

Welcome Speech (draft 2012/10/30)

President Hiroshi Matsumoto, Kyoto University

5:30 pm, November 6, 2012

Her Excellency Madam Irina Bokova, director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

His Excellency Mr. Isao Kiso, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, permanent delegate of Japan to UNESCO,

Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and departments of the Japanese Government,

Distinguished guests and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honor to announce that the UNESCO and Kyoto University have just successfully concluded an Agreement Concerning the Establishment of an Internship Programme, signed by Madam Bokova as the Director-General of UNESCO and myself, Hiroshi Matsumoto, as president of Kyoto University.

The agreement seeks to strengthen the relationship between Kyoto University and UNESCO, and provide Kyoto University graduate and postgraduate students in relevant fields with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of UNESCO, while enhancing their own knowledge and providing UNESCO with talented and qualified assistants. We also hope to explore the possibility of including faculty and staff members in the internship program. I am sure that the program will be of great mutual benefit, and that our students and staff will gain a great deal from working at a top-level international institution.

As we are joined by several distinguished UNESCO representatives and many members of the general public, I hope you will not mind if I take this opportunity to briefly introduce some aspects of Kyoto University. Kyoto University was established one hundred and fifteen years ago, in 1897, as the second imperial university in Japan. The first imperial university, the University of Tokyo, was established twenty years earlier in 1877. The imperial universities were later re-named as national universities.

In accordance with the drive towards modernization which was prevalent in Japan at the time the University of Tokyo served mainly to produce politicians, bureaucrats, lawyers, economists, engineers and other such professionals, which would help make the nation as “rich and military strong” as European and American countries. The University of Tokyo, therefore, is very closely linked to the central government of Japan in Tokyo.

Kyoto University, on the other hand, was established to promote science and technology independently from the central government. The academic style of the university is deeply imbued with the rich cultural heritage of Kyoto City. As you may know, Kyoto City and its surrounding areas, including Uji City, include seventeen World Cultural Heritage Sites, and many other historic sites, such as very ancient temples and shrines. One reason for this rich heritage is that Kyoto was the capital of Japan for over a thousand years from 794 to 1868, after which the capital was moved to Tokyo during the Meiji Restoration.

Kyoto University’s involvement in the region’s rich cultural milieu is no doubt one factor in our ability to produce scholars of an exceptional standard, including eight Nobel Prize winners in science and technology fields. The first of our scholars to win a Nobel Prize was Professor Hideki Yukawa, who won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1949. He was, in fact, Japan’s very first Nobel Prize winner. And just last month, as I’m sure you all know, Professor Shinya Yamanaka, was awarded the Nobel Prize in physiology or Medicine.

Currently, Kyoto University has ten Faculties and seventeen Graduate Schools, as well as several research institutes and centers. There are also a number of other facilities, such as libraries, a museum, experimental forests and fields, a nuclear facility, and the university hospital. We currently have an enrollment of 13,403 undergraduate students including 171 international students, and 9,173 graduate students, of which 1,218 are international students. Of our graduate students, 4,755 are master’s students, 3,696 are Ph.D. students, and 722 are enrolled in schools of management and government. We employ 2,831 academic staff members including full, associate, and assistant professors,

and 2,608 non-academic staff members. It is through the combined endeavors of all of those elements—our students, faculty, and staff—that we are able to operate as one of the world’s leading universities, and contribute to international society through our research, education and medical science.

We have been engaged in collaborative activities with UNESCO for about two decades prior to the newly concluded internship training agreement. I sincerely hope that this new stage in our cooperation will be successful and fruitful, bring further opportunities and outcomes, and help to cultivate a new generation of young leaders who can think and act globally.

I think that is a good point at which to end this brief greeting. This evening, we are most fortunate and honored to have a special lecture by Her Excellency Madam Irina Bokova, the director-general of UNESCO. I hope that you will all find it both enjoyable and edifying.

I will now return the microphone to the MC, Professor Takara.

Thank you very much.