

Afterword

The Asahi Glass Foundation has supported pioneering scientific research since 1933, providing grants to promising young researchers in a variety of fields. In 1992, the year of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Foundation first awarded the Blue Planet Prize, an annual international award that recognizes those who have made major contributions to solving global environmental problems. Since the second year of the Prize, the awards ceremony has been attended by His Highness Prince Akishino and Her Highness Princess Kiko, and the Prize has garnered increasing attention and interest both within Japan and abroad during the course of its first five years. Looking back, we remember the late Hideaki Yamashita, the Foundation's chairman from 1989 to 1995, who believed that the Foundation should contribute to the creation of a world in which each member of humankind may live in peace, harmonizing tradition with modern civilization to help remedy the strains on our planet. It was Hideaki Yamashita as well as the board of directors and councillors of the Foundation, including the late Dr. Saburo Okita, who helped pave the way for the establishment of the Blue Planet Prize. The Prize's subsequent development and international stature owes much to the dedicated efforts of the nominators, selection committee members, and many other supporters. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of the Prize.

This publication, commemorating the first five years of the Blue Planet Prize, contains the lectures given by each of the first ten recipients on the occasion of their being awarded the Blue Planet Prize. In addition, the prizewinners were kind enough to give of their time to contribute essays about the environment and recent developments in their fields. We thank the laureates for their cooperation and generosity in contributing to this volume. Their lectures and essays are a valuable resource and give important guidance on what we can and must do to find solutions to global environmental problems.

Since 1992, the Asahi Glass Foundation has also conducted an annual opinion survey, the "Questionnaire on Environmental Problems and the Survival of Humankind." Each year, the results of this survey are analyzed and compiled into a published report—a five-year summary of which appears in this commemorative publication. The Foundation is grateful to the many respondents who have taken the time to fill out the questionnaire and to Professor Akio Morishima of Sophia University, who has lent his invaluable assistance to the project. We hope that the survey's findings on views about environmental policies and humankind's current predicament will be useful for readers and help stimulate further interest in environmental issues.

Scientific and technological advances have brought humankind innumerable benefits, but we are beginning to realize that those same advances may also cause our ultimate downfall. Fortunately, we may still look to science and technology for solutions to our current problems. By further developing our research assistance and commendation programs, we hope to support the search for these solutions and contribute to a brighter 21st century. All of us at the Foundation thank you for your interest and support for our activities.

Osamu Shiragami
Senior Executive Director
The Asahi Glass Foundation

