

For Further Leap toward the Future of Railways

I am grateful that so many people came to attend WCRR 2019 from all over the world and so many organizations at home and abroad supported this congress. Representing the host organization, the Railway Technical Research Institute, I would like to extend my sincere thanks here to every participant and supporting organization. As many as 939 people, including 424 from overseas, gathered in Tokyo to attend the congress and were able to share their experience, expertise and perspectives regarding railway research and technical development through truly lively exchange of ideas. I am so pleased that WCRR 2019 was able to provide such opportunities.

What role should railways play in the coming years? In what way can railway research contribute? I am sure that the significance of WCRR lies in the very effort to explore the answers to these questions by gathering the wisdom of rail-related people of all over the world. At the Plenary Sessions of WCRR 2019, the panelists representing the positions of railway operators, suppliers and research institutes had in-depth discussions on the role of railway research in creating the railways of the future, with an eye on the congress theme "Railway Research to Enhance the Customer Experience".

I believe that the role of railways is to become important part of social mobility through gaining trust from customers by further enhancing the safety and providing universal, pleasant services. In addition, railways have to be sustainable from the viewpoint of environmental conservation as well as of business management so as to keep playing a significant role as part of social infrastructure. Railways have been considered to have an advantage over other transport modes in terms of



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environmental footprint. In recent years, however, the environmental performance of other modes including automobiles has been rapidly improved and our efforts to raise the advantage of railways are even more important. As this is also the case with other advantages of railways such as safety, high-speed and punctuality, we need to aim higher.

We are facing so many challenges. Among them, most urgent tasks are streamlining of railway operation with digital technologies, improving competitiveness by making railways more attractive and addressing the issues of climate change and extreme weather disasters.

I am confident that WCRR 2019 was able to provide a good opportunity for rail-related people to share the recognition of these important issues, their expertise and experience and to trigger their joint commitment to create a better future of the railways. I do hope to take a further stride towards the future of the railways, together with you all.