

Summary of Commissioner Tokura' s keynote speech

- Expressing gratitude to Italy for its hospitality in hosting the meeting, and to other countries for their congratulatory messages on the ongoing Tokyo Olympics.
  
- For generations, Japan has received blessings from its rich natural environment, having a climate divided into four seasons from fall to winter. Japan' s reverence and fear of Mother nature can be seen in its traditions, religion and culture. One example is the seasonal phrases used in Japanese Haiku poems that express the beauty of the seasons.
  
- But Japan' s Mother nature and seasonal changes have changed due the effects of climate change. The snowy landscape of Edo Tokyo depicted by the Japanese artists Hiroshige and Hokusai during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, is now seldom seen in Tokyo.
  
- The intensification of disasters is seriously affecting our cultural heritage. Last year, a shrine built more than a thousand years ago which had never seen flooding before, was damaged by floods.
  
- Based on the above, I would like to stress the following three points:
  - (1) We must take this message seriously from our cultural heritage sites that are vulnerable to rapid climate change.
  - (2) We must learn from our ancestors who have overcome crises, and work to further strengthen their knowledge by using the latest science and technology.
  - (3) Nations must cooperate to stop climate change and address the intensifying natural disasters.
  
- On the importance of culture and art, in Fukushima Prefecture that was devastated by the massive tsunami due to the Great East Japan earthquake, people living in temporary housing who experienced successive blackouts responded they found " music" to be second most

important, following electricity. Culture and art are what keep us alive. They are a basic human right and their access should be ensured. Culture and art should be added as the 18th Sustainable Development Goal.

- We must reacknowledge we exist because of what our ancestors passed down to us, and it is our obligation to pass on precious heritage to our children.