

Dear Caroline Kennedy san,

Congratulations for your appointment to the US Ambassador to Japan. I hope you are doing fine and well.

I live in Nago city, Okinawa. I am eleven years old. I live in an area that looks out to the sea of Henoko and Oura Bay. In the sea of Henoko and Oura Bay, dugongs, an endangered species, live in. It is said that the dugong is the model of mermaid. The area of Henoko-Oura Bay on the east coast of Okinawa Island is the only area in Japan where we can find dugongs. As their name "Dugong" tells, the dugong has a very sweet and adorable character. You may wonder why a creature like the dugong lives in Henoko and Oura Bay. When you actually see the area with your own eyes, you would easily understand why.

I have paddled a canoe out to Oura Bay and found the color of the water so transparent and beautiful corals growing so big. Yet, more than anything else, without any disturbing noise, I could hear the sound of the wind and the sea was so calm.

I have been very interested in dugongs for a long time and I love dugongs very much. My deep affection for the dugong led me to work on a summer project on the dugong this year. I received a "Special Prize" for my project from the Global Oceanographic Data Center.

I have not seen a dugong in person in my life. Though I wish to meet dugongs, they are an endangered species and their number is so small that even most of local people do not have chance to meet them.

Still, I know they are so gentle and loveable. Because even a photo of a dugong tells me how gentle they are. If I can meet them in person, that would be the biggest surprise that I could not even imagine, and I would make the biggest smile in my life.

Yet there is a plan to construct a US military base in this "Dugongs' sea." I want to protect the dugongs' sea! I want to protect the rich nature of Henoko and Oura Bay! And I know I am not the only one who wishes to do so. Everyone in Okinawa wishes the same. If a new military base is built, the dugongs will be extinct and the rich nature of Henoko and Oura Bay will be destroyed and lost.

So please, do not build a new military base. Please, protect the dugongs! Please, Caroline san, come visit to see the beautiful sea of Henoko and Oura Bay. I am confident that you will love the sea, too.

I wish you to take good care of yourself every day of tomorrows and to do a great job.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read my letter.

With my faith, I believe my heart will reach out to you, Caroline san.

Wakana Toguchi