

A Message from Fukushima on March 11th, 2023

“There are two things that we can change in this world. One is yourself, and the other is your future.”

(Quote by Dr. Hideyo Noguchi, an exceptional bacteriologist from Fukushima)

In March 2011, we were struck by the massive earthquake, tsunami and the ensuing nuclear power station disaster.

Twelve years have passed since then, but I have never forgotten the extremely difficult situations and painful experiences that residents of Fukushima had.

In 2011, “Fight! Fukushima”, in 2012, “Future From Fukushima.”, and in 2021, “Making it a reality, one at a time. Fukushima”. Following Dr. Noguchi’s teachings, we have put up these slogans, never given up on the future of Fukushima, and have been taking on new challenges. And now, we see before us a hope that we could not have imagined at that time.

“ ‘ Show the people, not the NUMBERS!’ our image of Fukushima changed when we actually visited and saw the Prefecture. ”

(Message by the students living in the international student dormitory of Waseda University who visited the Coastal Region)

Last August, people became able to live in a part of Futaba Town where all residents had been evacuated after the disaster, and all 12 municipalities where evacuation orders had been issued became livable.

Fukushima Robot Test Field and Fukushima Hydrogen Energy Research Field, which are unparalleled in the world in scale, attract businesses and researchers from within Japan and around the world. The establishment of the national intellectual research hub called F-REI is underway in an effort to create new technologies and methods.

The export volume of agricultural products from Fukushima has increased year by year to 431 tons, about three times the amount

before the disaster.

The delicious food of Fukushima and the passion of the producers are certainly being recognized, even in foreign countries.

Continuing to take on challenges without giving up, we have become able to do more and more every year.

This is due to the efforts of the residents of Fukushima and the support of people inside and outside Japan. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you.

Meanwhile, challenges such as COVID-19, a series of natural disasters, and soaring fuel and commodity prices are making it difficult to convey the status of Fukushima's revitalization.

In areas where evacuation orders still remain, the reality is that people cannot return to or live in their homes.

Businesses and farmers who have resumed or expanded their businesses are having difficulty securing workers.

Furthermore, deeply rooted harmful rumours persist: 12 countries and regions have imposed import restrictions on agricultural products from Japan, including those from Fukushima.

“There were times when I did not know whether it was worthwhile to continue releasing the fish amidst the deeply rooted harmful rumours. Even so, as a fisheries cooperative, we have been continuing to release young salmon into the river. I am engaged in this business with hopes of bringing back that Kido River full of salmon again one day.”

(Comment from Mr. Kentaro Suzuki, Chief of the Hatchery Division of the Kido River Fisheries Cooperative)

The positive attitude of each and every person in the Prefecture who has been patiently making efforts towards revitalization is a characteristic exclusive to the people of Fukushima.

The number of people, mainly the younger generation, who have moved to Fukushima from outside the Prefecture reached a record high.

The people who challenge the unknown possibilities bring many

others such as new challengers, supporters and proactive allies with similar aspirations together, which in turn creates new aspirations for people to follow.

“A chain of aspirations” is one of our proudest achievements that was born out of adversity.

I will continue to convey this pride to our children, whose memories of their hometown are fading, along with the lessons of the disaster and the nuclear accident.

The antonym of “impossible” is “challenge.”

JR Tadami Line, which was severely damaged by the torrential rains in 2011, the same year of the disaster, was fully restored and resumed full operations on October 1st of last year.

Three railroad bridges were washed away and restoration was thought to be impossible from a profitability standpoint, but we persevered in our efforts without giving up.

It is now praised as a “miraculous revival” by domestic and international visitors who use the train running along the beautiful, unexplored route.

Thus, the day will surely come when the world will recognize that “Fukushima is a place of revitalization that has overcome the disaster.”

On the way to that day, we will overcome adversity, making it a reality, one at a time.

To all of you in Japan and around the world, I would like to ask you to please come to Fukushima, see, eat, and listen to our voice.

The Japanese word “SHINKA” describes the challenges of Fukushima. SHINKA to be newly “improved,” SHINKA to be “evolved” for the better, and SHINKA to be “deepened” in our essence. I would like to call on you to continue the SHINKA, while cherishing our bond and trust, and together we will carve out the future of Fukushima.

March 11, 2023
UCHIBORI Masao
Governor of Fukushima Prefecture