

Voluntary report on implementation of the Programme of work
on marine and coastal biological diversity
Submission by Japan

In response to the decision VIII/14 on national reporting and the next Global Biodiversity Outlook, Japan submits its voluntary report on implementation of the programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity focusing on its efforts for marine pollution management, coral reef conservation and creation of SATO-UMI.

1. Marine pollution management

Japan has been conducting “Survey on marine pollution in Japanese waters” to monitor chronological changes and comprehensively assess the marine environment around Japan since 1975. In addition, Japan has been making efforts to assess the status of pollution in seawater, seafloor sediments and marine species since 1988 by adding marine ecosystem to monitoring items which originally consist of water quality and bottom material.

Japan actively promotes not only monitoring of marine environment but also measures to prevent marine pollution both domestically and internationally.

Japan has introduced the license system on the dumping of wastes based on the “Law Relating to the Prevention of Marine Pollution and Maritime Disaster” revised in response to the ratification of the "1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972". Japan promotes conservation of the marine environment through the appropriate operation of the license system.

Japan has been taking measures to prevent marine pollution from discharges of oils, noxious liquid substances and wastes since its accession to the “International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Prot (MARPOL73/78)”, in 1983.

Furthermore, in accordance with the “International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation, 1990 (OPRC Convention)”, Japan developed its national contingency plan to address oil spill accidents which undermine marine ecosystems and prepared Environmental Sensitivity Index Map of coastal area so that coasts to protect can be immediately identified in case

of oil spill accidents. Environmental Sensitivity Index Map were prepared in the same manner for noxious liquid substances and hazardous materials.

Japan actively participates in the international cooperation for prevention of marine pollutions through several international frameworks such as the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) and the North-West Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP).

2. Conservation of coral reef

According to the decision V/3 on progress report on the implementation of the programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity, the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties endorsed the elaborated programme of work which indicates that the Executive Secretary should facilitate implementation through active collaboration with International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) and its partners.

In this context, Japan had co-hosted the secretariat of the ICRI with Palau from July 2005 until June 2007 and promoted international efforts for coral reef conservation including the development of the Regional Marine Protected Area database "Coral Reef MPAs of East Asia and Micronesia".

At the G8 Environment Ministers Meeting held in May 2008 in Kobe, the G8 ministers adopted the "Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity" and Japan committed itself to the implementation including promotion of conservation of coral reefs and related ecosystems through International Coral Reef Initiative framework and organization of "International Coral Reef Marine Protected Area Network Meeting".

In accordance with the commitment, Japan hosted the International Coral Reef Marine Protected Area Network Meeting / 4th ICRI East Asia Regional Workshop at Tokyo in 18th and 19th November with 65 participants from 10 East Asian government, 26 organizations including international and regional organizations, academia and NGOs.. The summary of the workshop is annexed to this document.

Japan is also in the process of developing a domestic action plan through multi-stakeholder consultations in order to promote coral reef conservation in harmony with sustainable development of local community.

Japan would like to continue actively promote international cooperation for the coral reef conservation.

3. Creation of SATO-UMI

Japan enacted the “Water Pollution Control Law” in 1970 to cope with an expansion of marine pollutions in the coastal area by centralizing the administrations on water quality preservation, and eventually a control regime on total pollutant load was introduced in the Tokyo bay, the Ise bay and the Seto inland sea in 1978. Nevertheless, although the situation has been substantially improved, “red tides”, “anoxic water masses” and “blue tides” still occur in the coastal area of Japan. Recovery of the marine and coastal ecosystems was not sufficient because of the decrease in material circulation functions of the ocean, and the public attention to the conservation of the marine environment is being decreased. To cope with such a situation, Japan has introduced a new concept of “SATO-UMI”, which is defined as "high productivity and biodiversity of coastal sea area as a result of, and in harmony with, human activity", and incorporated it into its policy frameworks such as the “Strategy for an Environmental Nation in the 21st Century (2007)”, the “National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan(2007)” and the “Basic Plan on Ocean Policy(2008)”.

As stated above, “SATO-UMI” represents coastal seas which have close relationships with the public and therefore include even highly populated areas. For instance, at the Tokyo bay area, where the large population brings a significant load onto the sea, and where the water purification function is limitedly performed due to the lack of natural coast. Several attempts have been conducted by local residents and communities, such as water purification through oyster cultivation, with the aim of regenerating the purification functions by increasing living organisms that ingest the nutrients flowed in from the land.

The Government of Japan is currently involved in assisting activities to enhance benefits of SATO-UMI, distributing a manual for the dissemination of its concept, and promoting the related publicity and education. The Government of Japan intends to disseminate to the world the outcomes derived from these efforts through the SATO-UMI website.

Japan wishes to actively contribute to the conservation and restoration of marine and coastal environment all over the world through the SATO-UMI initiative.