

A Message from Fukushima on March 11, 2017

It was the sixth winter since the Great East Japan Earthquake.

A father expressed his agony when he found the remains of his precious daughter, who had been lost in the tsunami in the restricted area: "If there hadn't been a nuclear accident, I could have found her much earlier."

Those who lost their lives, and the stricken hearts of the bereaved persons shall never be forgotten.

Six years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, its subsequent tsunami, and the resulting accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station.

Since then, a significant portion of the evacuation area has been released from the evacuation orders, and the operation of the JR Joban line to stations north of Odaka Station has resumed.

Steady restoration is underway regarding the infrastructures that were damaged by the tsunami and earthquake.

Off the coast of Fukushima Prefecture, trial fishing operations carefully managed by the government have been expanded.

Farmers in Fukushima are proudly growing agricultural products which do not exceed the standard limit set for radioactive substances. For the last four consecutive years, Fukushima has held the record for the highest number of Gold Award-winning sake brands selected in the Annual Japan Sake Awards. Furthermore, Fukushima's hot springs are highly rated all over Japan. These examples show that the light of hope in Fukushima is growing stronger and brighter.

However, nearly 80,000 citizens of Fukushima are still living away from their hometowns, having evacuated at the time of the earthquake.

Some of these people feel isolated because they feel left behind from the progress being continually made through reconstruction efforts.

We still face many problems concerning decommissioning of the nuclear reactors, contaminated water, harmful rumors which we can hardly dispel, memories of the disaster that are fading, and prefecture-wide depopulation.

At present, Fukushima is in a somewhat mixed situation. There is light, and there is shadow. There are bright and cheerful aspects, and there are many challenges.

In the middle of all this, it is our mission to present a ray of light, known as "HOPE".

We hope to achieve the complete decommissioning of all nuclear power stations in the prefecture, and establish a pioneering land of renewable energies.

We also hope that products made in Fukushima with hope for revitalization will spread not only in Japan but also abroad.

We are committed to building Fukushima, our home, full of the smiles of the elderly, as well as the children and young people who will lead future generations.

We would like to show the world the progress we are making in revitalization at the 2020 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games.

"Although Fukushima was hit by the disaster, you have been making your utmost efforts and have achieved so much."

"Fukushima has beautiful flowers and delicious foods including fruit. I will come back here and bring my friends with me, because I love Fukushima."

We are so encouraged by the many warm messages that we have received from around the world.

Keeping the appreciation for those who support Fukushima in our minds, we will picture the bright future of Fukushima.

"I want to produce food that everyone can enjoy eating without concern. I would have absolutely hated to have given up this challenge."

These are the determined words of a female farmer who was able to resume growing safe to eat shiitake mushrooms in a formerly evacuated area.

If we stand tall with our hopes and dreams in our hearts, continue our challenge, and never give up, despite the adverse circumstances that may come our way, then surely we can pave the way forward.

If we keep trying without fearing failure, we can transform each small effort into a big change, and by doing so, I firmly believe that, not only will we achieve the revitalization of Fukushima, but our efforts will also contribute to Japan and to the rest of the world.

With our united efforts, let us create a new Fukushima Prefecture that will be taking a great step ahead towards revitalization and that our future children can be truly proud of.

March 11, 2017

福島県知事 内堀雅雄

Masao Uchibori, Governor of Fukushima Prefecture

Source of reference

1. "If there hadn't been a nuclear accident, I could have found her much earlier."
Posted in the Fukushima Minyu Shinbun on December 25, 2016 Posted in the FUKUSHIMA-MINPO, Co., Ltd. On December 26, 2016
2. "Although Fukushima was hit by the disaster, you have been making your utmost efforts and have achieved so much."
"Fukushima has beautiful flowers and delicious fruit. I will come back here and bring my friends with me, because I love Fukushima."
Remarks at the discussion meeting joined by the Governor and the Youth Division of Fukushima Ryokan Hotel Association on November 25, 2016.
3. "I want to produce food that everyone can enjoy eating without concern. I would have absolutely hated to have given up this challenge."
Posted in the Mainichi Newspapers on July 7, 2016.

