

Afterword

In February 2007, the Working Group I of the IPCC published their contribution to the Fourth Assessment Report. The media reported on their findings with much fanfare. Following this coverage, a significant change in the public's attitude occurred with greatly heightened interest and many discussions on how we should tackle our global issues. There is today a common understanding that the well being of the next generation depends entirely on how speedily and effectively we of this era respond to global warming and the whole of global environmental problems.

The Asahi Glass Foundation established the Blue Planet Prize in 1991 and awarded the first prize in 1992, the year of the Earth Summit. Starting from the second award ceremony, the event has been attended by Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino.

Since its inception 15 years ago, the prize has been awarded to winners from 14 countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, India, the People's Republic of China, Russia, Australia, Vietnam, Norway, Indonesia and Japan. The award has continued to gain in prestige and prominence during this period.

This publication, commemorating the last five years of the Blue Planet Prize, is a sequel to the second commemorative publication published in 2002, which followed upon the first, published in 1997. Each contains the lectures of the prize winners, over the five years, given at the ceremony of the Blue Planet Prize. The laureates were kind enough to give of their time and to contribute essays about the environment and recent developments in their fields. We thank them for their cooperation and generosity in contributing to these volumes. Their lectures and essays are a valuable resource and provide important guidance on what we can and must do to find solutions to global environmental problems.

The Blue Planet Prize rests entirely on the willingness of the nominators to recommend candidates who deserve to be awarded, and on the selection committee members who deliberate and judge the outstanding award laureates. All of us at the Foundation would like to take this opportunity to thank the nominators, the members of the selection committee, and all who have supported us for their consideration, understanding and cooperation in bringing everything together for the realisation of the Blue Planet Prize.

Since 1992, the Foundation has also conducted an annual survey called "Questionnaire on Environmental Problems and the Survival of Humankind." Each year, the results of this survey are analysed and compiled into a published report. A summary of the last 15 years, with a special focus on the most recent five years, appears in this commemorative publication. We hope the survey's findings on views about environmental policies and humanity's current predicament will be useful for readers and help stimulate further interest in environmental issues.

There is no longer doubt that humanity's endlessly expanding activities are having an enormous effect on the global environment. The time has come to reconsider human impact on a global scale and our wisdom to be put to a test. We must begin changing individual awareness, regional awareness, and national awareness.

We would be honored if the Blue Planet Prize and the Questionnaire on Environmental Problems and the Survival of Humankind were to play even a small role in changing people's awareness and contribute to passing on this wonderful planet Earth, home to all living things, to the next generation.

In closing, it is with tremendous regret that we note the passing of Dr. Charles D. Keeling in 2005 and Prof. Sir Nicholas Shackleton in 2006, the recipients of the 2nd (1993) and 14th (2005) Blue Planet Prize. Our thoughts remain with them.

Keiichi Uchida
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