

## Opening Remarks

**Masayuki Takahashi**

Dean, Graduate School of Kuroshio Science, Kochi University

Our distinguished guests and speakers from Taiwan, the Philippines and Malaysia, our colleagues from Kochi University, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this joint Kuroshio workshop which has the theme, “Recent Changes in the Seaweed Ecosystem along Kuroshio Current: Towards Collaborative Rehabilitation of the ‘Cradle of Fishes’.” Although most of our current collaborative works are in their infancy stage, we are optimistic that this workshop will be a stride forward towards fruitful research collaboration between our institutions. As we all know, common to our countries is the dominance of coastal areas, and in the Pacific side, we all face the same Kuroshio Current. Particularly here in Kochi, the word *kuroshio*, probably, is not a strange word in the academic and local communities because coastal areas in Kochi are directly affected by this current. The role of Kuroshio itself in the marine ecosystems and in relation to development in the marine communities, however, has not gathered much interest. Here is where the Graduate School of Kuroshio Science, the newest department of Kochi University, hopes to make some contribution. In addition, it cannot be ignored that the strategies for marine preservation and conservation, especially in the coastal areas facing the Kuroshio, will have to transcend national borders. It is thus our pleasure to be working with all of you in both regard.

I also take this time to welcome you to Kochi, one of the four prefectures of the Shikoku region of Japan. Although part of Kochi is along the coast, 80% of the total area of Kochi prefecture is mountainous, and Kochi has the highest proportion of forest area in Japan. The Shimanto River which threads through the mountains and flows into the Pacific Ocean is most representative of Kochi’s river system consisting of both small and large rivers. Flows from these rivers merge with the Kuroshio in the offshore, forming highly fertile fishing grounds. I hope you will take time and enjoy the varied natural ecosystems that Kochi is rich of during your short stay here in Kochi.

Finally, I express my sincere appreciation for all your efforts in preparing manuscripts and presentations, and for agreeing and taking time to participate in this workshop. In behalf of the Graduate School of Kuroshio Science and Kochi University, I wish you all a fruitful workshop and pleasant stay here in Kochi. Thank you very much.