

September 21, 2013

**President Hirano's greetings at the Closing Ceremony  
of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Seven Universities Meet**

As President of Osaka University and on behalf of Osaka University, the host for this year's meet, I'd like to extend my congratulations and appreciation to all who were a part of these games. It gives me great pleasure to state that we were able to host a successful meet without any major incidents despite the scorching heat of this summer. The success of this meet could not have been possible without the support of participating universities, the smooth management of many who made efforts behind the scenes, and the students on the steering committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all people and organizations involved in this meet for their good service.

This year's meet started with ice hockey in December 2012. Over the past 9 months, exciting competitions were held in 31 sporting events. Tohoku University excelled against fierce competition and deservedly won the championship. I'd like to praise all the athletes' strenuous efforts. Please accept my hearty congratulations on your victories.

Regarding sports, this year can be called "the year of Tohoku." Performances by high schools from the Tohoku region in the senior high school baseball tournament were outstanding. In professional baseball, thanks to Tanaka Masahiro, fondly referred to as "Ma-kun," his team, the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles, is in first place, aiming to win their first league title. Tohoku University's championship in this 25<sup>th</sup> meet will also surely encourage people in the Tohoku region working on reconstruction in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The other day, Tokyo was chosen to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. SATO Mami, a Paralympic track-and-field athlete, hails from the Tohoku region. She made the first presentation, a very impressive presentation, at the meeting of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) members in Buenos Aires. She lost her right leg below the knee to cancer as a university student. Despite many difficulties as an athlete with an artificial leg, she was active in world championships and the Paralympics. Moreover, although she also became victim of the big quake two years ago, she visited people in damaged areas to promote bonding among people through sports and encourage them.

In her presentation, she said, "I learned that what was important was what I had, not what I had lost." What she lost must have given her immeasurable sadness, but she learned to overcome that through positive thinking.

My hope for you would be that you too learn many things through sports. I hope this Seven Universities Meet has been a place not only for excelling in competition, but also for deepening friendship, learning from sports. I hope these meets will always remain a place for such purposes.

Seven years from now some of you may be skilled athletes. I wonder if one of you might be in the Olympics one day.

Next year's meet will be hosted by Kyoto University. It will surely be an exciting meet. I look forward to seeing you again in Kyoto, crowded with people for the Gion Festival.

Finally, once again, I would like to thank all who supported this meet and conclude my greetings with the wish for ever greater Seven Universities Meets in the years to come.

***HIRANO Toshio***

President

Osaka University