

Speech by Ambassador Takata  
at the graduation ceremony of Institute of the Pacific United (IPU NZ)  
14:00, Friday, 4 December 2015  
The Regent Theatre, Palmerston North

Mr Hiroshi Ohashi, CEO/Chairman of the Board of Trustees, IPU New Zealand

Professor Wayne Edwards, President, IPU New Zealand and other executive members of IPU

His Excellency Mr Jose Antonio Tavares, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia and other foreign mission representative

Mr Ian McKelvie, Member of Parliament and other Members of Parliament.. Mr Grant Smith, Mayor of the Palmerston North City

Ms Emily Fabling, Director, International, the Ministry of Education

Kia Ora Koutou.

First and foremost, to all the students graduating today, congratulations! To be invited to have this opportunity to speak you on to such an important day is a great pleasure for me. I have been in New Zealand for about half a year now, but the life of a career diplomat can at times involve intense negotiations, so it is pleasure to be invited to such celebratory events like this.

The advantages of having studied at IPU NZ are that students from all over the world have the opportunity to study international relations, as well as providing a great place for students from overseas to not only practice their English, but also to learn about international issues.

Over the 25 years since the opening of this university, many students who studied English, international relations, or Japanese at this institution are now making their mark in the world.

This university offers a truly culturally diverse educational environment, providing a natural place for international cooperation and for forging lifelong friendships. It think that this kind of people-to-people exchange and intercultural understanding is one of the few things that we can do to rid the world of international conflict.

As you may already know, in Japan and New Zealand, there are already some major assets in place to promote good international relations. These are the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme

(JET), and the sister city relationships between our two nations.

In fact, there are 41 sister cities between Japan and New Zealand, and more than 70% of the population in New Zealand are living in those sister cities. As for people-to-people exchange, about 100 young kiwis every year are selected for the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET), to go to Japan to teach English and to work in local government offices across the country. These cultural and people-to-people linkages greatly contribute to the promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and New Zealand, and it is a great example of successful bilateral development.

I sincerely hope that as ambassadors of IPU NZ, you will continue promoting mutual understanding among different cultures and peoples around the world based on your experiences gained at this university.

I don't want to keep you too long, however, in Japan, a guest speaker at a graduation ceremony often gives a lesson on life to graduating students. Following this tradition, I would like to pass on this inspiration to you.

“一生学び続ける” Which translates to “keep on learning (or studying) for a lifetime”. As humans, the ability to continue to grow and learn is a unique trait. It is therefore something we should cherish and continue to do throughout our lives. Just because you have finished with university does not mean that you have finished learning!

As for myself, it has been almost 40 years since I started out as a diplomat, so I have learned many things. Each time I am assigned to a new posting, I have to learn or study each country's customs and its climate/geography as well as its politics, economics and background and so on. My study never really finished after university and neither will yours.

I hope that many of you will have the chance to visit Japan in the future, possibly for the Rugby World Cup 2019, or even the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Before I go I would like to leave you with one parting remark. Knowledge is a necessity for success in anything that you do. Make sure to keep on studying, even as you leave university behind you to embark on new endeavors, I encourage you to continue to challenge yourself to learn new things.

Thank you and Congratulations again.  
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.