As a Designated National University, the University of Tokyo will become a GLOBAL BASE FOR KNOWLEDGE COLLABORATION by supporting sustainable development, enabling healthy living in a super-ageing society and deepening fundamental research.

As a Designated National University, UTokyo has been selected in 2017 as our second WPI centre. The International Research Coordinator, WPI, WPI centres are selected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to foster world-class research hubs that break convention. “In addition to the Kavli Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe, the International Research Center for Neurointelligence was selected in 2017 as our second WPI centre,” says Aihara. “We are the first university to have multiple WPI centres.”

“A base for knowledge-intensive economy is gathering speed,” Gonokami adds. “As a base for knowledge collaboration, we must make the most of the freedom our new status allows us. Together we will work to create a better and sustainable future for all.”

The shift to a knowledge-intensive society and deepening fundamental research are now too big for any one country to resolve alone.”

Further disruption and the tools to overcome our current challenges,” says Gonokami. “UTokyo, the hub of so many research and institutional networks, is uniquely positioned to bring together the diverse people and ideas necessary to develop the new societal models we need. But we also need a common framework to coordinate our action.”

That framework, he suggests, can be found in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include eradicating poverty and alleviating environmental damage. “There are moves to align business strategies with the SDGs,” explains Gonokami. “With academia, industry and society working together, we can create inclusive, long-term solutions to the challenges they set.”

Moves to help realize the SDGs are underway at UTokyo under the Future Society Initiative. “The Future Society Initiative (FSI) is a university-wide framework to catalyze collaboration across disciplinary boundaries,” explains Executive Director Hiroaki Aihara. “By also strengthening collaboration with other organizations, we hope to deploy our efforts related to the SDGs within society.”

A sustainable global society

UTokyo researchers have a proven track record of implementing innovations. WASSHA, a startup that spun off from technology developed at UTokyo, is bringing electricity to off-grid areas in Tanzania. Many of the 630 million people without electricity in Africa use kerosene lamps, which pose a respiratory health hazard. WASSHA distributes portable LED lights that can be charged by solar panels that WASSHA installs at local shops. Electricity is paid for with mobile money, a popular transaction method in Tanzania.

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As a Designated National University, UTokyo is keen to use its selection as a Designated National University to benefit a much wider community than those directly connected with the university. It aims to create a better future for all. The university’s president, Makoto Gonokami, explains the goal. “Societies around the world share huge challenges, including environmental degradation, financial uncertainty, rising inequality and religious conflict. As a result of globalization, these issues are now too big for any one country to resolve alone.”

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