

Statement by Mr. Joe NAKANO
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs
At the Thematic Debate on Disaster Risk Reduction
April 12, 2012 – New York

Excellency, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
Distinguished representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor to have this opportunity to make a statement on behalf of the Government of Japan at the thematic debate on disaster risk reduction. The Government of Japan strongly desired that this debate be held, and I would like to express my deep appreciation to H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly, for his initiative and leadership on this issue. I would also like to thank every person who has rendered their valuable support to make this debate possible.

[The Great East Japan Earthquake ~ Japan's Experience and Lessons Learned]

Japan is a country with a long history of earthquakes, tsunamis and other natural disasters. Because of this experience, our country does its utmost to reduce disaster risk, and we believed Japan has become a world-leader in this area. Despite our efforts and experiences, the nature's fury sometimes far surpasses our imagination.

The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, which struck our country on March 11th last year, was an unprecedented disaster in the history of Japan.

- The dead and missing number almost 20,000 people;
- at their peak, evacuees from the disaster reached more than 400,000;
- buildings either completely destroyed or severely damaged numbered more than 380,000;
- more than 22 million tons of debris were created; and
- overall financial losses are estimated at between 200 and 300 billion dollars.

Mr. President,

Although the Great East Japan Earthquake has brought us enormous difficulties, it was also an opportunity for us to reaffirm the bonds, '*kizuna*' in Japanese, that we share with our families, our communities, with all the people in Japan and with people all over the world.

In the two months that followed the earthquake, disaster relief and medical assistance teams from 24 countries and regions around the world, as well as expert teams from UNOCHA, FAO, IAEA and WFP extended their hands in relief to the disaster-stricken areas. Over the last year, 126 countries, regions and international organizations have provided financial and in-kind assistance to Japan. There are countless examples of warm and valuable support provided by the many private groups and volunteers that came to help us in our time of need.

With these bonds, encouragement and heartening assistance, Japan is steadily recovering from the disaster and accelerating our steps towards the renewal of Japan.

On behalf of Japanese people and the Government of Japan, I, once again, would like to express our deepest appreciation to international community.

Mr. President,

We firmly believe that it is our duty to share our experiences and lessons learned from this disaster with the international community in return for the support we have received from all over the world. And it was this sense of duty that drove Japan to support the PGA's initiative to hold today's thematic debate as well as motivated us to sponsor a resolution titled "Gender-Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disasters", at the Commission on the Status of Women last month.

One of the lessons we learned was that if society as a whole can focus its effort to implement preventive measures, we can minimize damage and casualties. For example, although the March 11th earthquake was the largest in our recorded history, measuring magnitude 9, damages to buildings and structures by the earthquake were rather small thanks to our implementation of the some of the world's most advanced seismic technology and Building Codes. In addition, when the earthquake hit, as many as 27 *Shinkansen* bullet trains,

were running in the Tohoku region, however no severe accidents were caused thanks to the design of our rail network's Urgent Earthquake Detection and Alarm System, which automatically and at once directed all trains to be safely and immediately stopped. What is more, all lines were able to resume their operations within two months of the earthquake.

Japan's efforts and experiences at disaster risk reduction should be a message to countries and regions all around the world, telling of the value of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and of the necessity of building societies resilient to disasters.

Mr. President,

[Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in International Cooperation]

I would like to reiterate how critical it is to fully consider disaster risk reduction as an integral part of international cooperation. Not only natural disasters can cause serious damages to vulnerable communities and individuals, but they can even wash away achievements in long-term development in a flash.

Today, the world is witnessing rapid urbanization, most notably in emerging countries. Urbanization can bring both enormous economic benefits and vulnerabilities to disasters as cities attract people and social capital. I believe mainstreaming disaster risk reduction is indispensable to achieve sustainable development.

[Human Security]

People may ask what the key to mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and building a society resilient to disaster is. I believe the answer is "Human Security". We should respect every individual and consider the needs of the most vulnerable. On that basis, we should strive to allow the full potentials of individuals and communities to bloom.

I also believe Human Security should be laid at the core of future development agenda. This is my strong conviction after experiencing the Great East Japan Earthquake.

[Post-MDGs]

As the deadline for Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) nears, discussions on how the post-2015 international development agenda should be

set out have begun. I strongly desire that disaster risk reduction occupy its rightful place in such agenda. Japan will make active contributions to discussions to establish the post-2015 framework to this end.

Mr. President,

[Climate Change in International Cooperation]

To ensure Human Security, we cannot discuss mainstreaming disaster risk reduction without raising awareness of climate change, which aggravates water-related disasters and droughts. As Japan has been actively committed to implementing countermeasures against world climate change, including our Hatoyama initiative, I look forward to having further discussions around disaster risk reduction which focus on such emerging issues as climate change at today's thematic debate and expect today's discussions will be appropriately reflected in the outcome document of Rio+20.

Mr. President,

[High-Level International Conference on Large-Scale Natural Disasters]

I would like to add that Japan will host a "High-Level International Conference on Large-Scale Natural Disasters" in July in the disaster-stricken Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima prefectures, which will include in-depth discussions based on views of today's thematic debate. We aim at raising awareness of disaster risk reduction and increasing the capabilities of all stakeholders in a comprehensive manner and will bring the outcome of this conference to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015. I affirm that Japan is fully committed to contributing to the discussions to establish a post-Hyogo Framework for Action.

Mr. President,

[Conclusion]

Last but not least, I would like to promise to you all that Japan is determined to continue to contribute to international society, with gratefulness in our hearts for the warm assistance shown to us in our darkest hour.

Thank you for your attention, thank you.

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