

Hello everyone. My name is Tsuyoshi Maeda from the Tsushima City SDGs Strategy Division.

Thank you very much for inviting me to this international meeting today. I would like to talk about the current situation of marine plastic pollution in Tsushima.

Tsushima is a remote island that sits like a stepping stone between the Korean Peninsula and mainland Japan, making it a geopolitically unique island. The island is about the same size as Singapore, but is long from north to south, and is located at the entrance where the Tsushima Warm Current flows into the Japan Sea, which is the reason why it is the island with the most marine plastic waste in Japan.

The island is bordered by beautiful ria coastlines.

The waters off Tsushima are some of Japan's leading fishing grounds, providing us with a rich bounty of the ocean. Fishing from a sea kayak is one of my favorite things to do on my days off.

Furthermore, many sea gods live on Tsushima and have nurtured the island's spiritual culture.

Tsushima, an isolated border island, is the closest island to the continent in Japan, only 50km from Busan, Korea. As a result, Tsushima has been a gateway to continental culture, with a trading base called "Wakan" in Busan, where it received Korean envoys and accompanied them to Osaka and Edo, bringing continental culture to Japan through the sea.

Speaking of Busan, it was the site of INC-5.1 on the proposed Convention on the Prevention of Plastic Pollution that took place from November 25th to December 1st last year. The gap in opinions between the countries could not be bridged, so the agreement was postponed to Geneva in August as INC-5.2.

What is the current state of plastic pollution in Tsushima, just 50km away from Busan, where the international treaty was being discussed? We will take you on a Tsushima study tour through footage from the island.

This beach is called Kujika Beach. It used to be a memorable place for children to visit on school field trips. However, it is now filled with so much marine

plastic waste that it is almost impossible to walk. Due to the declining birthrate and aging population, the people in this area are unable to collect the waste.

Plastic pollution is not limited to coastlines. Light plastics are blown away by the wind, spreading pollution deep into the mountains.

Microplastics are spreading and are accumulating as sediment, forming rock strata. This is a sign of the new geological phenomenon known as the Anthropocene, which shows that human activities are having a significant impact on the Earth.

We will explain the characteristics of plastic waste that washes ashore. At first glance, most of it appears to be fishing gear such as styrofoam and buoys, but all kinds of plastic products that we use every day, such as everyday items, drink and food packaging, detergent containers, amenities such as toothbrushes, shoes, stationery, etc., wash ashore on Tsushima.

By country, Tsushima is a remote border island close to Korea and China, so the majority of the waste comes from Korea, China, and Taiwan, followed by Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and other Southeast Asian countries. Of course, there is quite a bit of Japanese waste as well.

The waste from these countries is carried by ocean currents and seasonal winds, but there are also some countries that are left wondering why it came from India, France, Germany, and other countries. The Korea Strait is an international strait, and many huge container ships pass through it, with the Port of Busan in South Korea as its hub. It is speculated that the waste probably came from these ships.

Other possible causes of plastic waste leakage include illegal dumping due to illegal IUU fishing, rising sea levels due to climate change, and changes in the path patterns and strength of typhoons.

If we do not collect as much as possible and as quickly as possible on Tsushima, the plastic will turn into microplastics, and the pollution will spread from Tsushima, and it will be too late.

Marine waste is not just trash; it can also allow invasive species to hitchhike, destroying the island's fragile ecosystem.

Tsushima has a long coastline, so it is not possible to collect all of the waste, but fishermen carry out cleanup work once a year.

The collected garbage is transported to the Clean Center in the center of the island. It looks like a graveyard for marine garbage, but about 8,000 1m<sup>3</sup> flexi-con bags are collected here every year. However, the amount that washes up on the shore each year is four to five times this amount.

At the Clean Center, hard plastics are re-sorted by color and type for recycling, which is a very time-consuming task.

Styrofoam, which is the most prevalent by volume, was previously melted and turned into oil, but is now reduced in volume by making it into pellets or ingots. The work before the volume reduction process is also difficult. There are foreign objects, so the surface must be scraped off to check the inside.

Hard plastics such as tanks, baskets, and buoys are crushed into flakes, which are collected by trading companies and recycled into resin pellets, which are used in various products as a material recycling resource. They are also used as shopping baskets at the official store of EXPO2025.

However, only about 10% of all plastic is recycled. Most is incinerated or landfilled. This is the dark side of modern society, a society of mass production, mass consumption, and mass waste.

This is an AI rendering of what the ocean in Van Gogh's famous painting will look like in 2050. As people who live alongside the ocean, we can very realise that the ocean will be filled with plastic waste.

To prevent such a future, now is the time for change, brought about by a trinity of companies, consumers, and governments.

We have had various companies visit the island on study tours and discuss whether we can solve the problem of plastic pollution through our main business.

We also had the staff from Rengo visit the island and volunteer to clean up

the area.

In addition, members of Kansai Association of Corporate Executives and other members of the business world visit Tsushima every year to experience the current state of marine plastic waste through cleanup efforts.

These developments prompted Rengo to enter into a comprehensive partnership agreement with the Blue Ocean Initiative, a corporate alliance of which it is a steering member, and to take active steps to resolve social issues related to the ocean, such as hosting the Tsushima Future Conference and collaborating with member companies.

The world is connected by the ocean, and in order to fundamentally resolve these issues, we must strengthen international collaboration. For this reason, we also use Tsushima as our base to hold international symposiums and other events.

The current situation remains severe, and even with collection, the situation is getting worse.

Should we continue to let the children on the island collect the waste forever?

Is this the only colorful plastic waste the children on the island can play in?

Now is the time for the international community to unite and reduce new plastic pollution to zero.

I believe that the actions of you, leaders in the packaging industry, will change the world.

Thank you for your attention.