On International Academic Exchange: In the Spirit of Respect

In order to overcome difficulties and keep prospering in the future world, I believe Japan must play a greater international role in the promotion of advancement in scientific and technological fields, and thereby contribute to the welfare of humanity. In particular, much seems to depend on our willingness to cooperate with our fellow countries in Asia and help them in their efforts for economic and scientific development. This cooperation will also be a contribution to the solution of the North-South problem, a problem for all of mankind.

Since its foundation fifty-two years ago, the Japanese Society of Irrigation, Drainage and Reclamation Engineering has been making every possible effort to promote international exchange in the appropriate fields of science and technology. During the early decades, this exchange mainly took the form of importing and imitating the achievements of developed countries in Europe and America. During the 1960s, however, Japanese science and technology caught up with those of the developed countries, and since then we have been carrying out original research and have made substantial improvements. Consequently, we are now in a position to offer, in return, as much of our achievements as possible to the countries of the world, so that they may be utilized by all.

Since technologies in the field of agricultural engineering are closely related to the natural and social conditions of the regions concerned, special emphasis should be laid on regional studies for successful exchange and improvement of knowledge in this field. Needless to say, regional studies must be conducted in co-operation with the people of the regions concerned. When we engage in cooperative pursuits in foreign countries and endeavor to achieve international understanding in academic and everyday life, I believe the most important thing is to have the spirit of mutual respect for the identity of the various cultural traditions. Customs and traditions differ among different peoples, and indigenous cultures have their own historical backgrounds. There can be no great cultural traditions without the differences characteristic of various races. Therefore, it is to be emphasized again that regional studies should be conducted with the spirit of respect for the cultural identity of different traditions.

It is a great pleasure for us all to celebrate the starting of the English magazine of our society, and I personally express my great hope that the Journal will be a forum for significant contributions to the promotion of international academic exchange.

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