

Speech by Minister Ishii

Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), Japan
(Read by Vice Minister Fujita, MLIT on behalf of Minister Ishii)

Hearty congratulations on this great occasion of the IHRA Forum 2018 assembling leading figures of the government, legislature, business community, academia and mass media amongst others from around world today. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt condolence and sympathy to the casualties of derailment accident that recently occurred in Taiwan. I myself, as the one who is responsible for infrastructure administration including railways, have renewed my resolve to make unremitting efforts to ensure the safety.

Now, the theme of today's Forum is "Overcoming Challenges in a Complex World – Past, Present and Future". So, in line with this theme, looking back at Japan's history. In October 1964, the world's first high speed railway "Shinkansen" started operation between Tokyo and Osaka. Our predecessors' firm commitment to and belief in the possibility of the Shinkansen led to its completion in just five years, to everyone's surprise. Ever since to date, the Shinkansen has been in service for more than half a century.

We can enumerate a number of outstanding features of the Shinkansen, but above all, it is noteworthy that the Shinkansen is proud of its excellent safety and reliability as evidenced by the past records of no fatal passengers' accidents and the average delay time of less than one minute since the beginning of the operation.

I would like to highlight the fact that the Shinkansen has received the confidence of people through performing the prominent role as the

key infrastructure in leading the socioeconomic activities as well as the function to support daily life of people in Japan.

Last September, Indonesia's Sulawesi was hit by a massive earthquake. I understand there are participants from Indonesia. Please accept my heartfelt condolence and sympathy.

Japan is regarded as an earthquake prone country. In order to prepare for earthquakes which are unpredictable, there are earthquake detectors installed along the Shinkansen lines. In the event of a quake, an emergency brake will be immediately applied. These technologies also support safety and reliability of the Shinkansen.

And currently, construction of the SC Maglev is underway between Tokyo and Nagoya and this Maglev or Chuo Shinkansen can go beyond 500 kilometer per hour employing the cutting edge superconductive technology. In the future, it will be further extended to reach Osaka, connecting the three major metropolis in Japan with a population of 70 million in just one hour. A super mega-region will be created.

Once the Chuo Shinkansen starts service, it will transform our national structure, penetrate the growth to all regions, bring about social and economic development and enhance international competitiveness. The present Shinkansen, which surprised the world, started operation in the year Japan hosted its first Olympic Games in Tokyo. And, in 2020, Tokyo again will host its second Olympic and Paralympic Games. To accommodate the needs of our guests from overseas, we have to make our transportation more smooth and barrier free by deploying universal design. We must also make all out

efforts to ensure safety. At the same time, we need to ensure that critical infrastructure will function even in the event of a disaster, given the fact that the recent disasters are seeing an increase in severity and frequency. We need to promote initiatives to ensure safety and security of both Japanese and our foreign visitors.

In the face of globalization, the issues that we need to address go beyond the borders. Development of High Speed Railway, including the Shinkansen, is something I believe will contribute to resolving the challenges foreseen in the process of social and economic transformation.

Fukuoka and Kyushu have a history of serving as a hub for international exchange. The fact that this Forum is being held under the theme at this venue is fitting with the history, and I hope everyone will engage in active and meaningful discussions.

Now, I would like to conclude my greetings. Thank you.