

Video Message
Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

Good morning, everyone. I am Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.

I would like to offer my warm congratulations on the opening of the IHRA International Forum 2016, “A New Society and the Future Created by High-Speed Rail” , with a large number of participants from around the world.

Japanese high-speed rail is called “Shinkansen” , a word that has come to symbolize our nation. “Shinkansen” represents not only the pinnacle of railway technologies, but also the Japanese culture that values safety and trust, as well as tireless pursuit for quality and efficiency... the elements that Japan wishes to present to the rest of the world with pride.

The “Shinkansen” was born on October 1, 1964, just nine days before the opening of the Tokyo Olympics. I was 10 years old then. I clearly remember desperately wanting to go on the ‘Dream Super Express’ as soon as possible.

In those days, Japan was not as affluent as it is now, but the Shinkansen construction was completed in just five years with a loan from the World Bank. The Shinkansen’s capability to deliver high-speed and mass-volume passenger transportation dramatically improved business conditions and supported Japan’s economic advancement.

Half a century has passed since then. The Shinkansen now carries almost 400 million passengers each year along its nationwide network, extending some 3,000 kilometers in total. With no passenger fatality

and outstanding punctuality despite an operation interval as short as 3 minutes, the Shinkansen has evolved into an advanced transportation system, developed on the basis of emergency resilience and ultimate safety.

Construction is currently underway for the Superconducting Maglev, the next-generation ultra-high-speed rail. By 2027, the Superconducting Maglev will be in operation in Japan, revolutionizing high-speed rail for the 21st century.

Japan's high-speed rail network, serviced by the Superconducting Maglev and Shinkansen, will link transport hubs such as Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and all regions across our nation from the northern tip to the southern end. This 'corridor of regional revitalization' will integrate all of Japan into a single economic zone, providing growth opportunities to regional communities.

Looking outside, it is as if the whole of this ancient capital with its rich history has become tinted with autumn leaves. Kyoto in autumnal colors looks gorgeous at times and solemn at other times. This is the perfect setting for distancing ourselves from mundane tasks and problems, and letting our mind freely explore the future.

I have high expectations for this Forum, where leaders of various sectors from numerous countries and regions around the world have gathered to exchange opinions and share information for societal transformation by high-speed rail.