

Press Conference by Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations
of the Prime Minister's Office for members of the foreign press

24 March 2011

Mr. Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations of the Prime Minister's Office: With us are officials from various ministries, including Mr. Nishiyama, Deputy Director General of NISA, Mr. Shinichi Kawarada, Advisor of MEXT, on my left, and Ms. Noriko Iseki, Senior Technical Officer of the Department of Food Safety of MHLW, on my far left. My name is Noriyuki Shikata, and I am Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations of the Prime Minister's Office.

At the outset let me recap the current situation regarding the impacts of the quakes and tsunami. As of this evening, the number of deaths confirmed is 9,737; the number who are missing is 16,501; those who are injured is 2,766, and the number isolated has now fallen to zero. The number of those who are evacuated is 201,171, and the number who have been rescued is 26,646.

In terms of the mobilization situation of different government agencies, about a little over 100,000 – the figure I have is 106,100 – Self-Defense Forces people, Japan Coast Guard about 86 patrol boats, National Police Agency 2,754, Fire and Disaster Management Agency 2,923. If we add them up it is about 113,000 people working in Tohoku tackling the situation.

As far as the assistance extended from overseas, in terms of announcement of their intentions of support, over 130 countries have expressed their will to support us, as well as 33 international organizations.

Just one more thing about some of the salient points coming from the Chief Cabinet Secretary's press conference this afternoon, on the issue of tap water, Mr. Edano, Chief Cabinet Secretary, mentioned that the Japanese government has asked local governments to frequently conduct monitoring of the levels of radioactive substances in tap water. The MHLW will compile these data and provide the detailed monitoring results to the public.

On the issue of the reconstruction, the government is considering the big picture of

reconstruction efforts, but now we are focusing on doing everything in its power to support the livelihood of the disaster victims, and tackle the incidents at the nuclear power plants in Fukushima at present.

A final point is regarding the budget to cope with evolving situations. We will use effectively the government's reserve fund for quake disaster-related expenses this fiscal year, which ends at the end of March. In the next fiscal year we intend to draft a supplementary budget for disaster relief efforts while carefully considering the importance of fiscal discipline. That is all from me, and I will ask Mr. Nishiyama to have opening remarks.

Mr. Nishiyama: Thank you Mr. Shikata. Good evening ladies and gentlemen. As usual, I would like to update the recent status of the six plants within Fukushima no.1 site.

First, Unit 1. Regarding this unit, Unit 1, we began introduction of sea water to the reactor through the reactor feed water system to increase the amount of water. Although we saw some unstable situation yesterday, today, after we adjusted the amount of water to be introduced, the pressure and temperature of the reactor of Unit 1 became stable. With respect to the spent fuel pool we will introduce water through the fuel pool cooling and filtering system. Regarding restoration of the power line, lights were turned on for the first time since the earthquake in the central controlling unit of Unit 1.

Next, Unit 2. Regarding this Unit 2, parameters of the reactors are relatively stable. We are introducing sea water to the reactor through the fire protection system. As for spent fuel pool, we pumped sea water once on March 20, and once on March 22. Regarding restoration of the power line, we are mending and replacing cables for the measuring equipments and the lights of the central controlling unit.

Next, Unit 3. Although we saw black smoke from Unit 3 yesterday, we no longer see black smoke today, and the parameters of the fuel core became stable. As for the spent fuel pool, we began introducing sea water, starting at 5:35 a.m. today through the fuel pool cooling and filtering system. With respect to power restoration, we will confirm the integrity of such systems as instrument-air system.

Next, Unit 4. In this unit, the focus is on the spent fuel pool. According to our observation there is enough water to cover spent fuel in the pool of this Unit 4.

According to the Japan Self-Defense Forces, the temperature of the spent fuel pool of Unit 4 is not so high. We are introducing sea water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 4 using concrete injecting vehicle. Later we will introduce sea water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 4 through the same system as Unit 1 and 3 which is the fuel pool cooling and filtering system. Regarding Unit 5 and 6, only Unit 5 has some changes, that is that we are aiming at recovering the residual heat removal system with electricity from outside the grid very soon. That is all for my report today. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you very much Mr. Nishiyama. Then I would like to ask Mr. Kawarada of MEXT to make an opening remark.

Mr. Kawarada: Thank you very much. Good evening. I would like to update you on the monitoring data that we have published, and I think we have distributed the information. What I wish to convey to you this evening is that yesterday we have announced that we will conduct the offshore monitoring, so we now have the findings. The results were made known by noon today, and that is also published. The sea water radiation level is subject to the impact of the nuclear disaster, so we have detected relatively high levels of contamination or radiation. From 30km from the nuclear plant, at eight points we have collected data and conducted analysis south to north. We have detected Iodine-131 and Caesium-137 which prove to be relatively high. For the Iodine-131 I think the nuclear disaster has impacted the readings, and we have identified relatively higher readings. Also the air contamination and the radiation level of the dust have been found to be relatively low. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you Mr. Kawarada. Now I would like to ask Ms. Iseki of MHLW.

Ms. Iseki, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare: Good evening I'm just going to briefly give you the test result reportage as of yesterday, 23 March, indicating that in total, 74 food samples have been tested and among them, one sample, a *mizuna* sample from Ibaraki Prefecture exceeded the acceptable level. Five fresh milk samples tested in Fukushima Prefecture are also beyond the acceptable level. That is the report from yesterday.

With regard to the notice to extend the monitoring test in the neighboring prefectures, the respective press release is on paper, on the table beside the door, on the left. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Then I would like to ask Mr. Matsunaga.

Mr. Takeshi Matsunaga, Assistant Press Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Thank you very much Mr. Shikata. I would like to briefly explain the international assistance generously extended to Japan in response to the earthquake and tsunami. This is an update of my previous explanation. The latest number of the countries and regions who have extended generous assistance is now 132, and also 33 international organizations have extended assistance. Perhaps you already have the paper circulated to explain the details as to the rescue teams. Many of them have already completed their activities and left Japan. Those rescue teams are denoted with star marks. You can see that those remaining rescue teams are still active in Japan.

In addition, we have also distributed “Assistance in Kind from the International Community” which explains the countries and regions, as well as the details of their assistance, received by Japan. To save time, I would refrain from going into the details of this chart. You will also see the map which shows the places of the rescue teams’ activities. As I mentioned, a number of rescue teams have already left, completing their activities, and for the area of the activities for rescue teams who have already left the country please refer to the first material I have mentioned at the beginning of my explanation.

Next I would like to update today’s developments. Today we have received relief supplies from the European community. The supply consists of a large number of blankets, mattresses and sleeping bags. In total the relief supply is 70 tons and those supplies are heading to Ibaraki Prefecture. We also received generous relief supplies from Venezuela today. They have provided blankets, mineral water, canned sardines and tuna, etc. We also received donations from Latvia today. Please refer to our press releases for more details.

Lastly, I would like to explain the assistance extended by US forces in Japan very briefly. For details, please refer to our website. The relevant information will be available on our website within a day or two. Here I will only touch upon the gist of our explanation given on our website. The US forces in Japan have mobilized as many as 20,000 personnel as well as 20 US ships, and also 160 airplanes. They have rescued 10 persons and they have provided 100,000 liters of water, 80 tons of food, 40 tons of

clothes and blankets, and they have transported 230 tons of goods, including the materials I have mentioned. More specifically, with respect to the assistance related to the earthquake, for example, the US Navy in Japan, the Japan-US joint airlift operation of 30,000 portions of US survival food was undertaken. The food was airlifted by US helicopters from USS Ronald Reagan and other US ships to Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force ships and then the food was airlifted by the Self Defense Forces to Miyagi Prefecture. After the joint airlift operation, the US ships have been carrying out search and rescue operations off the coast of Iwate Prefecture and the airlift of water, clothes, medicine, babies' nappies, heating oil etc. was undertaken.

With respect to US Marines, an amphibious assault ship, USS Essex, bearing the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and dock landing ships, USS Germantown and USS Harpers Ferry, moved from the Japan Sea to off Yato City of Aomori Prefecture on 21 March and started, together with a dock landing ship, USS Tortuga, airlift of assistance goods using their ship-based aircraft to Miyako City of Iwate Prefecture. The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit will further undertake humanitarian assistance activities in Ofunato City, Kamaishi City, and their vicinities, in Iwate Prefecture. Furthermore, US tanker plane KC-130 has established a fuel supply center in Yamagata Airport and CH-46 Helicopters stationed in Yamagata airport are undertaking the airlift of personnel and goods in Sendai and other places.

With respect to the US Air Force in Japan, C-130 transport plane arrived at Yamagata Airport on 15 March with goods, medicine and gasoline fuel trucks. The fuel truck will fuel the automobiles undertaking rescue activities. The C-130 transport plane airlifted medical supplies prepared by the Japan Medical Association from Yokota Air Station to Sendai Airport, etc. Also, on 20 March, medicines such as 100,000 doses of Tamiflu, etc. were airlifted from Yokota Air Base to Kesenuma City of Miyagi Prefecture and the medicine has already been provided. Aerial pictures taken by the unmanned reconnaissance plane Global Hawk, etc. are shared with the Japanese side.

Lastly I will touch upon the activities of the US Army in Japan. They have extended their cooperation for the repair of air strips in Sendai Airport. It appears that the Army is deployed in Yamagata Airport and undertaking transportation of humanitarian assistance goods, etc.

US forces in Japan have established the Japan-US Joint Coordination Center in the

Japanese Ground Self Defense Force Sendai Garrison. That is all for my explanation. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you very much Mr. Matsunaga, Assistant Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Does our Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism colleague have any official remarks? If not I would like to open the floor to questions. When you ask a question, please identify yourself and limit yourself to one question. Go ahead.

QUESTION (Yamaguchi, AP): I have a question to Mr. Nishiyama. You have mentioned that the water in the spent fuel pool in Reactor No. 4 is pretty full. Roughly speaking, up to what level is the water in the spent fuel pool in Reactor No. 4? Is the water more or less covering the spent fuel? And can we also know the temperature of the water in the Reactor No. 4 spent fuel pool?

Mr. Nishiyama: Regarding the spent fuel pool in Reactor No. 4, there was some discussion regarding whether there was water inside or not, but from the helicopter of the SDF, we have been able to confirm that there is plenty of water that is actually covering the spent fuel in the pool as we can see in a video that was taken from a SDF helicopter, and also this has been confirmed by the eyes of the crew that was flying in that helicopter.

Regarding the temperature of the water in the spent fuel pool, the temperature of the water has been measured from afar by the SDF and we have been able to find out that the temperature of the water in the Reactor No. 4 spent fuel pool was less than 50 degrees Centigrade.

Since however there is a lot of spent fuel inside the No. 4 spent fuel pool, in order to maintain the level of water as well as a healthy level of temperature in that spent fuel pool, today also we have continued to spray water into the pool from a concrete pump truck.

QUESTION: (Sakamaki, Bloomberg). A question to Mr. Nishiyama. Of the six reactors of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, probably it is fair to say that reactors No. 5 and 6 have reached a more or less stable state. So of the remaining four – that is reactors No. 1 through 4 – which would you say is the most dangerous of the reactors as well as

the spent fuel pools in reactors No. 1 through 4? And what are you focusing on in your activities at the current moment? Can you give us an explanation that can be very understandable to us?

Mr. Nishiyama: For Reactors No. 1 through 4, which out of all the reactors are facing various difficulties now, we are taking steps that will enable us to bring each of those difficulties to a stable state.

If I can just recapitulate the main points, for Reactor No. 1, I believe what is most important is how we can control the temperature as well as the pressure of the reactor.

For Reactor No. 2, first of all, since we are not able to inject water from the outside, for Reactor No. 2, what is most important is how we can use the various supply lines within the reactor building to inject water into the spent fuel pool.

For Reactor No. 3, our main focus now and what we are working the hardest on is how we can replace the seawater with fresh water for the water that is being injected into the reactor.

And for Reactor No. 4, as I have already responded in my answer to the previous question, what is most important in Reactor No. 4 is to continue to maintain the very high level of water that we now have in the spent fuel pool.

I just have one explanation that I would like to give regarding the location of Fukushima Prefecture and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Fukushima Prefecture and the capital of Japan, Tokyo, where we are now, are 230km apart. Since the name Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) is often mentioned – TEPCO is the power generation company that is operating Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant – since the name TEPCO is often mentioned, there may be people who feel that Fukushima is close to Tokyo, but actually, Fukushima is located at a location that is 230km from Tokyo. So actually, the effect on Tokyo from anything that happens at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant is very limited.

Accordingly, the functions of Tokyo as the capital of our country would not be undermined in anyway. And in dealing with the incident that occurred at the Nuclear Power Plant in Fukushima, all of the instructions are being given from the headquarters

in Tokyo. So the Government as well as TEPCO are giving instructions from their headquarters here in Tokyo.

QUESTION: (Yamaguchi, AP). This is question to Mr. Nishiyama. According to the results of seawater monitoring, it seems that a considerable amount of radioactive materials are being detected recently. For instance, Zirconium, Thallium and Cobalt seem to be detected recently from the seawater monitoring. What would you say are the possibilities regarding where and how these radioactive materials are being detected – from where do you think they are coming and how do you think they are coming?

Mr. Nishiyama: The materials that have been detected are mostly similar to the radioactive materials that have been detected from the sea, as well as those that have been detected from the soil are very similar, so we would assume that they come from the nuclear power plant, but we have not been able to confirm through what channel or how they have reached the sea or the soil.

QUESTION: (Sakamaki, Bloomberg). A related question to Mr. Nishiyama. From the materials that have been detected, and based on the numbers that you have received from the monitoring, what is your assessment of the damage to the fuel rods in the reactors of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant?

Mr. Nishiyama: There is no doubt that the fuel rod has been damaged to a certain extent. But we do not know for sure the data that can be a basis for quantifying anything beyond the fact that there is probably a certain amount of damage. And we would like to evaluate that factor once we were able to collect the data.

QUESTION (Daniel Leussink, Asia Times Online). My question is also about the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. It seems to be that the pumping in of seawater leaves behind residue in the spent fuel ponds – I heard about salt. What kind of residue will be left behind? And how much do your measurements show has been left behind, possibly damaging the fuel rods?

Mr. Nishiyama: It is true that since we are injecting seawater which includes salt, in the long term, there may probably appear some effects from the salt and other contaminants. But I do not believe there is any major effect on the emergency cooling operation that we are now undertaking.

And in particular, we are not assuming that there will be any reaction occurring between the salt and anything that is within the reactor.

Mr. Shikata: Any other questions? If not, we would like to conclude today's briefing. Thank you very much.

(END)