

Welcome Remarks

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Eminent Speakers and Chairpersons,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am Kazuhiko Shimada, Deputy Director-General of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Research Council Secretariat. On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the participants who have come to join the JIRCAS International Symposium 2018 today. I would especially like to express my deepest appreciation to JIRCAS for organizing this symposium under the theme of "Women in Fisheries: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Contributions to Research and Industry".

In recent years, Japanese food culture such as sushi and sashimi - which we are so proud of - is becoming extremely popular all over the world. The Japanese people have a long tradition of consuming seafood, which we consider as a precious gift from the ocean. The fishery industry of Japan has continued to develop against this background of food culture while adapting itself to the changes of the times.

Women's presence has always been significant in fishery in Japan. In the traditional fishery industry, women fishers called "ama" are famous for diving without equipment (oxygen tanks) in the coastal areas. In the modern days as well, women have been playing an important role in selection and processing work for fishes that are landed at the seaport. At the symposium today, female researchers will be giving lectures from the women's point of view, with special focus on women who are active in the fishery industry. I am convinced that discussions based on these lectures will enable us to better reflect women's opinions and ways of thinking in the fishery industry, as well as to support women researchers in the field of fisheries.

In our country, the production volume of fishery and aquaculture industry has been declining. In 2016, it was four point three six (4.36) million tons, coming down to one third (1/3) of the figure during the peak period, while the gross fisheries output almost halved compared with its peak (to 1 trillion five hundred and eighty-five point six billion yen in 2016). One of the factors that is responsible for this decline is overfishing in the world, which has resulted in a decrease in fishery resources. Demand for fishery products is rapidly increasing worldwide because of factors such as health consciousness in Europe and the United States, economic development of China, and overall increase in the world population. The fishery resources of the world are already fully utilized or rather over-utilized, which threatens the sustainable development of the fishery industry.

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Under these current circumstances, in 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and has been promoting efforts to protect "Life Below Water", which is one of the SDGs. In response to this situation, in June this year, the Japanese government decided upon a strategy of reforming the fishery policy in order to manage fishery resources appropriately, and to transform the fishery into a growth industry. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is currently examining necessary measures to implement this reform.

In view of these circumstances, it is very timely and appropriate that the goal of achieving SDGs has been selected as the theme of this symposium. I sincerely hope that today's symposium will help you to better understand the role of women in the fishery industry in achieving the goals of SDGs. Finally, it would be my great pleasure if today's discussion leads to the promotion of women's active participation in research and society, and sheds new light on our work to achieve sustainable development of fisheries resources and food security.

Thank you for your kind attention.