

## Opening Address

On behalf of the National Institute for Agro-Environmental Sciences (NIAES), I would like to extend the most cordial greetings to all visiting guests and experts, not only from Asian but from around the world, and also participants from domestic government organizations, academic institutions, and research institutes. Please allow me to give you a hearty welcome to MARCO Symposium 2009 in Tsukuba titled "Challenges for Agro-Environmental Research in Monsoon Asia". MARCO, which is the abbreviation for Monsoon Asia Agro-Environmental Research Consortium, was established in December 2006, is a flexible research collaboration network. Its main aim is to facilitate international collaboration for agro-environmental research in the Asian Monsoon region in order to analyze, evaluate, and solve various problems related to the agricultural environment, and to develop and spread techniques for sustainable agricultural production that preserves environmental resources and enhances the power of biosystems. As of August 2009, MARCO has 17 member organizations (academic institutions and research institutes) from different countries in the Asian Monsoon region.

This three-day-symposium is being held to share knowledge of the status quo and problem trends related to the agro-environment and discuss the direction of future research and collaboration. It consists of a plenary session on the first day giving an overview of several main topics in agricultural and environmental issues, five workshops on "phyto-technology for decreasing heavy metal in food", "crop production under heat stress" "allelochemicals and plant natural resources", "agro-ecosystem in relation with biodiversity" and "meta-genomics analysis techniques" on the second and third days, and a summary concluding session on the third day. We are proud to have Professor Emeritus Dr. Kazutaka Kyuma of Kyoto University, for our keynote lecture, Professor of the Center for Development Research, the University of Bonn, Dr. Paul L.G. Vlek and six other distinguished speakers for our lectures at the plenary session. We sincerely hope that all the participants will enjoy the series of outstanding lectures and that they will stimulate their future research.

With an understanding of the purposes of this international symposium, I hope you not only will obtain useful results, but also will deepen relationships with each other through active exchanges of opinions during these three days. I sincerely hope that you will have a continuing interest in MARCO and continue to provide us with

your constant support and cooperation. Together with you, MARCO will successfully carry out its mandates and continue to work towards a better world for future generations.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Research Council, MAFF, for generous co-organizer. Finally, I should like to end these words of welcome in hopes of success for this workshop for the next three days.

Thank you.

October 5, 2009

**Yohei Sato**

President

National Institute for Agro-Environmental Sciences