

Symposium Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Blue Planet Prize

Date: August 25, 2022

Venue: Hamarikyu Asahi Hall, Tokyo

Organizers: The Asahi Glass Foundation, The Asahi Shimbun, Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability (JYPS)

Speakers

Eric Lambin,

2019 Blue Planet Prize Laureate; Professor, Université Catholique de Louvain George and Setsuko Ishiyama Provostial Professor, Stanford University

Brian Walker (attended online),

2018 Blue Planet Prize Laureate; Hon. Research Fellow of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO); Hon. Professor, Australian National University

David Tilman (video lecture)

2020 Blue Planet Prize Laureate; Regents Professor, University of Minnesota; Distinguished Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara

Masayoshi Iyoda,

350.org Japan, an international environmental NGO

Mana Saza,

SWiTCH Association of Sustainability

Kairu Kobayashi,

Youth Biodiversity Network

Program

Part I

14:00-14:20 Opening remarks and video messages

14:20-14:35 Prof. Lambin (profile video + 10-min talk)

14:35-14:50 Prof. Walker (profile video + 10-min talk)

14:50-15:05 Prof. Tilman (profile video + 10-min video talk)

15:05-15:20 Break

Part II

15:20-15:35 Proposals (Youth Environmental Advocacy) by Mana Saza,

Kyle Kobayashi, and Masayoshi Iyoda

15:35-15:42 Declaration (read by Prof. Eric Lambin)

15:42-15:46 Comments by Prof. Eric Lambin

15:46-15:50 Comments by Prof. Brian Walker

15:50-16:30 Panel Discussion (Former Blue Planet Prize laureates & young Japanese people)

Moderator: Hisanori Imamura, editor-in-chief, Asahi Shimbun DIALOG

16:30-16:40 Closing and Photos

The “Blue Planet Prize,” an international award for the global environment, was established in 1992, the same year that the Earth Summit was held. Since then, the prize has commended those who have contributed to the solution of global environmental problems from the perspective of science and technology.

On August 25, 2022, in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Blue Planet Prize, the symposium took place at Hamarikyu Asahi Hall in Tokyo. Three former Blue Planet Prize laureates issued a “Declaration on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Blue Planet Prize” and a group of young Japanese people made proposals called “Young Environmental Advocacy.” Then two of the laureates and three young people had a panel discussion on environmental issues.



Photo 1 Opening

Dr. Syukuro Manabe, one of the very first Blue Planet Prize winners and a winner of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physics, gave a video message for this symposium.

Dr. Manabe said, "I had the honor to receive the first Blue Planet Prize in 1992. I was awarded for my pioneering study on climate change prediction. Encouraged by the Prize, I devoted myself to furthering my research. 30 years have passed since then. I truly appreciate the farsighted vision of the Blue Planet Prize selection committee. The list of Blue Planet Prize laureates shows that the Asahi Glass Foundation selected outstanding contributors from across the world who helped solving global environmental issues. I sincerely hope that your endeavor is to be further continued."

The three laureates who issued the declaration are Prof. Eric Lambin (one of the two 2019 winners), Prof. Brian Walker (one of the two 2018 winners), and Prof. David Tilman (one of the two 2020 winners). Professor Lambin attended in person from Belgium, Professor Walker joined online from Australia, and Professor Tilman gave a video message from the United States.

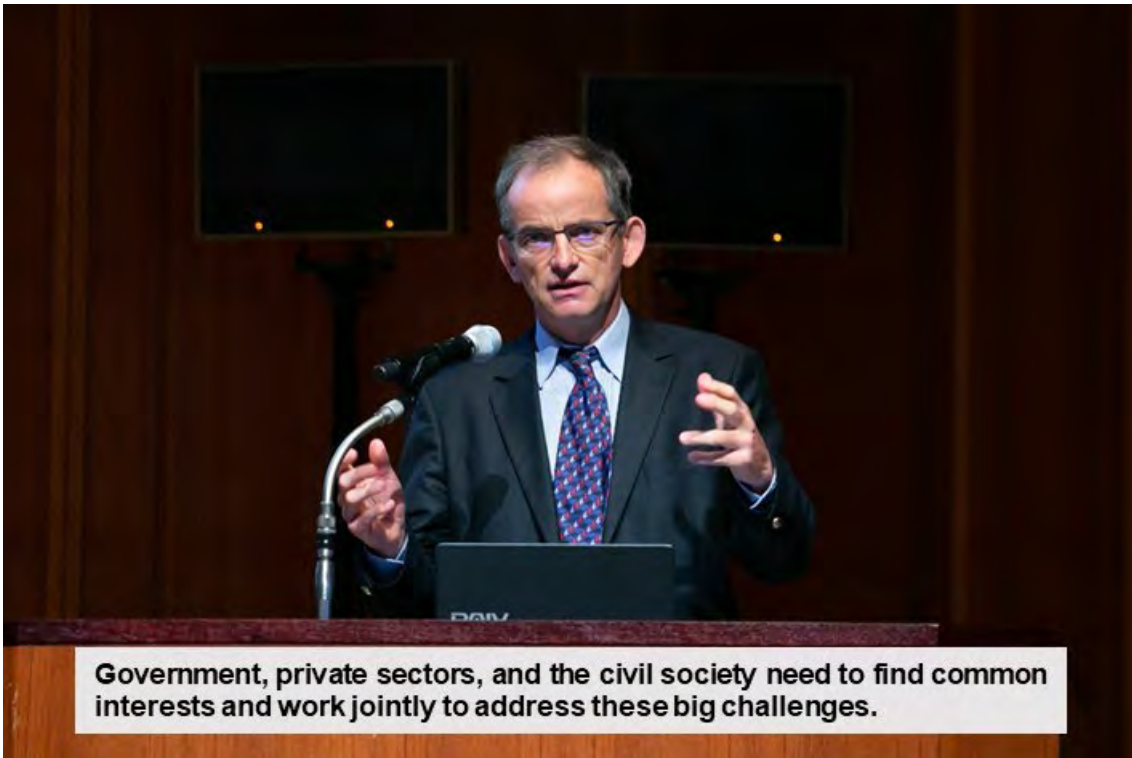


Photo 2 Professor Eric Lanbin

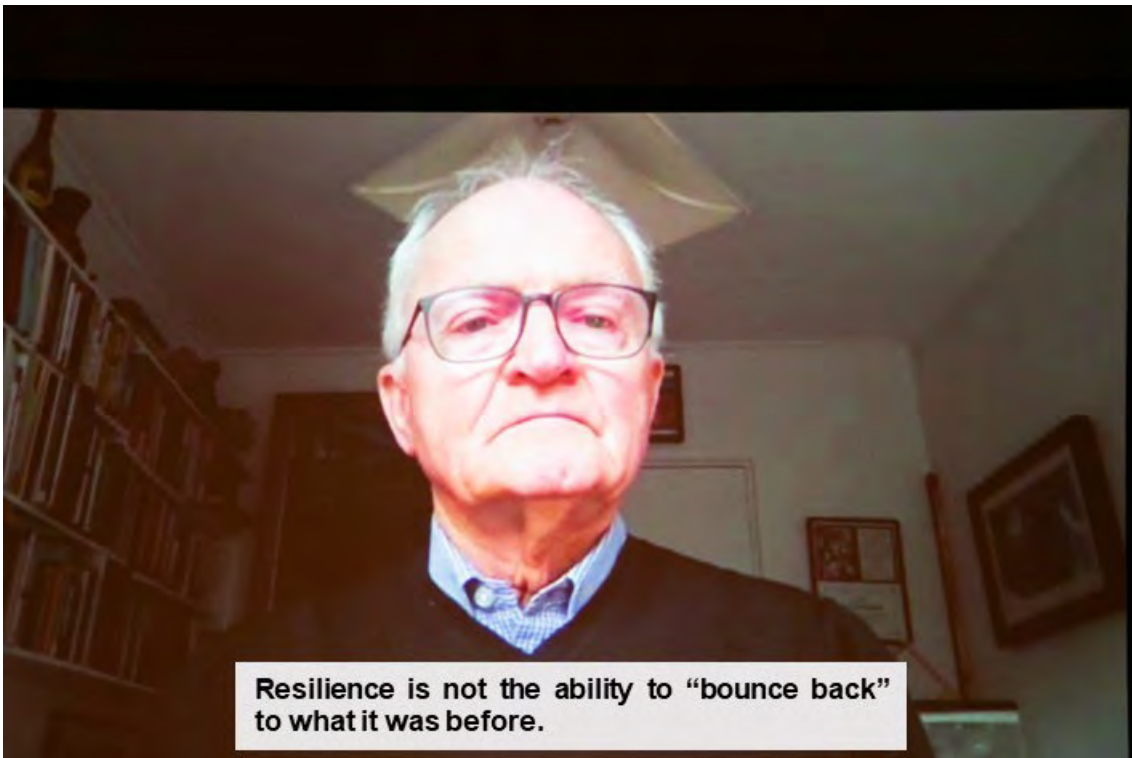


Photo 3 Professor Brian Walker (Online Lecture)



Photo 4 Professor David Tilman (Video Lecture)

The joint statement by the three former laureates and young people's proposals were made simultaneously. After three international online discussions with young people in February and March, the laureates worked on their statement based on these discussions. Professor Lambin said, "What the young Japanese people said was thought-provoking. What impressed us most was that they said they felt anxiety for the future. So we wanted to show solutions and paths for a bright future by our declaration."

The Youth Environmental Advocacy final draft was collated by Mana Saza, Kyle Kobayashi, and Masayoshi Iyoda as the central figures. The authors state, "The important things are for everyone to be actively involved and to make choices that are not only beneficial in the present but also consider the future of the planet. We hereby advocate for the actions and behaviors required to achieve these." They call on people to do what they can, with what they have, wherever they are.



Photo 5 Youth Environmental Advocacy

In the panel discussion, the laureates (Prof. Lambin and Prof. Walker) and young Japanese people (M. Saza, K. Kobayashi, and M. Iyoda) exchanged opinions about how together they address the environmental problems, beyond generations.



Photo 6 Panel Discussion



Photo 7 Mana Saza, SWITCH Association of Sustainability

Below are excerpts from the panel discussion.

“The climate crisis needs to be taken seriously by everyone on this planet. What we proposed in the Youth Environmental Advocacy statement are the bare minimum. However, change comes from small steps that turn into ripple effects. To put environment at the center, let's all take a step together and encourage young people to become the drivers of a green movement,” said Ms. Saza.



Photo 8 Kyle Kobayashi, Youth Biodiversity Network

Mr. Kobayashi said, “The proposals we made are what we need to do at the very least, but politicians and local authorities may regard them as tall orders. It’s becoming critical how to close the gap. When calling for the need to address the environmental problems, I would like to take a positive approach in which people can feel the splendor of biodiversity, instead of just stirring up in people a sense of crisis.”



Photo 9 Masayoshi Iyoda, 350.org Japan, an international environmental NGO

“If you are staying calm and living a happy life, it’s because you are ignorant. You need to listen to what scientists say and get into a panic. In order to solve environmental problems, it is also necessary to solve social issues, including gender inequity, and it takes solidarity of various people,” said Mr. Iyoda.

Professor Lambin said, “It’s important to be, on one hand, pragmatic and realistic in your requests. I think it’s also important to develop a dream. Martin Luther King Jr. made a famous speech, “I have a dream.” I want to hear from you. What is your dream? It’s also important to have a positive try. These approaches decrease anxiety because you are not just there to solve problems left to you but you are really aiming somewhere.”

Professor Walker added, “The challenge is keeping the big picture in mind and being able to deal with the components that need to be addressed individually, and sometimes together, to deal with the big picture. It’s not easy to go up and down scales like that. It’s easy to get depressed about the fact that what we’re doing at this level is not influencing the big picture. I think that’s a challenge for the youth. I would like to see how they can create different levels of attention, some people dealing with a big picture, others dealing with components.”



Photo 10 Participants and staff members of the Asahi Glass Foundation
(back, from left) H. Watanabe, T. Shimamura, T. Tanuma (The Asahi Glass Foundation)
(front, from left) M. Saza, K. Kobayashi, E. Lambin, M. Iyoda