

Looking Back on a Turbulent May

Good Morning to the Nagasaki University community! This is President Shigeru Kohno.

Today we learned that the Costa Atlantica Cruise Ship had finally departed from Nagasaki Harbor commencing its return trip to the Phillipines. To all of the dedicated staff at Nagasaki University Hospital, to the Tropical Medicine research professionals, and to all who devoted their time and energies to Nagasaki's CoVid 19 response, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks for all of your hard work and service.

As I received continual updates about the ongoing work of the professionals on the ground, I maintained weekly contact with those dealing with the situation at the Costa Atlantica. Because the Covid19 crisis involved the complex intertwining of medical, political and economic issues, negotiating this crisis presented one of the most difficult challenges of my tenure as President.

My top priority during the consultations was protecting the health of the citizens of Nagasaki, as well as the safety of those aboard the Costa Atlantica. As I survey the situation as it stands now, I get the sense that we have weathered the worst of the storm. I want to thank all of you for pulling together and putting our slogan of "planetary health" into practice.

At the beginning of this year I declared that the mission of Nagasaki University going forward would be to make a contribution to planetary health. I must confess that at the outset, while I understood what this term meant in the abstract, I myself was unclear what it would mean in practical terms. Oddly enough, it is only now, in the wake of the worldwide Coronavirus Pandemic, that the outlines of Nagasaki University's potential role in moving planetary health closer to reality are coming into focus. Ironically enough, as I reflect back on what this turbulent month has wrought, it was perhaps mere chance, or perhaps we can say it was fate, and has enabled us to fulfill a part of our destiny. These were my thoughts as I sat down to compose this message.

Apart from the Coronavirus pandemic and the response to the health crisis aboard the cruise ship, there have been a variety of other important developments at the university. In one such development, the media has raised questions about whether Nagasaki University's School of Information Data would move its base of operations to Omura City. To clarify the current state of those deliberations, formal consultations regarding such a move have yet to begin in earnest. While the full ramifications of such a decision are difficult to gauge at this stage, this School will certainly be a new chapter in Nagasaki University's future. Therefore, we must carefully consider how best to balance the needs of the current student-body, their parents, and future students, and our responsibilities as research and educational professionals. If we do that, I'm confident we will succeed in building a School that will attract many new students. As the consultations regarding this question proceed, I intend to take a flexible approach to the situation, and so I am not ruling out the possibility of a move to Omura. While the newspaper reports in question were certainly premature, the outcome of this issue will affect all of us, and so I pledge that, as the relevant committees take up the deliberations, I will strive to make the process as transparent as possible by sharing information with all of you on a regular basis.

In other news, I am pleased to report that, thanks to your generous donations to the Students with Financial Difficulties Fund, we have already raised 60% of our target for the fund-drive. Just a little bit more to go, so please consider donating. We have received many grateful messages from students, such as "I think I can make it now!" and "Thank you so much!" I've been gratified to note that the circles of support have even spread to high-school students, who've generously donated food.

Finally, as you know, the university has decided to adhere to an online class format for the time being. To all of our teachers, I recognize the logistical difficulties this policy poses for you, but considering the health and safety of our students, remote lessons of this kind are unavoidable in the age of Coronavirus. Now that the National Emergency Declaration has been lifted, the temptation to relax our strict safety precautions is understandable, but I am firmly convinced that a second and even third wave of infections will come. Accordingly, I urge you to maintain your vigilance and together we will

negotiate the difficulties of this pandemic successfully.