

## Environment Summit speech in Hawaii

I am Okada, from the Aeon Group Environment Foundation. I am very happy to be able to meet all of you once again. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to Mayor Harris, a long-standing friend of mine, for hosting this marvelous meeting and for giving me the opportunity to address the audience today.

Last year, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I retired from every managerial position I held. Fifty-five years ago, in 1946, I became the president of Okadaya, which then became the mother body of JUSCO Ltd, Co. Okadaya, which was established 240 years ago, was a specialty retailer for Japanese kimonos. When I assumed the presidency, we did not have anything left from the war. We lost both, merchandise and stores; all we had left were 5 employees and a 132 square meters temporary shelter. Since then and until my retirement last year, I have been the CEO of this company for 54 years.

Now, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the era where the society and the economy will change enormously. I believe that the new generations, who are free of preconception should take the responsibility of management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since I am a man from the 20<sup>th</sup> century I have decided to retire. Nevertheless, as a lifework for my second stage in life, there are still two missions I want to continue carrying out the rest of my life. One is, as it was introduced, the Aeon Group Environment Foundation and the other one is the Cultural Foundation of Okada, established 22 years ago for the preservation and promotion of the traditional culture in my hometown.

For more than 10 years now, I have been saying that the biggest issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the North-South problem, and that “environment” will be the key word. Historically, the four big civilizations glorified a soil rich in nature and water, however, because of the dilapidation of this blessing they perished. In the same way, due to the environmental destruction, the possibility of modern civilization disappearance is becoming a fact.

We, the adults, have the duty and responsibility to pass to the children of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our irreplaceable beautiful earth. With that objective in mind, we have to thoroughly promote education opportunities to deepen children awareness about the earth. Based on this awareness, the Aeon Group Environment Foundation and myself are actively supporting the promotion of these education opportunities. One of them is the activity of the Children Eco-club, which is propelled by the Environment Ministry of Japan. Today, we would like to report the activities of the Children Eco-Club from Japan, Malaysia and Hawaii who previously attended the Second Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Children Eco-club held in Hiroshima. I would like to ask for your attention to what they have to say.

I would like to conclude my greetings by wishing that these children's message will be carried through out the world and that our irreplaceable beautiful earth to be inherited forever.