

September 14 2009 (Monday) 18:00-19:30

Reception (speech)

(3) Fukuoka New Deal

Wataru Aso: Governor, Fukuoka Prefecture

How will we change with the current world economic crisis? This is a critical issue, and for us, the breakthrough is “the Fukuoka New Deal.” We are at a paradigm shift and we must think of ways to create high-income employment opportunities.

The first paradigm shift is the environment. The second is a shift in demand toward cheap but functional goods. With this, the demand for luxury items and branded goods will probably fall. The third is the increasing power of BRICS. The fourth is a greater emphasis on safety and reliability. The fifth is the understanding that a domestic-demand-led economy will not succeed. In particular regarding the fifth point, the concept of domestic demand and foreign demand in a global economy no longer makes sense. Growth sectors in terms of domestic demand are health care and nursing care. For these sectors to grow, a huge amount of capital must be injected every year, but Japan cannot afford this. That is why it should expend its energies on foreign demand. A global economy centered on foreign demand will make Japan an better place to live.

The Fukuoka New Deal plan is comprised of 17 projects, starting one that transfers human resources to the agriculture sector. The argument that it is dangerous for senior citizens to drive and hence, they should give up their drivers’ licenses, is a problem for regional areas. That is why we are trying to develop cars that are less accident-prone and trying to realize hydrogen automobiles, highways and hydrogen towns. In addition, following surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatment, we are trying to develop a fourth treatment method for cancer, something called Cancer Peptide Vaccine treatment (boosting the immune system to treat cancer). Furthermore, we are also involved in semiconductor businesses, robotics businesses,

young Asian fashion and content to enter into Asian markets, the Noshoko alliance (alliance of small and medium-sized firms with agricultural, forestry and fisheries people to create new products and services) and the development of urban mines. How can we enter into this growing global market? Another key is how much small-to-medium-sized companies, which employ 70 percent of the workforce, can grow. By taking into consideration past mistakes in entering global markets, we must be careful not to make mistakes. This means we must make good use of IT and guarantee physical distribution of goods. As a prefecture, we want to our small-to-medium-sized companies and agricultural industry to spread throughout the world.

In terms of decentralization, with a declining birthrate and an aging population, Japan's societal structure will change. With this, we must provide services that meet the needs of the region. Tokyo has the lowest birthrate in the country, and yet the population is concentrated there. This is not sustainable. In a society with a declining birthrate and an aging population, it is a tremendous task to take care of one elderly person. There is not enough to meet the nation's standards. It will just cost a lot of money, and yet we will not be able to get high-satisfaction services. How about being bold and letting the regional areas take charge of industrial development? The nation should look at and deal with the world. For example, the nation should be engaged in making global rules, such as environment related rules. Unless we consider how we can elevate our nation's achievements to world-class levels, we are wasting money. The nation should behave more like a nation, and should allow the local governments to take care of what local governments should be in charge of. We are doing our best to move toward decentralization and your ongoing understanding and support would be much appreciated.

* * * * *