

The Spirit of *Itadakimasu*



The current issue of *Japan SPOTLIGHT* carries articles on global governance. It is a shameful thing, but I do not know yet of a fine example of global governance that has taken place in the world. Of course, people will have different ideas of the definition of a fine example.

The meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is one case of global governance that is fresh in our memories. I watched that conference on TV and the debate seemed to be an affair of developed countries versus developing countries, and was somewhat of a letdown.

I think many people must have seen on TV how that meeting was carried out. Delegates were busy pursuing only the interests of their own countries. While I knew that this is the reality of international conferences, the question remained with me – is this really how it should be?

The results of the conference are what the participants decided on and nothing can be done about it, but has that meeting led to

a reduction in CO₂ emissions? Have brakes been put in place to slow down the pace of global warming? I think that the earth itself will provide us with an answer in the not-too-distant future. Even now, the earth seems to be subtly pointing to the answer by various signs such as the unprecedented opening of a voyage route in the Arctic Ocean. Perhaps it is only human beings who do not notice.

The 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10), which is like an inseparable sibling of the UNFCCC, will be held in Nagoya in mid-October. This is also an extremely important meeting for the human race.

Little children may not understand, but I do not think that any ordinary person assumes that humankind can live without the existence of other living creatures. The words “food chain” that I learned long ago reflect this fact. We human beings survive by consuming plants and animals. At such a time as this when climate change is threatening the lives of plants and animals, and the number of creatures is predicted to decline drastically, surely it is the role of the human race, which stands at the top of the creature world, to cooperate and protect plants and animals. I am looking forward to the upcoming conference. I am interested to see whether we will witness a battle between developed and developing countries as at the UNFCCC meeting, or whether we will witness, in my view, a fine example of global governance.

Lastly, I would like to mention an essential Japanese mealtime custom. The Japanese say *Itadakimasu* before eating. Simply translated, it means “I take.” However, there are words that are abbreviated in this phrase. The complete phrase would be “I take your precious life with thanks.” The lives of animals and plants are regarded as part of the same life as ours, and *Itadakimasu* is an expression of gratitude to them for helping us to live. When we argue about the world from now on, I think we need to bear that mentality in mind.

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Japan SPOTLIGHT Information

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