some 90 Alumni present for this meeting from 58 States. I am told that this level of commitment is typical of the Alumni, as reflected in approximately 90% participation rate in each of the five Regional Alumni meetings which have been held over the last five years. I think you will all agree that these statistics reveal a great deal about the quality of character of the Alumni, and I commend them for their commitment to this Programme and thank them for their contribution to the success of this meeting and its outcome.

Of course I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the commitment of the staff who have constructed this Programme over a decade ensuring it remains adaptive and responsive in this ever-mutating field of ocean affairs and law of the sea.

In closing, I note that the Convention represents the single most comprehensive international treaty ever negotiated. It is widely accepted as the foundation for the principles of international law which govern human interaction with the oceans and seas. While on a different scale, the founders of the Fellowship also established a standard of practice in capacity-development for ocean affairs and the law of the sea, which today has become universally recognized - I do not say this because of my Office's role in this success, but I simply echo a decade of accolades emanating from the international community. Indeed, the important contribution of the Fellowship Programme to human resources development for developing Member States in the field of ocean affairs and the law of the sea and related disciplines is recognized on an annual basis by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution on oceans and the law of the sea.

I wish to end on a note of personal thanks to Chairman Sasakawa for having recognized the importance of this vision over a decade ago and, perhaps more importantly, for having committed to its implementation.

Mr. Chairman, I venture to confirm that while the journey ahead of us is still long, we are well on our way to building the future generation of ocean managers and leaders. I also wish to personally reiterate my Office's steadfast commitment to our partnership and its expansion as we continue to row the boat in unison.

I wish all of you a successful meeting and I look forward to its outcomes which I am certain will meet all our expectations.

Thank you.