

Presidential Address Delivered at Graduation Ceremony
Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, March 20, 2012

Graduates, Parents, Chancellor Yoshikazu Morita, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen assembled here today, on this most auspicious occasion.

On behalf of the faculty and staff of Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, I welcome this opportunity to congratulate our newest graduates upon their successful completion of the mighty challenge of four years of university study. It is also my distinct joy and great pleasure to congratulate the parents of all of our students on their achievement of bringing up their children with care, hard work, and love. Today here they are—mature, competent, and ready to become responsible members of Japanese society. Indeed, most of them already are!

My fellow graduates, today as you stand on the threshold of the world beyond our classrooms, I feel the hope that fills your hearts. I see optimism in your eyes. I hear confidence in your voices. This is a tough time, and I admire you for having these qualities.

This year Kyoto University of Foreign Studies celebrates the 65th anniversary of its founding. We all share pride in our university's motto, "Pax Mundi per Linguas" which means "World Peace through Language". We have made every effort to contribute to world peace every one of the past 65 years by translating the ideal of our university motto into action.

When we look around the world of today, we are led to think that genuine and lasting world peace is fragile and hard to grasp. We still have a long, long way to go to make the dream come true.

Graduates, ladies and gentlemen, what went wrong in spite of our efforts to make our world safe and secure? Well, the answer, it seems to me, is that we humans have been neither wise enough nor courageous enough to practice what we preach about being members of one single human family.

We, of Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, are fortunate to find on our campus today very comforting and hopeful signs of wisdom, courage, and change. I would like to call your attention to the many admirable student groups who engage in extracurricular activities which do practice what we preach, students who put into action our proud motto. The following three groups are representative of our many student-led activities which we could call Pax Mundi Projects. They are Kyoto Gaidai Habitat, Kyoto Gaidai Table for Two, and the Kyoto Gaidai Peer Support Community.

First, the students of Kyoto Gaidai Habitat strive to help solve the world-wide problems of homelessness and poor housing. These students go abroad twice a year—at their own expense and I really respect you for that—to work and help people of developing countries build decent, affordable homes.

Secondly, Kyoto Gaidai Table for Two raises funds to help poor and needy children who are undernourished. The idea behind this fund-raising drive is brilliant, simple, and effective. When we go to Kyoto Gaidai's Libre dining room and place an order for lunch on the designated menus, 20 yen per plate goes to pay for school lunches for hungry and ill-fed children in developing countries.

The third example of our many Pax Mundi Projects is the Kyoto Gaidai Peer Support Community. Volunteers offer a helping hand to their fellow students. They give advice and counseling on studies, and indeed, on all aspects of student life. As President, I want you to know that I look up to you.

These students have also joined with other Kyoto Gaidai students this past year in our 'Don't Forget Tohoku' projects to help with our own tragic problems here in Japan.

I must confess that my heart has been moved, and my imagination captured, by these students who put into practice, in thought and deed, our university motto every day of the year. The students of our Pax Mundi Projects richly deserve respect and admiration from us all.

It may appear to some people that these students' activities are neither so

impressive nor sufficiently influential when we compare them with the gravity and magnitude of the global crisis, such as environmental destruction and global warming.

However, there is no doubt in my mind that by learning how to balance their own self-interests with the interests of broader communities, both locally and globally, the students in our Pax Mundi Projects give us examples of the ways in which we all ought to be living to make our world more hospitable, more just, and more peaceful for every human being. So, ladies and gentlemen, let us all give these students a big round of applause!

We all are the children of the founders of this fine university. Our university's motto most eloquently expresses our hope, our will to find meaning in our lives—meaning that will bring the people of the world together.

We may find purpose in study, in our work, in our hobbies, and in our interests. Above all however, we find purpose in these things by rising above selfish goals and finding purpose in living for other people.

I look forward to seeing the seeds that our Pax Mundi Projects have sown in our campus soil grow tall day by day, little by little, to flower and bear fruit for all the students who follow you here at this university.

In my heart, I believe that as long as our school banner of idealism keeps flying high, as long as we continue to nurture admirable students like you, I will remain an optimist. I have every confidence in you, and you, and you who graduate today from Kyoto University of Foreign Studies.

Congratulations once again on your remarkable achievements. I wish each and every one of you, joy, love, and peace in the communities, in the careers, and in the families that you will build in the coming years.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Takeshi Matsuda
President