

A Message from Fukushima on March 11, 2019

“It was a life-changing event. If the teachers had not acted quickly, we might not have been able to grow up.”

- Wakana Yokoyama, previously attended Ukedo Elementary School in Namie Town – at her Coming of Age Ceremony.

“We all compete together with the aim of giving courage to Fukushima, which was struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake. I want to give back to Fukushima, which has always supported me.”

- Itsuki Someno, attending Shoshi High School – achieved 3rd place at the 97th All Japan High School Soccer Tournament.

It has been eight years since the Great East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent nuclear accident at the Tokyo Electric Power Company’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station.

Now, in Fukushima, children's laughter has returned to schools where time once stood still. The tree saplings that many of you planted with hope at the National Tree-Planting Festival are now growing quickly and strongly. Many people, from both Japan and overseas, visit our prefecture to take in its beautiful nature, and enjoy its many delicious foods.

The youth of Fukushima have also been achieving remarkable success in various fields, including sports and culture. Fukushima's steady progress towards revitalization is thanks to the persistent efforts of the people of Fukushima, and the warm support from people all over the world.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to you all for this hard work and generous support.

However, despite this progress, there are still areas where evacuation orders remain in place. Although the number of people who were displaced dropped to a quarter of the highest number of evacuees, more than 40,000 residents have yet to return to their homes.

In addition, there are still harmful rumors, and even though we are still on the long journey to decommissioning the reactor, memories of the disaster are fading. It is difficult to fully convey this conflicting situation. The more time passes, the more complicated it gets.

We must continue to challenge and overcome many obstacles while acknowledging each other’s situations, in cooperation and support of each other.

“I wanted to be a participant, rather than a spectator, of Fukushima's revitalization and development.”

- Takanao Ishii, a high school student who took part in a field trip to Fukushima from Tokyo.

Over the years, we have received much support and encouragement, from both within and outside of Japan. Sadly, last year, disasters occurred all over Japan. Therefore, now it is our turn to give back. Because we are aware of the strength of the bonds that we have made over the last few years, we would like to repay these kindnesses to the other affected communities in Japan.

“There is nowhere else in the world that has had an experience like ours. I want to show how Fukushima has bounced back and I hope that Fukushima becomes a stronger and more resilient place.”

- *Toshiyuki Nishida, actor*

“Clip-Clop, Clip-Clop... the horses’ hooves sound in time

With my children, I watch the smiles of the brave samurai on horseback”

- *Mako Kogure, a high school student of the Koriyama Special-Needs Education School – with her mother, Yuko.*

Soon, a new era is about to begin.

Closed railroads will be reopened, so that people can return to the former evacuation areas. By utilizing the Fukushima Robot Test Field, which will be launched soon, the development of robots such as drones that can be used in difficult environments will move forward.

In addition, actions are being taken to take on regional challenges: Young people have been creating a community place where people with innovative spirit can gather; and Fukushima’s high school students have been editing magazines to convey the experiences of Fukushima farmers and the excellence of their produce.

Our efforts towards revitalization will continue in the next era.

We have gratitude for those who came before us, who built Fukushima Prefecture, as well as for those who have been involved in the revitalization efforts. We will always have Fukushima Pride in our hearts. Cherishing the bonds that we have made with others, we will nurture and protect the next generation. We will continue to walk towards the future of Fukushima full of hope and pride so that we all can feel “I am glad that I was born here, lived here and visited here.”

March 11, 2019

Masao Uchibori, Governor of Fukushima Prefecture