

International Forum “Thinking from Disaster Affected Areas and Hirono”

～Towards “Happy Return and Reconstruction”～

Message from “Disaster Affected Areas & Hirono” (Draft)

Under the slogan of “ATSUPARE (let’s get together)! FUTABA – Towards the Future,” and following the “Message of Hirono” delivered in June 15, 2014, we, the participants of the Forum, have gathered in Hirono Town in order to promote exchanges of honest voices of stakeholders. This was realized as a result of over a year of discussion by the Planning and Organization Committee of the Forum, comprised of Hirono residents and experts working in the disaster affected areas.

The participating experts and volunteers stayed in the Onigoe Temporary Housing in Iwaki City from September 14th through 20th and organized sessions under 15 key topics. The experts also visited the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station of TEPCO. Furthermore, events such as barbecue, tea ceremony and Shoryu Daiko drum experience provided the participants of the Forum with the opportunities to further interact and hold a series of dialogues with many citizens, including the residents living in temporary housing.

Through the discussions held over the Forum, valuable lessons towards reconstruction of the disaster affected region as a whole.

- 1) In the globalized world now, solutions for global issues need to be explored under international cooperation, or otherwise it would be difficult to find solutions or receive international understanding.
This Forum is a valuable first step. It is desired that this initiative will be continued into the future.
- 2) There is no such thing as absolute safety or zero risk. We have to choose and make decisions by considering various risk factors around us.
Under the precondition that as much information as possible is collected and that the information is made freely available to all, we need to make our own decisions based on the best level of information available. To this regard, education of the citizens to better understand information is necessary.
- 3) The societies in the region were forced to change after the disaster. As time goes by, the affected areas are facing even more severe and diverse problems.
On that premise, we have to explore and find solutions for creating a “better society” together with the citizens as a shared vision for the region. That is the only way forward towards reconstruction.
- 4) In order for the disaster-affected areas to be revitalized, it is vital to establish a system with a mechanism to appropriately reflect the opinions of the citizens and implement them, and to ensure “transparency of the process.”
Realization of the above will contribute greatly to the building of mutual trust between the citizens and public authorities.
- 5) Participants agreed on the importance of considering the disaster affected areas and the host communities as a whole. The issue is how to realize it.
The Forum has been significant in a sense that various attempts were made to explore partnerships within the region comprising of stakeholders with perception gaps and varying degrees of interests. Many partnerships are now being created, including those by students from junior high school, high school and universities, and by young officials of relevant municipalities who are put into difficult and complex situation. It is particularly noteworthy that the Forum was attended by young officials from all eight municipalities of Futaba District. These show great promise for the future.
- 6) The communities of the disaster affected region are now experiencing a situation that did not exist before the disaster, with fragmentation and weakening of communities,

particularly the generations raising children, caused by the long-standing evacuation and “health-related anxieties”; need for revitalization of agriculture; reputational damage; and increased workers in respect to the population.

We should not just aim to eliminate the negative situation. We have realized that it is important to move forward with a positive approach, by changing the crisis situation into opportunities, and building win-win situation aiming at creating new orders. This will not be an easy task, but we are willing to tackle this challenge.

- 7) The forum also provided an opportunity where journalists of local, regional and national papers, a television journalist and a French journalist got together and discussed the roles of journalists about information gathering and communication. Furthermore, the “Hirono Town walking tour” helped us rediscover that Hirono Town in fact has many attractions.

As mentioned above, we recognized that seeing issues and learning from diverse perspectives from around the world is extremely useful. We, the forum participants gathered in Hirono will continue with the efforts and promote interactions among diverse stakeholders to the greatest extent possible. In doing so, we shall not forget to let the world know the various activities that are taking place in the disaster affected areas.

September 20, 2015

Participants of the International Forum

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