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UN Ocean Conference: Ocean's 8 Champions Speech

Ocean Champion 8  
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Ladies and gentlemen, I am deeply honored to have been named one of the Ocean's 8 Champions amongst such distinguished recipients. To be 78 years old and receive this recognition. I might think of retiring but, on the contrary, I accept it as your warm encouragement to keep continuing my work.

The Nippon Foundation began its ocean capacity building projects in 1987. Through various interdisciplinary fellowship programs, the Foundation has supported a total of 1,236 Fellows in 140 countries around the world.

These numbers could represent a sign of accomplishment, but I see them as seeds that we have sown around the world. The actual harvest comes much after, when alumni come together and act to address diverse challenges facing the ocean.

Let me share an example. When it comes to space exploration, we now have detailed maps of the surface of Mars. Yet, when we compare this to the surface of our planet, we know very little. 70 percent of the earth's surface is covered by water. Despite century long efforts, only 15 percent of this area has been adequately mapped to date.

Understanding the bathymetry of the global ocean is imperative in not only improving maritime navigation, but also in enhancing our capacity for climate change projection as well as monitoring marine biodiversity and resources. Not only will it promote the "International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development" of IOC-UNESCO but also contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Considering these critical benefits, the Nippon Foundation is partnering with GEBCO, the General Bathymetric Charter of the Oceans, to uncover one hundred percent of the ocean floor by year 2030.

The Nippon Foundation has been partnering with GEBCO since 2004 to nurture oceanography and bathymetry researchers at the University of New Hampshire. The alumni and faculty from the NF-GEBCO Fellowship played key roles in coming up with the Seabed 2030 project. I welcome this as the budding of the seeds that we sowed more than a decade ago.

But the real harvest cannot be reaped without much more support. So, to the international community, including coastal states, international organizations, and industries, please lend us your support. Let us work together to bring this monumental goal of mapping one hundred percent of the ocean floor by 2030, within our reach.