FOREWARD

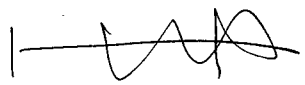
The Institute of Industrial Science has developed two kinds of research center: (1) Centers for strategic research such as International Research Center for Disaster-Mitigation Engineering, INCEDE, which closed its ten year activities in March 2001, and International Center for Urban Safety Engineering, ICUS, which has taken over INCEDE in April 2001. These Centers bring together resources in the Institute for some specific research topics designated. The Centers are expected to produce tangible outcomes in the limited period; and (2) Centers for encouraging researchers in the Institute to co-operate with each other in similar fields. The Centers are expected to create new research in the fields. Earthquake Resistant Structure Research Center (ERS) is of this type in the field of earthquake engineering.

In order to achieve the above objective, ERS meets to hear most updated studies by ERS members and to exchange information among members every month and publishes members' work every year. This publication, ERS bulletin, has provided earthquake engineers in the world with a forum for exchanging view on engineering aspect in earthquake disaster management, as well as in Japan. In this forum, ERS has assumed leading position, I am convinced.

Does ERS do so still now and can ERS continue to do so? In order to be able to answer to this question, I wish to pay my attention to the following fact: Engineering research for earthquake disaster reduction has bifurcated since 20 years ago. One is in the developed world. In this world, development of maintenance technology must be urged further for earthquake disaster reduction. The Kobe earthquake disaster revealed that many of structures have been deteriorated due to long age or due to bad construction. Diagnosis and reinforcing of structures are urgent issues. There are so many other issues to be studied. I dare to have to point out, however, that there are many pieces of research which will benefit only researchers themselves. The Kobe earthquake has brought flood of Information and a diversity of observation to some number of leading researchers in earthquake disaster management. It seems that these researchers might think learning these from ears be research activity: Mimi Gakumon (Ear Study) so called.

The other one is in the developing world. There are many problems to be solved and issues to be studied. Disaster statistics shows that the most earthquake death has taken place in residential home in the developing world. Even small earthquakes have been serious in economy and society in the developing world. Low-cost anti-seismic housing could have saved much more lives and could have made disasters much less devastating. International aid world, actually, has been very much concerned about the above mentioned and has pointed out that building capacity against of earthquake disaster in these countries is an urgent issue. There is, however, very little research even in the developing countries. Is there no academic interest in this study which will bring researches prestige in the leading earthquake engineering society? Is it difficult for researchers to link these advanced, academic and sophisticated studies to the above mentioned problems? It is obvious that industrial activities can be achieved in safer countries in terms of disaster. The safer countries will provide more sustainable development so that economic market can be formed more rapidly.

I wish ERS research group to take note these points in seeking group's new direction.



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