



October 9, 2016 Initiative Nippon in Omura, Nagasaki: Acceptance of Foreign Residents

The sixth regional meeting of the Initiative Nippon project was co-hosted by the Outlook Foundation and Omura, Nagasaki Prefecture, on Sunday, October 9th in Plaza Omura, a community plaza for Omura residents. Twenty participants including members of local organizations and businesses, a school, a Japanese language NPO, foreign residents and other stakeholders in foreign resident issues engaged with the hosts in vigorous discussion.



Mayor Hiroshi Sonoda was a nurse before becoming a city councillor. At that time, he was highly interested in the foreign resident acceptance issue. After assuming the Mayor's office last November, he attempted but failed to engage the first foreign nurse in Omura. There is a need to solve the labor shortage, but some industries and organizations resist accepting foreign workers because of their fear of losing jobs. However, acceptance of foreign workers actually stimulates competitiveness among Japanese workers.

Mayor Sonoda wants Omura and Nagasaki to take the initiative in this effort.

The next speaker, Mr Miguel Diego, has lived in Japan for three years. When he arrived, he faced a pile of paperwork to open his bank account and to sign contracts for residence, water, electricity, gas, telephone and internet service, all written in Japanese. He suggested providing tuition-free Japanese language classes in multiple cities.

Assistant Professor Peter Bernick of Nagasaki University pointed out the need for educating Japanese children to eliminate the prejudice toward foreigners that some have acquired through the media. He said it is important to educate them on the importance of diversity.



I would like to express my gratitude to participants from Omura and other areas who dedicated their weekend to this meeting. I also thank the members of Omura City's Planning and Coordination Division.