

I am delighted and honored to be here with you on this occasion for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and Nomura Kohsan Co. Ltd.

Nomura Kohsan is the only company in Japan that specializes in extracting mercury from waste, and has honed such capabilities for over four decades. You may be surprised to know that Nomura Kohsan's predecessor; Nomura Mining Co. Ltd (which was established in 1939) was once recognized as the biggest producer of mercury in the East. In fact, our refinery plant, Itomuka Refinery, had formerly been a mercury mining station.

Eventually, the domestic demand of mercury in Japan decreased as the population became more aware of the dangers posed by mercury, and the mine had to close down. However, in 1973, using the skills and know-how of mercury refining techniques, the former employees of the mine restarted a waste treatment facility for mercury waste. This new facility is what stands as our present-day refinery plant, Itomuka Refinery, in Hokkaido.

Ever since, our company has shown a new façade to the nation. We have been collecting, processing, treating and recycling mercury-containing waste that comes from all across Japan.

Moreover, in 1986, the Japan Waste Management Association has designated our company as the treatment and recycling center for used dry-cell batteries and fluorescent lamps.

We handle all types of waste; not just limited to waste from products, but also waste that is emitted from all industries such as the non-ferrous metal refining industry.

In addition, as mercury is a chemical element and cannot be destroyed, countries will need to find ways of safely storing mercury-containing waste. Not only does our company treat and recycle waste, but we have also been doing extensive research on ways to stabilize metal mercury as mercury sulfide (HgS). We are now at the point of

applying and enhancing this technology.

Through our mutual efforts and commitment, it is our goal to be the heart of the mercury treating and recycling operations in Asia. With UNIDO's expertise in promoting industrial development in developing countries, we are ready to support and encourage these countries to adopt treatment and recycling technology for mercury-containing waste.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone here today for having contributed to the finalization of this MoU. We look forward to building a firm partnership with UNIDO, and to achieving our common goals of preventing mercury wastes to contaminate the environment and to identifying long-term solutions for the storage of mercury.

Thank you.

Yutaka Ichihashi  
Executive Director, Nomura Kohsan Co. Ltd.