

<<NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE>>

(FROM HIROSHI OZAKI,
CHAIRMAN, OSAKA CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE AND
INDUSTRY)

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I take great pleasure in offering our New Year's greeting.

Last year, the Japanese economy continued gradually improving against the background of the recovering global economy and tendencies toward depreciation of the yen. While this trend is expected to



continue this year too, there are some concerns on the economy, of political unstableness represented by North Korean problems, the path forward for Brexit, and other issues.

The global business environment has recently been undergoing further accelerated changes, including the emergence of startups sweeping the markets with innovative technologies, and dynamic competition beyond industrial borders.

In view of this changing business environment, I hope that this year we will be able to increase the potential growth rates of the Osaka/Kansai economy and consequently the Japanese economy and pave the way for powerful economic growth, by encouraging companies to take up new challenges in growth areas.

In FY2017, the OCCI put in motion its three-year medium-term plan "Tanto" Business Osaka. Aiming to ensure Osaka achieves its future vision as an ideal city by 2030, we are implementing 60 concrete



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measures to invigorate Osaka and the Kansai region. Under its Board of Executives newly appointed in November last year, the OCCI will devote united efforts in taking decisive actions in various ways to lead the economic growth of Osaka and Kansai, in cooperation with its member and councilor companies.

Osaka aims to be a “pole” leading the growth of all of Japan, and an “innovation hub” connected to and growing together with the world, Asia in particular. We will attract human resources, companies, and investment from Japan and abroad, stimulate technological innovation in highly advanced fields, and facilitate the creation of new businesses and industries. I hope that we will be able to raise Osaka to a “Sparkling city”, strengthening powers attracted from outside to Osaka, into much stronger ones, sharing its fruits of growth with other regions, and growing itself together with them through the circulation of all those resources.

One of our measures for this purpose is “open innovation.” The Kansai region has already accomplished remarkable achievements constructing a dense cluster of startups through industry-academia-government cooperation in the life sciences industry. From now on, we should enable other industries to create clusters of innovative enterprises.

The OCCI currently collaborates with the Kyoto and Kobe Chambers of Commerce and Industry to tackle the challenge of creating new business mainly in the sports industry, where Kansai has a dense cluster of companies, by involving enterprises in other fields such as the healthcare, medical and IT industries. In addition, the OCCI will also strive to create “wellness business” focusing on health promotion and disease prevention.

Moreover, we will also take up the challenge of creating an innovation ecosystem as an incubator of new business based on the fourth industrial revolution, such as artificial intelligence (AI), the internet of things (IoT), and big data. Specifically, based on a comprehensive alliance with Osaka City, we will provide support for social pilot projects conducted by companies using land and facilities in the city’s possession, and work together with the Osaka Institute of Technology to establish a center for collaborative creation among various enterprises, including large companies, SME and startups.

We are also required to promptly combat urgent problems for SME, that is, labor shortage and business succession. To address the growing labor shortage, we will implement measures to support SMEs in recruitment, reinforcing productivity by introducing industrial robots & IT, and other means, while devoting our energies to lobby such measures in government policies.

Given that 60% of SMEs managers will exceed 70 years of age in the coming decade, leading to a peak of generational changes, business successions can have massive impacts on economic development in Japan. The next several years will be extremely important for us to facilitate a smooth succession of businesses and strengthen our economic base. The OCCI will enhance its system for supporting business successions and implement effective measures for 10,000 companies in the next three years.

This year, we face a critical moment for Osaka's Expo 2025 candidacy campaign. The OCCI is running an Expo Sticker Campaign to strengthen the motivation among people and companies in the city, and this initiative will be implemented through three Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe. We will devote all our energies to succeeding in our bid for the Expo 2025 through close collaboration in the business world and with the national and local governments.

This year also marks the 150th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration. Cherishing the "aspiration for innovation" of our predecessors who built the foundation for modern industry in Osaka, like Godai Tomoatsu, we will take up new challenges toward ensuring Osaka's future as a "Sparkling city."

We look forward to your continued support and cooperation.

Hiroshi OZAKI

Chairman

Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry



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Chief Editor : Susumu SAITO, Director of International Division, OCCI

Mailed by : Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, International Division

Address : 2-8 Hommachi-bashi, Chuo-ku, Osaka, Japan 540-0029

Tel : +81-(0)6-6944-6400

Fax : +81-(0)6-6944-6293

Contact Persons : Yumiko NAGOSHI (Ms.), Morihiro UTSUKI (Mr.)

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