

**Speech by Yohei Sasakawa  
at the Awards Ceremony for the 2010-2011 Recipients of  
The UNEP Sasakawa Prize (February 23, 2011)**

Mr. Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation was unfortunately unable to attend today's ceremony. Therefore, I will present his speech on his behalf.

Executive Director, Mr. Achim Steiner, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

To the two winning organizations, AFISAP from Guatemala and MDI-Nepal, I convey my heartfelt congratulations.

It is a great disappointment that I will not be able to attend this year's awarding ceremony and shake the hands of the winners and congratulate them in person.

Your innovative approaches in tackling the world's environmental problems have made a tremendous impact to not just your community but to the global community at large.

I strongly feel that the two winners are great representatives of this year's theme, "Forest for People, Forests for Green Growth" as they are engaging in activities for both the people and the environment. AFISAP working as the 'protector' of the precious Maya Biosphere Reserve while creating much needed employment for the community and MDI Nepal working to conserve the sloping uplands while improving the livelihood of the poor upland farmers.

This will be the 25th ceremony to be held to honour the winning Laureates. The UNEP Sasakawa Prize has quite a long history. It was started in 1982, to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of UNEP, by the late Ryoichi Sasakawa who was the founder of The Nippon Foundation.

Today, not a day goes by without hearing news about environmental issues such as global warming, climate change and biodiversity loss. But as hard as it may be to believe, when the prize was established 27 years ago, issues concerning the environment were not common household topics. After over a quarter of a century and the awarding of 37 outstanding individuals and organizations, we see how much the global community has changed.

It is my conviction that over the years, the Sasakawa Prize has helped to increase public awareness to environmental problems and I convey my utmost appreciation to the laureates, the jury members, the selection panel and the UNEP secretariat. This feat would not have been possible without all of your hard work and dedication.

There is no doubt that human activity has been one of the main causes of today's environmental problems. It is quite clear that we must definitely change the way we do things or the time will come when this beautiful planet and our only home will be damaged to the extent that it can no longer be regenerated.

With four more years until the deadline of the UN Millennium Development Goals, these next few years will surely be a great challenge for all of us. I hope both winners will continue your good work and please, keep in touch with us as I would be delighted if we ever have a chance to collaborate in the future.

In closing, I would like to once again extend my warmest congratulations to this year's laureates, and thank all those who have worked so relentlessly to make this year's event a success.

Thank you.