



## Initiative Nippon project in Toyooka: Regional meeting on acceptance of foreign residents

The fourth regional meeting of the Initiative Nippon project was co-hosted by the Outlook Foundation and Toyooka, Hyogo Prefecture on Saturday, September 3rd in Toyooka's government building in Kinosaki. Twenty-eight participants including local corporations, organizations, schools, a Japanese language NPO, other stakeholders in foreign resident issues, foreign workers, and the hosts engaged in vigorous discussion. Toyooka is an environmentally conscious city, and its wetlands are known as a sanctuary for Oriental Storks.

Chairman Takaji Kunimatsu of the Outlook Foundation explained the objective of this meeting: Japan now accepts foreign residents with makeshift policies that lack direction. Alarmed by this situation, we are travelling the country to learn regional views. With our Tokyo round scheduled for November, we want to move forward in this matter based on local opinions.

Mayor Muneharu Nakagai of Toyooka explained that



his city, although remote from large urban centers, has increasing opportunities to encounter



foreigners. The majority of them are now tourists, but the city expects foreign residents to constitute a greater part of communities and organizations in the future. Mayor Nakagai thinks that we should discuss how to successfully assimilate them, how we can support and create opportunities for foreign communities. Children of foreign residents are a precious resource of the city just as are Japanese children. He stressed the importance of such awareness and their participation in the society.

Ms Yoshie Katsuma, who supports foreign residents in various ways, especially in language education, pointed out that Toyooka already has many foreign residents and people with foreign roots and that the Japanese language is a primary barrier.



I would like to express my gratitude to participants from Hyogo and other prefectures who dedicated their weekend to this meeting. I also thank the members of Toyooka's Tourism Division.