

## A MESSAGE TO THE TOWNSPEOPLE OF FUTABA, FROM THE MAYOR: FUTABA TOWN FOREVER!



Katsutaka Idogawa,  
former mayor  
of Futaba town,  
Fukushima prefecture.

We are living through an evacuation of unprecedented hardship. We cannot be perpetually left adrift on the ocean. I have, therefore, implored the national government to provide us with a place where we can land, and for the day when we can rebuild. However, I did not have enough time. Praying that we shall build a town where we can unite in peace, without radioactivity, and wishing my people to live safe and sound lives, I tendered my resignation today.

I would like to share the following with you, based on my experiences.

### I. Never give in to the disaster

To “give in” to the nuclear disaster means to do nothing in making a difference from now on. I don’t want the people of Futaba town to be losers. I fervently hope that each of you win this and continue to thrive. Even if we are now divided, and forced to live scattered apart from one another, let us unite someday when the nuclear plants are abolished and the danger of radioactivity is gone, allowing us to live in harmony with nature.

To our children; never forget this rancor, and survive by every means. Please rebuild a much happier Futaba town. In order to achieve this, please don’t lose sight of yourselves, and study to become someone that other people need. I exhort you to be heroes of the world.

*“Never give in” means not forgetting the following:*

- We were asked to evacuate by the national government.
- TEPCO and the national government had sworn they would never allow a disaster to occur.
- There is a safety agreement between our town, the prefecture and TEPCO.
- The fact that we didn’t cause the disaster.
- There haven’t been any formal apologies or compensation. (lack of anything tangible)
- Our rights are yours to be exercised exclusively.
- That we are exposed to radiation.
- We are being told to clear up the radioactivity.
- We are told to go back to town when it is 20 mSv/y. (While the limit for other citizens is 1 mSv/y and lower)

*What should we do to win?*

- Confirm the entity that caused the disaster.
- Draw up a comprehensive list of the damage inflicted on us.
- Keep adding up the total estimate for damage caused.
- Demand recovery.
- Demand to be shown the limits of recovery and alternatives (such as a makeshift town, a borrowed town)
- Officially acknowledge the fact that we don't bear the burden of proof.
- Take notice of what is going on
- Learn from the suffering of the people of Minamata.
- Listen to the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Don't forget the grace of the people who hosted us when we evacuated.
- Keep intact the healthy genes of many people of the town.
- Confirm the reality of Ukraine and do not follow the same track.

*To Concentrate the Power of the Town's People:*

- Divide up and allocate work
  - Contamination surveys
  - Decontamination issues
  - Compensation issues
  - Housing issues
  - Workplace issues
  - Health issues
  - Cemetery issues
  - Schooling issues
  - Mid-term storage site for radioactive waste issues

Organise teams as such for survey and research, in order to quash citizens' negative predicaments.

- Establish a Disaster Investigation Committee

Existing reports into the disaster fail to convey the reality of the residents who were compelled to evacuate. Since any outside party will process it inaccurately, we should establish this town's own committee and leave a proper record.

## **II. Exercise the right to be assertive**

- Organise a neighborhood watch / care team
- Organise legal advisors
- Organise documents and academic affairs
- Organise volunteer activities
- Organise an association of victims of radiation exposure

In doing so, we must reclaim and restore the sovereignty of the people and the rights of the victims.

### III. Learn from our Predecessors

- “Review old teachings to know the new.”

From history, new ideas spring up. They teach us about problems we are facing. Such as, the past when our ancestors in Shineha province fell to Soma; the past where the Aizu Clan were defeated by Cho-shu. However, we survived those defeats and lived on. We must thank our ancestry and know that now it is us who carry on the survival of our town and hand it on to future generations. This disaster has no precedent. For now, let us live, keeping our children away from DNA damage caused by radioactivity, and survive the numerous perils on the path towards the reformation of Futaba town.

- “There are five schemes in life.”

Zhu Xinzong of the Chinese Song Dynasty left this as a lesson. He wrote that there is a “scheme for life”, “scheme for body”, “scheme for household”, “scheme for aging”, and “scheme for ending”. It is a conception for a living.

- “The Noble Eightfold Path”

This is said to be the Buddha’s words that teach new ways for those seeking enlightenment in ancient India.

- Right view: To see things as they really are.
- Right intention: To think rightly.
- Right speech: To speak without falsehood.
- Right action: To conduct oneself rightly.
- Right livelihood: To earn rightly.
- Right effort: To make a wholesome effort.
- Right mindfulness: The ability to focus on things rightly.
- Right concentration: To unite all mental faculties rightly.

We, for now, cannot attain such a spiritual plain. I wish these words will be heeded by TEPCO, the national government and some other forces who are trying to make light of this disaster and the human rights of the afflicted, and I hope that these words prompt an urge to do some serious soul-searching. I dare to hope also that the children of Futaba town keep these words in mind, as a part of the lessons learned in their lives. I have learned numerous lessons from this disaster. Even my country disregards peoples’ lives. The national government ordered this evacuation, and it is a battle declared on us. How we can fight back, while we don’t have armaments, measures or authority?

There is an Auschwitz Memorial Museum in Shirakawa city. Everyone knows that the Nazis used toxic gases in the holocaust against Jewish people. In Fukushima Prefecture, people’s DNA is harmed by toxic radioactivity. It seems that things are the wrong way round. I cannot guarantee safe lives to the people unless we evacuate them from this environment. Decontamination can be done after the evacuation, there is plenty of time.

There are no research results available that allow us to deem manmade radioactivity as being safe. Those who say we can live with 20 mSv/yr should come first and live with their own families and prove it. Fukushima people can come home after the safety is proven. To treat us as guinea pigs any more is no less than tyrants of some countries who fire missiles at their people.

Japan’s rehabilitation cannot be achieved without the reconstruction of Fukushima. With the decreasing population, I imagine there are a large number of Fukushima people who worry that hurting the bearers of our future will prevent a true reconstruction of Fukushima. Futaba town invited nuclear power plants and became a place not suitable to live in. And everything made by the grant for the nuclear plant is left in the town.

The invitation of a nuclear power plant cannot be done by a mere town; it first becomes possible when the prefecture proactively participated in the inviting process. We are blamed by people around Japan who says things such as “You invited the nuclear plants so you can’t call yourself victims.” Now we have been all over but have not found a place we can call home, yet we are striving to live, almost losing to the pain. I tried to deliver the cries of the children, of the elderly, of the fathers who have to earn a livelihood for their families, and of the mothers, to Prime Minister Kan. But nothing has changed. Then I pleaded with Prime Minister Noda to treat us as people of this nation. Nonetheless, my town’s people have reached the limit and it is too much. Thus I have tried to tell the national government the distress of my people, taken the role of whipping boy for my people, and tried to expose it to the mass media.

I also have tried to communicate our distress to the prefecture. Recently I made an inquiry again, and was disgusted by the reply which lacks concreteness. The prefectural governor told me that we should build mid-term [radioactive waste] storage sites in Futaba town, in order to revive Fukushima. So I questioned him by what he means by Futaba town being able to revive. He didn’t answer. Then I went a step further and asked him to give me a town. He didn’t answer this either. In such a way, it could not be called a consultation.

Then I asked a question to a bureau chief in the Ministry of the Environment, to see why they decided on the two sites in Futaba. He said that he did not know. Then I asked him to show me the minutes of the meeting, and was told days after that they don’t have it. With all these experiences, even though they say they are just doing surveys and will not build the sites, I simply cannot offer my consent to them.

The town has its history and properties that were built by our ancestors. And I am not happy if someone who lacks understanding of our history would order us to build mid-term radioactive waste storage sites. I demand the direction be decided after sufficient discussion among my town’s people. I want it to be decided by the younger contingent.

For every one of the town’s people who support me, everyone in towns and villages in Futaba district and Fukushima prefecture, the national and Fukushima prefectural government and everyone around the country who supported us through our evacuation and relief, everyone in the Diet, everyone in self-governing bodies around the country, everyone in the Saitama prefectural government and its assembly, everyone in Saitama prefecture, everyone in Kazo city office and its council, every Kazo city citizen, everyone in Sakura city, everyone in the field of health science and medicine, everyone in the field of welfare, those who gave us valuable information, and everyone who supported us with volunteer activities from all over the country and around the world, we are supported by you, by so many people who lend us helping hands for this evacuation, and we came this far. I express my sincere gratefulness to you and I hope this would somehow compensate for my message of resignation.

Thank you very much for your ongoing support.

23rd January, 2013

Mayor of Futaba town, Katsutaka Idogawa

Originally written in Japanese, and reproduced by permission.

Translation commissioned by Greenpeace Japan.

Portrait © Noriko Hayashi / Greenpeace