

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. IWAYA Takeshi,
Foreign Minister of Japan
at the Event for the World Tsunami Awareness Day 2024**

Distinguished guests and participants,

My name is IWAYA Takeshi. I am the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. It is a great honor to make a few remarks in this UN event commemorating World Tsunami Awareness Day 2024.

At the outset, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Kamal Kishore, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of the UNDRR. I would also like to thank all our fellow Member States and relevant UN agencies for their efforts in bringing us together to discuss how we can enhance international cooperation to reduce tsunami risks.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami of December 2004, which had devastating impacts on several countries in the region. It is our responsibility to ensure that the memory of this tragic event never fades, and that the grim lessons learned are passed on to future generations.

Today, I would like to share an episode from Japan that highlights the significant role of “Youth Engagement, Education and Empowering the Next Generation” in reducing disaster risks and building a resilient society.

On March 11, 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake triggered catastrophic tsunamis that struck the northern part of Japan. However, in the Unosumai area of Kamaishi City, one of the most severely affected regions, nearly all 3,000 local elementary and junior high school students successfully saved their lives during this unprecedented tsunami. This remarkable outcome was due to their awareness of how to respond immediately after the earthquake, with each student taking the initiative to evacuate to higher and safer ground. This episode is known as the “Miracle of Kamaishi.”

As part of Japan’s efforts to promote “Youth Engagement, Education, and Empowering the Next Generation”, High School Students Summit on “World Tsunami Awareness Day” has been held in Japan since 2016. More than 2,000 high school students from around the world have participated in the event to date, proactively sharing knowledge about what they should

and can do to protect themselves, their families, and their communities from tsunamis.

Three high school students who organized last month's High School Students Summit in Kumamoto, Japan, are here today. They are Ms. KAWAI Chisa, Ms. SHIOJIMA Anri, and Ms. WATANABE Julia. I hope that they will share what they have learned with their friends from around the world at the summit.

Disasters, including those related to climate, have been occurring with increasing frequency around the world. Recently, Hurricane Milton caused enormous damages in the United States. While on our side, the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture was hit by a major earthquake in January of this year. Moreover, the area was struck by floods and landslides in last September, further impacting the lives of those who are still in the midst of recovery.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to call on everyone to fulfill our responsibility to pass the lessons we have learned from past disasters on to

future generations. I sincerely hope that today's event will help raise awareness of the threat of tsunamis and build a world where we "Leave no one behind", fully considering the voices and perspectives of youth.

Finally, disaster risk reduction is the key to achieving the SDGs. As a country that has experienced numerous disasters and places great importance on disaster risk reduction, Japan will continue to share the knowledge it has gained and contribute to disaster risk reduction around the globe. Thank you very much.