



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center  
1845 WASP Boulevard, Building 176  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96818

December 19, 2014

Dear Nominating Committee of the International Sea Turtle Society:

I am writing to sincerely offer my complete professional and personal endorsement and support of Dr. Yoshimasa Matsuzawa for the position of President-elect of the 37th 2017 International Sea Turtle Symposium envisioned for Kobe, Japan. I have known and worked closely with Dr. Matsuzawa for over 15 years. We are colleagues and we are friends because of our professional shared relationship involving North Pacific sea turtles. I have participated in three of the 25 annual symposia of the Sea Turtle Association of Japan (STAJ), substantially and successfully organized and accomplished under Dr. Matsuzawa's leadership skills and diplomacy. My most recent attendance was just three weeks ago when the STAJ symposium was convened at Amami Island, a rural community in Kagoshima Prefecture of southern Japan. For four days I was in the unique position of meeting an array of enthusiastic and talented attendees converged from throughout Japan. I was also able to closely observe Dr. Matsuzawa's interactions with the participants, including their great and genuine admiration for him, and his mutual feelings for and attention to all attendees, ranging from young school children to senior representatives of elected government. An equally impressive relationship was witnessed between Dr. Matsuzawa and his team of volunteers doing the hard work needed to have a smooth and enjoyable meeting. A single word will suffice to describe all that I observed about Dr. Matsuzawa, and his team, and the symposium participants. That word is "outstanding."

I am composing this letter based on observations and experiences, - both historical and contemporary, - that have led me to conclude, with no doubt whatsoever, that Dr. Matsuzawa is the correct person for Presidency, at the correct time of 2017, for our ISTSociety to convene a symposium in Japan. Japan has rich and widespread sea turtle resources that have been the conservation focus of the STAJ for 25 years. Convening the 37th symposium in Japan will mark the first for ISTS, as well as for neighboring nations with Japan-shared sea turtle stocks of Korean, China, Taiwan, and even Russia bordering the Sea of Japan. The region is both right and ripe for the ISTSymposium. The sea turtles and the people of this East Asia region, and our ISTSociety, will significantly benefit from a symposium in Japan under Dr. Matsuzawa's presidency.

Sincerely,

George H. Balazs  
Marine Turtle Scientist  
32 years with NOAA  
10 years with the University of Hawaii  
Recipient, ISTSociety Lifetime Achievement Award  
Oceania Region Vice-Chair, IUCN MTSG  
Member, Sea Turtle Society of Japan

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