



**四川大学-香港理工大学灾后重建与管理学院**  
**Sichuan University – The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**  
**Institute for Disaster Management and Reconstruction**

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July 6, 2020

**To:** Colleagues at Kyoto University

**From:** Gretchen Kalonji, Dean, IDMR

**Re: Selection of the next President of Kyoto University**

I am writing to offer my most enthusiastic support for the candidacy of Prof. Takara Kaoru for the Presidency of Kyoto University. I have had close working relations with him for a number of years, and am confident that as the future President of Kyoto University Prof. Takara can take the university to yet higher levels of concrete contributions to society, building on the notable history of Kyoto University in freedom of expression, international collaboration, and multi-disciplinary frontier research.

As a brief introduction to myself, I am a US academic with a long history of international collaborations. My connections with Japan are extensive – while at the University of Washington I served for 15 years as the Kyocera Professor of Materials Science (1990 – 2005). From 2000 to 2014, I served as Assistant Director General for Natural Science at UNESCO. Japan was consistently the most significant funder of sciences at UNESCO, and I worked closely with the Japanese delegation at UNESCO. In the context of his outstanding work, I became acquainted with Prof. Takara, who now holds the WENDI UNESCO Chair in Kyoto.

I would also like to offer some insight from my previous role as Director of International Strategy Development for the ten-campus University of California (UC) system, from 2005 to 2010. In the UC system I was responsible for coordinating international strategic initiatives across all 10 UC campuses. It is vitally important that the world's premier universities, such as Kyoto University, further enhance their role in working with universities in the developing world, whose resources are very limited but whose potential contributions are enormous.

My current position is as Dean of the Institute of Disaster Management and Reconstruction (IDMR), located at Sichuan University in Chengdu, China. This is an institute jointly managed by Sichuan University and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, created after the devastating Wenchuan Earthquake of 2008. We work closely with Prof. Takara on all matters concerning our strategic development. In IDMR we span all aspects of disaster risk reduction and response, including natural sciences, social sciences, medical sciences, the humanities and policy issues.

From my perspective, one of the most notable contributions of Prof. Takara is in building new and innovative models for collaboration with institutions in the developing world. I really admire him for that. He is also very creative in building new models for interdisciplinary collaboration and for connections with the private sector, both of which are vitally important for the future of our research universities. Should you choose him as your next President, Kyoto University will no doubt be the strongest university worldwide in international scientific collaboration for peace and sustainable development.

I am confident that Prof. Takara would be an outstanding new President for Kyoto University. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Yours sincerely



Gretchen Kalonji

Dean, Institute for Disaster Management and Reconstruction, Sichuan University – the Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Former UNESCO Assistant Director General for Natural Science (2010-2014)

Former Kyocera Professor of Materials Science at the University of Washington (1990-2005)

Former Director of International Strategy Development for the 10-campus UC system (2005- 2010)