

Harmony between the Environment, Technology and the Earth: The 2005 World Exposition, Aichi, Japan

Interviewee – Mari Christine, Interviewer – Tsuchiya Hiroshi

Tsuchiya: *The World Exposition, Aichi, Japan will be held for half a year starting on March 25, 2005. Mari Christine is the Public Relations Producer for EXPO 2005.*

The Osaka Expo was held when I was a student, and I get excited when I hear about world expositions. What are the main aims of EXPO 2005?

Christine: The Aichi Expo is the second one to be held in Japan after Osaka in 1970, and it is the first world exposition of the 21st century. As a country, Japan is extremely fond of Western languages, and their use is becoming more prevalent in the media, Western words are being used more readily. "Exposition" is one of these words, and it is now frequently used for a variety of events from small flower exhibits to amusement park-type events. I believe foreigners perhaps have a clearer understanding than Japanese about the weight of the word "expo." The sheer magnitude of a world exposition is extremely important.

The first world exposition was held in London's Hyde Park in 1851. Since then, they have been held in various countries around the world. In France, for example, public structures such as the Eiffel Tower and Petit Palais were built because of expositions, and these structures still remain today. In this sense, while the exposition represented a great historic event for France, it also provided social infrastructure. In the same way, social infrastructure elements also remain from the Osaka Expo in 1970.

EXPO 2005 will perhaps be the first world exposition in Japanese history in which no structures will remain after the expo is over. In other words, this exposition is not about investing in social infrastructure. However, although no buildings or other physical structures will remain, we hope this exposition will be truly impressive in terms of ideas, points of view, the environment and so

forth. Expositions have traditionally had the purpose of exhibiting technology and industry and of transforming rough landscapes into beautiful areas. The 2005 exposition, however, will be held in the former Aichi Youth Park, and from this perspective, the event will have a unique atmosphere unlike world expositions held in the past.

During the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, there were discussions about the concept of the "Global Loop" and plans to build it as an above ground corridor at the expo site in Aichi (see rough map of the site on page 44). The symbolic meaning of this loop also expresses the importance of the ground by not setting foot on the natural environment. The summit participants in Johannesburg told us that this was a wonderful concept. At exposition sites in the past, soil was moved and structures were built on top of destroyed natural ecosystems. With EXPO 2005, however, we are working to minimize the impact as much as possible in an effort to leave the site better than when we found it. The Global Loop is premised on one of the ideas behind ecotourism, which is to leave the environment in better condition than when you found it.

Additionally, the loop is intended to give visitors a sense of traveling around the world and it symbolizes the countries of the world joining hands to form an uninterrupted link.

Tsuchiya: *The site is separated into two areas. In which area is the Global Loop located?*

Christine: The loop is located in the Nagakute Area of the Youth Park. The expo site also includes the Seto Area, where the Kaisho Forest is located. The Seto Area was chosen as the exposition site prior to the revelation of several problems, including the fact that rare

goshawks, which are designated as a category two threatened species on the Environment Ministry's Red List, had built nests in the Kaisho Forest. However, as a result of listening to the opinions of concerned local parties and environmentalists, land in the Nagakute Area of the Youth Park was chosen as an alternative site. I should point out that there is no difference between the two locations in terms of our commitment to taking good care of the environment.

Japanese people have traditionally valued nature, and during discussions with the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE, or International Bureau of Expositions) about holding the first world exposition of the 21st century in Japan, it was proposed to hold an "environmental exposition" that stressed the importance of forests.

We adopted extremely high standards in our own independent assessment of the environmental impact of holding the exposition. We set a high hurdle for ourselves, and in so doing, the exposition site has undergone an extremely ambitious assessment.

After the exposition ends, structures required by the prefecture, local authorities and prefectural residents, will be left intact for use, while on the rest of the site, the natural environment will be restored to its original state. As a result, pavilions will also be temporary structures, and the pavilion modules can be reused for other purposes after the Expo. Concerning garbage and other issues, although it cannot be eliminated completely, we have maintained a single ideology and philosophy of working to reduce its environmental impact to the greatest possible extent. There are a variety of ways to achieve this, including building modules from recyclable materials and using timber from forest thinning, and starting with the previously mentioned assessment, presentation and project planning have given maximum consideration to the environ-

The 2005 World Exposition, Aichi, Japan

Location: Nagoya Eastern Hills (Nagakute Town, Toyota City and Seto City)

Duration: March 25-Sept. 25, 2005 (total of 185 days)

Expected number of visitors: approx. 15 million



Mari Christine, a public relations producer for EXPO 2005

ment.

Tsuchiya: *What is the status of the preparations, including fund raising?*

Christine: Raising funds is still a major challenge. With that said, past expositions have enjoyed large national budgets and money could be spent lavishly. This exposition, however, is being held following the collapse of the economic bubble, and further, in these times there are questions about whether large sums of money should be used for expositions in already developed countries. Consequently, in a sense, I believe this is an extremely experimental exposition. Because it will have an impact on future expositions, EXPO 2005 has a great responsibility, and we are all working to make it a success.

Tsuchiya: *Currently, what is the total scope of the project?*

Christine: The total cost is ¥190 billion, which includes ¥135 billion in construction expenses.

Tsuchiya: *What is Aichi's geographical position within Japan?*

Christine: Aichi is located in the Chubu region, which is roughly in the middle of Japan. I think foreigners will perhaps recognize this area as one of Japan's main industrial centers and home to, just to mention a few, such companies as Toyota Motor Corp., Noritake Co. and Ōkura China, Inc. As this region has the highest GDP in Japan, foreign business people and engineers have likely had many opportunities to visit the prefecture. Aichi's industry supports Japan, but at the same time, these activities place a burden on the environment. However, a large number of companies in the Chubu region have acquired ISO (International Standardization Organization) certification, and like Toyota, which is developing environmentally friendly cars, many companies are involved in environment-related businesses. In this sense, going forward, we cannot protect the global environment without technology. Whether using technology to protect the environment or restoring destroyed habitats, we are unable to talk about the future of the global environment without considering technology. From this perspective, I believe this is the most suitable location for this exposition. Additionally, the Central Japan International Airport is

scheduled to open in February 2005, one month prior to the opening of EXPO 2005 in Aichi.

Tsuchiya: *Where will visitors to the exposition stay?*

Christine: We expect visitors are most likely to stay in the areas surrounding the exposition site. There are many hotels in Nagoya, the capital of Aichi Prefecture. Nagoya is about 20km west of the exposition site, and it takes about 40 minutes to travel there by train.

Tsuchiya: *Could you explain the exposition's basic concept of "Nature's Wisdom," as well as its sub-themes of "Nature's Matrix," "Art of Life" and "Development for Eco-Communities."*

Christine: The basic concept has environmental and ecological roots, and I feel it is fair to say that this is the first exposition to focus on the environment. When hearing the concept "Nature's Wisdom," some BIE members wondered about the idea of there being "wisdom in nature," but ultimately, I believe nothing compares to nature. Nature itself can be the best way to restore nature. Unless humans provide obsta-

Photo: Japan Association for the 2005 World Exposition



cles, the earth can survive on its own. Consequently, humans must live in a manner that does not interfere with the regenerative powers of the earth. However, because we are a part of the environment, we must not be self-destructive and instead we should use our knowledge and technology to help restore the environment. We would like to contribute to the earth while respecting nature's wisdom, and I hope this exposition will be able to spread this kind of thinking.

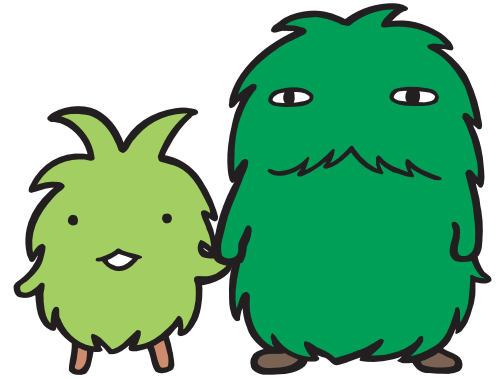
The basic concept is harmony between the environment, technology

and of course, the peace of the earth. The key phrase for this exposition, a "Grand Intercultural Symphony," was coined by Kimura Shozaburo, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo and also an executive producer for the 2005 World Exposition. Cultural exchange between peoples is of course extremely important. In today's world, the Earth does not have physical national borders. When considering a world without national borders, the most important aspect is the environment. For example, in a borderless world, acid rain that harms China hurts Japan as well.

Further, if a developing country is unable to dispose of its own waste and dumps it into the sea, it will have an impact in terms of contaminating the fish we eat. The word "borderless" is not solely a political term, but rather, the idea of environmental borderlessness represents an even more serious issue. In order to adequately address this issue, it is most important that we are able to integrate at the exposition our respective cultures and means of caring for the environment.

Tsuchiya: Are you conducting any over-

Photo: Japan Association for the 2005 World Exposition



The official mascots for EXPO 2005 – Kiccoro (left) and Morizo

seas public relations activities?

Christine: We have held discussions at the Summit in Johannesburg and Switzerland, in New York and most recently in China.

Tsuchiya: *What has been the response from so far?*

Christine: A total of 133 groups are participating in the exposition, comprised of 125 countries and eight international organizations. I recently attended a conference of government representatives from 90 participating countries, and they are all working with great enthusiasm.

The participating countries range from developed countries to developing countries, and some of the developing countries have still not reached the high-tech age. We hope these countries will showcase the splendid natural environments and how they live in relation to them. At the same time, we hope that by participating in the exposition they are able to gain a variety of new ideas on how to further develop their own countries.

Canada deserves the highest admiration. In all expositions, Canada has consistently been the first to come forward and declare their participation. This is a source of pride for its citizens. I think the notion that expositions represent one of the most important opportunities for having contact between one's own and other countries is a splendid aspiration.

Tsuchiya: *What about companies that would like to take part in the exposition?*

Christine: If you are interested in participating, please inquire with your countries' expo representatives, who are listed on our website.

Tsuchiya: *What is your message for visitors from other countries?*

Christine: I would like to say that many people have an image of Japan as a country located at the far end of the

Earth, but with the world becoming much smaller with the speed of news and the Internet, and airline tickets becoming relatively inexpensive, this has brought Japan much closer than before. Although the exposition is being held in Aichi Prefecture, all of Japan is serving as a host. I know that you can look forward to the warm hospitality of the people of Aichi and Japan.

Tsuchiya: *What are the projections for the number of visitors?*

Christine: We anticipate 15 million people, but personally, I sense the exposition will attract even more than that.

Tsuchiya: *Have advance tickets already gone on sale?*

Christine: Tickets can be reserved and purchased over the Internet. We are prepared to sell 8 million tickets in advance, and we have already sold more than 5 million.

Geographically, a large portion of visitors are coming from Asia. In particular, the largest number is from China, which is perhaps due to the decision to hold the 2010 world exposition in Shanghai.

Tsuchiya: *What are some of the highlights for international visitors?*

Christine: In some ways Japan is a highly technological country, and though the eyes of the world tend to focus on its sophisticated technology and industry, Japan is a country that has lived in harmony with nature since ancient times. Textbooks in one country describe Japan as a "country with a culture of paper and wood." Furthermore, when foreigners think of cherry trees, they might think there are no more than several varieties. However, Japan has more than 1,000 types of cherry trees, and similarly, it has a thousand words and phrases to express "rain." Japanese people born and raised in this delicate cul-

ture have a tender heart toward nature, and I hope others will feel the splendor of the natural environment that has nurtured the Japanese people. I also hope visitors from other countries will come away with a sense of its beauty and peacefulness.

Tsuchiya: *You are regularly active as a communicator with other cultures. From this standpoint, what is your message for people from other countries who are interested in Japan?*

Christine: I believe living peacefully is the starting point for all human beings. Inter-cultural communication is about gaining an understanding and appreciation of another culture and recognizing that it is okay if you do not necessarily agree. Moreover, I think it is a good medium for understanding the origin of one's own sensibilities and way of thinking. I would be pleased if EXPO 2005 serves as an arena for symbolizing this.

Tsuchiya: *Thank you very much. Best wishes for a successful exposition.* **JS**

Mari Christine is a public relations producer for EXPO 2005 AICHI, Japan. She is also a good-will ambassador for UNICHS-HABITAT, and frequently appears on Japanese television.

Tsuchiya Hiroshi is the executive managing director of the Japan Economic Foundation, and the editor-in-chief of *Japan Spotlight*.