

# The President's Inaugural Address – Uniting the Voice of Japan's Architecture Community

June 1, 2015

**Masayoshi Nakashima**

The Fifty-Fourth President of Architectural Institute of Japan  
Professor, Disaster Prevention Research Institute, Kyoto University



On May 29, I assumed the position of the fifty-fourth President of the Architectural Institute of Japan. I feel much honored to have been elected to this prestigious position, and shall work to my utmost to promote the sustainable development of the Institute.

## **Need for Uniting the Voice of Japan's Architecture Community**

For a long time, Japanese architecture has exercised a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing a wide range of diverse disciplines such as architectural planning, design, and history; building materials, structures, and construction; and building physics and urban environment studies. Should we succumb to an inward-looking bent, however, we would lose our momentum, like any other vertically administered organization, to adapt to a world that is changing rapidly because of increased globalization. The key to preventing such a loss of momentum, I believe, is a transdisciplinary attitude, in which linkage with the real world is appreciated. Another key is an interdisciplinary effort, by which new disciplines are forged through collective, integral efforts among diverse genres.

Our globe is experiencing an explosive increase in population combined with rapid development and urbanization due to growing economic activities. We now face the ultimate question of how to ensure the sustainable development of the human sphere, which in turn calls for a new way of living on the earth. The Institute, with its mission of responding to the demands of people and their living, has a major role to play

as we face this challenge. To expedite this, solid collaboration between different academic domains is required more than ever before. Thus, it is vital to push forward to ensure that Japanese architecture can move beyond the traditional engineering disciplines into a sphere that melds the humanities and sciences.

To further the transdisciplinary attitude and interdisciplinary effort, it is of the utmost priority that Japanese architecture, in support of the multidisciplinary approach, has to speak with a united voice, affording a clear view of the mission of Japanese architecture and the Institute. The key to uniting the voice of this community lies in harmonious cooperation among a plethora of stakeholders who differ in field, culture, traditions, age, and gender, among others. To achieve this, we must be proactive in promoting co-design and co-production where all participants can pool their resources.

## **Pathways toward a more united voice in Japan's architecture community**

In terms of specific measures to ensure an ever more united voice in the Japan's architecture community, I would like to set forth the following pathways that I aim to implement together with all members of the Institute, spanning industry, academia, government, and the people.

- (1) Reviewing the current medium-to-long term plan of the Institute and setting the next medium-term action plan conducive to the continuance of the Institute;
- (2) Enhancing the management that provides timely response to member needs;

- (3) Fostering young generations who can embody the spirit of Japanese architecture and yet flourish in the global era; and
- (4) Promoting the Institute's contribution to the establishment of more resilient and sustainable society.

**Reviewing Medium-to-Long Term Plan and setting the next Medium-Term Action Plan**

In April 2006, the Institute formulated its medium-to-long term plan entitled "Medium-to-Long Term Plan for Development of Architecture and the Institute – Sharing Goals and Strengthening Identities". This plan together with the associated action provided the roadmap for maintaining the coherent management of the Institute's progress for the ensuing ten years. It is vital to lay out such a plan and assiduously implement it to bolster the identity of the Institute. In view of the items mentioned in the action plan that runs to the end of fiscal 2015, I will work on revision of the medium-to-long term plan released in 2006 into the next medium-to-long term plan to reflect changes both in and outside the Institute, while helping to formulate an action plan that will pave the road forward for the coming decade.

**Enhancing the management that provides timely response to member needs**

Leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which is constantly changing the way that information is delivered and received, the many members who underpin the Institute can be ever more proactively engaged in co-design and co-production activities. Toward this, we must create a framework that allows greater appreciation of the merit of being a member of the Institute. To achieve this, I will work towards more speedy transmission and reception of information with members as well as promoting remote conference and seminar participation as a way to encourage participation in the Institute's activities.

**Fostering young generations who can embody the spirit of Japanese architecture and yet flourish in the global era**

In an era characterized by accelerating globalization, we must seriously consider how Japanese architecture can be attuned to globalization and its inevitable challenges related to cooperation and competition, while understanding that it is not easy to measure conformity to globalization with a singular yardstick when it comes to Japan's diverse architecture. The best solution is to nurture the next generations and encourage them to embody the characteristics of multidisciplinary approach, transdisciplinary attitude, and interdisciplinary effort, which will enable them to flourish in the global era. When it comes to cultivating the human resources that will constitute the foundation for such an approach, promoting joint and equal participation of men and women is a matter of the utmost priority. With a 30 to 40% ratio of female students, Japanese architecture outperforms other engineering disciplines where the ratio remains at just 10%. This highlights how important it is for women to participate more than ever before in Japanese architecture. I shall focus on a series of initiatives that will encourage the cultivation of human resources and the collection and sharing of information pursuant to this end.

**Promoting the Institute's contribution to establishing a more resilient and sustainable society**

The three pressing issues facing Japan, i.e., "Restoration from disasters and disaster prevention and mitigation", "Transition to low-carbon society", and "Utilization and application of vast building stock" are also the pillars of the social contribution activities engaged in by the Institute. When thinking of uniting the voice of the Japan's architecture community, we must be aware that these three issues are inextricably interlinked, and I believe that collective efforts among these are of the utmost importance when it comes to constructing an ever-more resilient society. I will do my utmost to enhance the promotion of these three issues, the fostering of cooperation spanning the solutions to these issues, as well as linkages for pressing everyday needs.