



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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International Environmental Award

## **Video Interviews Released of 2021 Blue Planet Prize Winners**

The Asahi Glass Foundation, chaired by Takuya Shimamura and located in Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, has released, on its special website, video interviews of the winners of the 2021 Blue Planet Prize, an international award to recognize the contribution in the resolution of global environmental problems (<https://www.af-info.or.jp/en/blueplanet/special2021/>).

This year's winners are Professor Veerabhadran Ramanathan of the USA and Professor Mohan Munasinghe of Sri Lanka. Professor Ramanathan found that short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs), including black carbon and methane, have great impact on global warming and that SLCPs' reduction is effective for both improvement in atmospheric pollution and near-to-mid-term global warming mitigation. Professor Munasinghe of Sri Lanka conceived an innovative sustainomics framework, which views development issues from economic, social, and environmental perspectives. Professor Munasinghe has been doing practical research and development in environmental economics, environmental policy, and sustainable development.

In 1992, the year of the Earth Summit, the Asahi Glass Foundation established the Blue Planet Prize, an award presented to individuals or organizations from around the world in recognition of outstanding achievements in social, natural sciences, and technology, as well as their application toward solving global environmental problems. The Prize is offered in the hope of encouraging efforts to bring about the healing of the Earth's fragile environment. As a general rule, two recipients are chosen annually, and each recipient is presented with a certificate of merit, a commemorative trophy, and 50 million Japanese yen in prize money.

The video interviews have been created in place of inviting the winners to Japan to attend the award ceremony and give commemorative lectures, which were cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The special website has been designed to simulate the flow of the annual award ceremony, with such content as congratulatory messages from the Asahi Glass Foundation's Chairman Shimamura, introduction of the Blue Planet Prize by Presentation Committee Chairman Dr. Yoshikawa, and His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Akishino. Professor Ramanathan spoke to interviewer Akio Kitoh, researcher at the Japan Meteorological Business Support Center, about SLCPs, effective methods for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> and SLCPs, and the benefits of dialogue with world faith leaders such as Pope Francis and the 14th Dalai Lama. Professor Munasinghe spoke to interviewer Ayumi Onuma, professor at the Faculty of Economics, Keio University, on such topics as the background of Sustainomics and Millennium Consumption Goals (MCGs), of which the concept was incorporated into Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Please visit our special website to view the interviews, which reflect the earnest desire of the two winners to resolve the increasingly severe global environmental issues.



Prof. Veerabhadran Ramanathan



Prof. Mohan Munasinghe

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## 1. Prof. Veerabhadran Ramanathan (USA), Born in 1949



Edward A. Frieman Endowed Presidential Chair in Climate Sustainability  
Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego

Professor Ramanathan has spent decades investigating the climate effects of non-CO<sub>2</sub> pollutants, including the role of short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs): methane, tropospheric ozone, halocarbons (HFCs<sup>\*1</sup>), and black carbon<sup>\*2</sup>. His contributions include the discovery of the super greenhouse effect of halocarbons (CFCs<sup>\*3</sup>), and clarifying the climate effects of black carbon through an international field project he led on Atmospheric Brown Clouds (ABCs). He showed that reductions in SLCPs can rapidly reduce warming and significantly improve air pollution. He later took the initiative in global actions to reduce SLCPs.

\*1 Hydrofluorocarbons (CFC alternatives), no ozone depletion potential but much greater global warming potential than CO<sub>2</sub>.

\*2 Commonly known as soot; formed through the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biofuel, and biomass.

\*3 Chlorofluorocarbons, large ozone depletion potential and much greater global warming potential than CO<sub>2</sub>.

## 2. Prof. Mohan Munasinghe (Sri Lanka), Born in 1945



Founder Chairman, Munasinghe Institute for Development (MIND)

Professor Munasinghe pioneered the integrative, transdisciplinary 'Sustainomics' framework which views development issues from environmental, social, and economic perspectives. Innovative concepts like 'balanced inclusive green growth (BIGG)' and 'millennium consumption goals (MCGs)' emerged from Sustainomics. BIGG calls for each country to take a sustainable development path in accordance with its development stage, while the MCGs ask the affluent, who consume most global output, to adopt consumption goals to reduce the burden on the planet. He has been developing practical activities using environmental economics and policy to implement these concepts worldwide.

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### Report on the Selection Process (2020 Blue Planet Prize)

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A total of 472 nominators from Japan and 748 nominators from other countries recommended a total of 127 candidates. The top three fields represented by the candidates, in order of number, were environmental economics and policy making (31), ecology (29), atmospheric and earth sciences (19). The candidates represented 38 countries; 33 nominations, 26 percent of the total, were from developing countries.

After individual evaluation of the 127 candidates by each Selection Committee member, the committee was convened to narrow down the field. The results of their deliberation were examined by the Presentation Committee. The Board of Directors formally decided to award the Prize to **Prof. Ramanathan**, and to **Prof. Munasinghe**.

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### About the Blue Planet Prize

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Environmental conservation is one of the most pressing of the global issues humankind faces. Global warming, acid rain, ozone depletion, tropical rainforest destruction, and river and ocean pollution are just some of the results of human activity that is having an adverse effect on the Earth.

In 1992, the year of the Earth Summit, the Asahi Glass Foundation established the Blue Planet Prize, an award presented to individuals or organizations from around the world in recognition of outstanding achievements in scientific research and its application that have helped provide solutions to global environmental problems. The Prize is offered in the hope of encouraging efforts to bring about the healing of the Earth's fragile environment.

The award's name was inspired by the remark "the Earth is blue," uttered by the first human in space, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, upon viewing our planet. The Blue Planet Prize was so named in the hope that our blue planet will be a shared asset capable of sustaining human life far into the future.

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