The President's Congratulatory Message for the fiscal 2021 Graduation Ceremony

On behalf of the faculty and staff, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to all of you on your graduation today. Furthermore, I would like to congratulate and thank your family members and others who have encouraged and supported you so far.

You spent much of your university life under the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the president of this university, I am proud of you for not losing sight of your goals and for completing your achievements to the end, even in the face of such difficult circumstances. I am sure that this experience will help you for the rest of your life. I would like to express my heartfelt sympathy to those students, faculty members, and staff who have actually been infected and hospitalized due to the virus, or who are suffering even now from the aftereffects.

People all over the world, ordinary citizens as well as famous public figures, have been infected. COVID-19 has hit humanity equally all over the Earth. Unlike natural disasters which are limited to a specific region, this disease has the potential to affect everyone, everywhere. This pandemic crisis has brought to our attention issues that we had not previously noticed or been very conscious of.

In addition to the pandemic, we are now faced with another crisis. The Russian military invasion of Ukraine in February reminded us of the realities of a tyrannical state. President Putin's argument is that Ukraine and Russia were originally one nation and that Ukraine's separation is unacceptable. He has said that the Russian military will use force to liberate the areas illegally occupied by Ukraine and rescue the abused Russian population. I categorically reject President Putin's logic and express my strong solidarity with the Ukrainian people in their resistance and with people all over the world, including Russians, who are protesting against this invasion.

Human beings are basically egoistic animals, "thinking only of themselves first". As long as they are not directly affected and their country is safe, they feel that is good enough. But this global crisis has sounded the alarm against such indifference to others. At this time we need to realize once more that we are all members of one community composed of global citizens sharing a common fate, and that various problems common to all humanity have become apparent. Among these issues I can mention the disparities between rich and poor countries, differences in the standards of science and technology, differences in crisis

response capabilities, and differences in the quality of health care systems.

COVID-19 and the Ukraine crisis have made us aware of many issues and presented us with a range of problems to think about. If you are to survive in the future and avoid getting involved in wars, it is dangerous for you to be indifferent. You need to be interested in the future of the earth, society, East Asia, the nation, and yourself. It is also dangerous to think that you already know it all.

Let me reiterate here what I always say at graduations. You should make it a habit to utilize the critical thinking skills you acquired at KUIS. You need to be in charge of your own life and try to avoid as much as possible being deceived. In order to do so, you should try to remember the principle on which this university was founded: "Languages are the foundation to link the world in peace." You should continue to improve the communication skills and the concentration skills that you developed through your foreign language studies at KUIS. Try to meet and interact with a wide variety of people.

The future is something that each one of you creates. Have a creative life! Congratulations on your graduation!

令和 3 年度学位記授与式 学長式辞(和訳)

本日、卒業を迎えた皆さん、卒業ならびに修了、誠におめでとうございます。教職員を代表して、心よりお祝いを申し上げます。皆さんをこれまで励まし支えてくださったご家族や関係の方々にも、お祝いと感謝の気持ちをお伝えいたします。

皆さんは大学生、又は大学院生である時間の大半を COVID-19 パンデミックの制約の中で過ごしました。このような苦境に於いても目標を失わず、最後まで学業を成し遂げた皆さんを、学長として私は誇りに思います。この経験は生涯にわたりみなさんを支えることとなると確信いたします。学生、教員、職員の皆さんの中には実際に感染し、入院をした方や後遺症に悩まされている方々がおり、ここに改めて心よりお見舞い申し上げます。

世界中で一般の人々から著名人まで感染したように、COVID-19 は地球上の人類に等しく襲いかかりました。誰もがかかる病気であり、地域性がある自然災害とは異なります。このパンデミック危機は、我々が普段気が付かなかった、またはあまり意識を向けてこなかった課題を突きつけました。

そして、パンデミックに追い討ちをかけるようにもう一つの危機に直面しています。2月のロシア軍によるウクライナ侵攻により我々は専制国家の実情を再認識しました。プーチン大統領の主張は、ウクライナとロシアは元々同胞でありウクライナの分離は許せない。ウクライナが不法占拠している地域をロシア軍が武力をつかって解放し、虐待されているロシア系住民を救済するというものです。わたしはこのプーチン大統領の論理を断固として拒否し、抵抗するウクライナの人々と抗議するロシアを含む世界の人々に強い連帯を表明します。

人間は元々エゴイスティックで「自分や自分の国家さえ無事ならば、それで良い」という「自分 FIRST」の行動傾向をもつ動物ですが、この世界規模の危機は、他への無関心さに対し、警鐘を鳴らすことになったと考えます。今回、我々はあらためて「地球市民で構成する運命共同体」の一員だということを実感するとともに、人類共通の様々な問題点を表に炙り出しました。例えば、富める国と貧しい国の格差や科学技術水準の格差、危機対応力の違い、医療体制の差など枚挙にいとまはありません。

COVID-19 は、我々に様々なことを気づかせ、考えさせ、問題提起をしています。皆さんがこれからの人生を生き抜くためにも、戦争に巻き込まれないためにも「無関心」は危険です。地球の未来のこと、社会のこと、東アジアのこと、国家のこと、自分のことを真剣に考えてください。また、知ったかぶりもいけません。

卒業にあたって私がいつも皆さんに申し上げてきたことを繰り返します。神田外語大で身につけた Critical Thinking を習慣化してください。自分の人生を出来るだけ自分でマネージしようと心掛けて騙されずに生き抜いて下さい。その為には建学の理念である「言葉は世界をつなぐ平和の礎」を思い出し、神田外語大で身につけたコミュニケーション力と語学学習で鍛えた集中力をさらに磨いて、そしてさまざまな人々と交流してください。

未来は皆さんそれぞれが作り上げていくものです。 どうか皆さん、創造的な人生を送ってください。 卒業おめでとうございます。

神田外語大学 学長 宮内 孝久