

## **Joint Declaration by Researchers toward the Environmental Conservation of the Sea of Okhotsk and Surrounding Regions**

1. The Sea of Okhotsk is not only an important source for rich marine resources as the exclusive economic zones for Russia and Japan, but also for neighboring Asian countries such as China and Mongolia that do not share direct boundaries with the Sea. Moreover, since the Sea lies in the southern boundary of the seasonal sea ice in the northern hemisphere and affected by the warm and cold currents, it is home to a distinct ecosystem and has evolved into a rich biodiversity.
2. With the progress in scientific research in recent years, it has been revealed that the primary production and the biodiversity that depends on the Sea of Okhotsk and the neighboring Oyashio region is greatly affected by and mutually dependent on not only the sea waters but also land. Amongst these, the largest river that flows into the Sea of Okhotsk, the Amur River, supplies a great amount of dissolved iron to both the Sea of Okhotsk and the Oyashio sea waters, which contributes to the high primary production of these sea waters. This discovery has been made by our research efforts that identified the physical and biological linkage between the land-surface environment on a continental scale and the open seas. In other words, the Sea of Okhotsk and the neighboring Oyashio region as well as the Amur River form an enormous ecosystem that transcends the boundaries between sea and land. It is a special and great concern for countries of the Amur River region and for the countries neighboring the Sea of Okhotsk to identify the unique mechanism of the ecosystem and to consider the future of the natural environment of the Amur-Okhotsk ecosystem.
3. In recent years, various human activities in the Northeast Asian region have resulted in the deterioration of the water quality of the Amur River and there are concerns about the effect this will have on the natural environment of the Sea of Okhotsk. We researchers will pay significant attention to evaluating how such human activities will affect the nature of the Sea of Okhotsk in the future. Moreover, we have also reached a common understanding that in order to ensure the sustainable development of this region we must deepen our academic knowledge on the research, conservation and the rational and sustainable use of the ecosystem of the concerned region.
4. The region of the Sea of Okhotsk and the natural environment of the Amur River Basin shares borders with the 4 countries of China, Japan, Mongolia and Russia, therefore, the cooperation among these countries is significantly important for the

conservation of this region. Up until now, at the governmental level, various bilateral frameworks for environmental cooperation among China, Japan, Mongolia and Russia have been implemented. However, currently there are no multilateral frameworks agreed upon among these countries. Therefore, even at the researchers' level there are no sufficient sharing of information and not enough opportunity to reach a common recognition of what the problems are. Thus, we researchers that share a common understanding will voluntarily participate in discussions of the problems taking into consideration the range and scope of the bilateral frameworks and the rights and obligations in international law, while paying full respect to the domestic legal obligations of each country. We have also come to a common recognition of the necessity to cooperate in terms of research and actions to discuss the possibilities and effectiveness of common use of information while sharing and exchanging information and opinion on a regular basis concerning what is necessary and what must be done for the conservation of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Amur River Basin.

While taking into consideration the points above, we firmly agree to the following:

1. To promote the sharing of information to the degree that can be disclosed by researchers of each country;
2. To make efforts toward a cooperative environmental monitoring;
3. To facilitate the robust discussions that transcends borders toward an environmental conservation and sustainable use of the resources of the Amur River Basin and the Sea of Okhotsk;
4. To establish the "Amur-Okhotsk Consortium" as a multilateral researchers' network to promote the above 3 goals.

(1) Establishment of the "Amur-Okhotsk Consortium"

We researchers will establish a researchers' network "Amur-Okhotsk Consortium" as a platform to discuss issues grounded on scientific knowledge for the purpose of sharing a common recognition through the exchange of opinion and discussions on the natural environment of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Amur River Basin. This network is a non-governmental network and has not been founded on or by any particular country or organization. This is a

personal network comprised of voluntarily participating researchers who share a common awareness and for the possibility of a free discussion by researchers on the future of the ecosystem of the Amur-Okhotsk.

(2) Tentative Secretaries, the Establishment of the Provisional Secretariat and the Meeting of the Consortium

The Consortium will hold a meeting once every 2 years and exchange information and opinions. This symposium will mark the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting will be held in Sapporo in 2011. The provisional secretariat will be established at the Pan-Okhotsk Research Center at the Institute of Low Temperature Science, Hokkaido University. Moreover, the tentative secretaries of the participating countries will be as follows: Zhigang DA (Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences) representing the Chinese researchers, Peter BAKLANOV (Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences) representing the Russian researchers, and Naoto EBUCHI (Institute of Low Temperature Sciences, Hokkaido University) representing the Japanese researchers. The Mongolian secretary will be decided in 2010 upon consultation. The establishment of the formal secretariat, secretaries and the next meeting will be decided on at the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

(3) Function of the Consortium and Achievements

The information that has been accumulated and organized with the cooperation of the members of the Consortium will be provided to the global community through the internet. We will continue to discuss ways to utilize and apply the knowledge and common recognition obtained through the Consortium to the environmental conservation of the Amur-Okhotsk ecosystem.

This document does not bind the 4 countries or the researchers from these countries with special legal obligations. It is a voluntary joint declaration signed by each individual researcher or one's affiliated research institute. Moreover, this document is not an international agreement nor is it internationally binding. Therefore, the document shall not influence the domestic laws or legal positions and viewpoints of the 4 participating countries, and furthermore, shall not influence the rights and obligations in international law among China, Japan, Mongolia and Russia regarding the environmental investigation or the accumulation and sharing of information of the Sea of Okhotsk and Amur River Basin.

November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
Members of the Consortium  
Environmental Conservation of the Sea of Okhotsk:  
Cooperation between Japan, China and Russia