

A Message from Fukushima on March 11, 2018

“I just stared at my beloved hometown as it was swallowed up by the tsunami. There was nothing I could do but stand and watch. Although we lost so many things, the bonds that we forged with those who survived the agony alongside us have become invaluable.”

(Sayaka Abe, a junior high school student at the time of the disaster)

Seven years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent nuclear accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Since that day, we have been steadily making progress towards the lifting of evacuation orders, along with the recovery of both the affected environment and the livelihoods of the people. We have also managed to open new elementary and junior high schools, including Odaka Industrial Technology and Commerce High School, which will foster the next generation that will take the lead in future revitalization efforts. The voices of school children and students have once again returned to our beloved prefecture. Futaba Future High School was opened after the disaster and this spring, like the soon-to-be budding cherry blossoms, the very first graduating students will be taking their first steps into the real world full of hope and promise. J-VILLAGE, Japan’s national and local soccer team training facility was used as a base for decommissioning work after the disaster. After restoring the field to its former glory, J-VILLAGE will begin part of its operations this summer to once again prepare the next generation of top soccer athletes for the world stage.

I would like to thank the people of Fukushima from the bottom of my heart, for their continued efforts in returning the prefecture to what it once was. I would also like to express my sincerest gratitude to people all around the world for their endless support of our efforts towards revitalization.

However, while great strides are being made along the path to revitalization, we are still facing serious issues, such as the decommissioning of the nuclear reactors, water contaminated with radioactive materials, deeply-rooted harmful rumours and fading awareness of the disaster both domestically and internationally. Even now, there are still close to 50,000 evacuees who have not been able to return home. The number of problems faced by this prefecture have increased and diversified as time has passed. On top of these already prevalent issues, the population of the prefecture has been decreasing since before the disaster and now stands at just under 1.9 million people.

In order to face these unprecedented problems, and resolve them one by one, we need to cooperate with each other, and confront them together.

“I will never forget that there are a lot of positive, passionate people aiming to revive Fukushima. I will be deeply involved with Fukushima for the rest of my life.”

(A student who visited Fukushima from Fukuoka Prefecture’s Ariake Shinsei High School)

In a victory over harmful radioactive substances, the cultivation of rice, vegetables, and flowers has expanded in the areas where the evacuation orders were originally issued. After incorporating computer technology and robotics, the challenge to solve future problems in Japan has begun. In order to decommission all nuclear reactors in Fukushima and to implement a plan to be at the forefront of renewable energy, we will begin employing advanced technological companies to develop useful technologies to improve the lives of the citizens of Fukushima, and to open up more job opportunities through the various projects under the Fukushima Innovation Coast Framework. It is our goal to build Fukushima up to a point where everyone feels comfortable enough to raise their children and spend their lives here in good health and vitality.

Through various events, such as the National Tree-Planting Festival that will be held this year, we will confidently show the world our resilient attitude; we will never stop working towards a better future!

“I was inspired by many of the people whom I met in the wake of the disaster. It is time to return the favour. We will put all our efforts into creating a better future for our home.”

(Airi Nonaka, a young adult in Iitate village)

“The overall winners of the 2017 Air Race were Team Fukushima. We have united our soaring spirits!”

(Yoshihide Muroya, the overall winner of the Red Bull Air Race World Championship 2017)

If you continue working towards your hopes and dreams, you will achieve them. Like our predecessors who have overcome agony and adversity, we will renew our feelings of pride towards our home. This will be our Fukushima Pride. Let us work together to create a new Fukushima; a Fukushima that we can be proud of; a Fukushima for our children.

March 11, 2018

Masao Uchibori, Governor of Fukushima Prefecture