Press briefing at the Prime Minister's Office for members of the foreign press

1 April 2011

Mr. Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations: Good evening. I'd like to start this evening's press briefing for the international press by the Japanese Government, ministries, and agencies. Today's briefers include on my right side Mr. Hidehiko Nishiyama, Deputy Director-General of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), and Mr. Takeshi Matsunaga, Assistant Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to his right.

To my left is Mr. Shinichi Kawarada, Advisor to Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and Mr. Masanori Shinano, Counselor, Secretariat of the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC). Lastly from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) is Mr. Eiichi Yokota. He is new to his post as of today, and is Senior Technical Officer of the Food Safety Department of MHLW.

At the outset I would like to introduce to you some of the main points that Prime Minister Kan mentioned at his press conference this evening. Prime Minister Kan announced that this earthquake is officially called the "Great East Japan Earthquake" based on the cabinet meeting that was held earlier today. And he, again, extended his condolences to the families who lost their family members and sent words to those who are suffering from this disaster, and also he extended his respect for those public servants including the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), firefighters, police, and those who are working for the municipalities, sometimes risking their lives with a sense of dedication.

He also mentioned his appreciation for the support extended from all over the world for our efforts, and he extended his utmost appreciation for all the kind assistance from the rest of the world.

He mentioned something about the budget, that there is a new budget being approved. But this budget was submitted before the disaster, and he mentioned that some parts of the budget could be suspended and he referred to his intention to prepare a supplementary budget to address the issues of those people who are suffering from this disaster. This supplementary budget could be necessary in stages according to the stage

of reconstruction.

As for the first stage, he mentioned that he wishes to submit the supplementary budget bill by the end of this month. Also, he referred to some of the need to go forward with the planning of reconstruction, and he has been engaged in communication with the mayors and heads of the municipalities who have suffered from this disaster. There are some ideas being discussed in terms of recreating a new community; for example creating an eco-town by making use of biomass with a regional warming system. And there is a need to address employment issues and reinvent the primary industries.

He also referred to the newly-created conference for formulating reconstruction, and he aims to establish this new conference by 11 April 2011. Also, with regard to Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, he referred to three principles that he will stick to in tackling this situation. Number one is putting the utmost priority on the health of residents and the people and their safety. Number two is the government will take the utmost efforts in terms of risk management. Number three is to come up with various scenarios regarding what could happen and whatever developments could take place. The government will be prepared for different contingencies.

Also, in order to stabilize the situation surrounding Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, there are two major pillars. Number one is the joint efforts among the government operators, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), and affiliated companies – the Nuclear Safety Commission and others. Number two is international collaboration. And he referred to his telephone conversation with President Obama with the promise of all-out efforts from the United States, and also yesterday's meeting with President Sarkozy, in terms of receiving assistance from France, with its advanced nuclear power plants, and also receiving experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Lastly, he referred to reinventing *kizuna* – bonds among the Japanese – in order to overcome this tragic event and to recreate a new Japan. He referred to his commitment to do his utmost efforts to carry out this task.

Lastly, I would like to just touch upon Prime Minster Kan's trip to the Tohoku region. Tomorrow morning, he will leave the Prime Minster's Office by Self-Defense Force helicopter to go to Rikuzentakata City of Iwate prefecture to visit the evacuation centers

and other places, and also he plans to visit the J-Village of Fukushima prefecture. He will be meeting with Self-Defense Force people or firefighters or TEPCO employees who are tackling the situation on-site. If he cannot make it due to bad weather, it is possible that he could try to go on Sunday instead.

That is all from me and I would like to ask my colleagues to go next. First, Mr. Nishiyama, please.

Mr. Nishiyama: Thank you, Mr. Shikata. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. As always, I would like to update you on the status of each plant and other information regarding Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

Regarding Unit 1, we are introducing pure water to the reactor with a tentative electricity-driven pump. The parameters of the reactor are relatively stable right now. As for the spent fuel pool, we injected pure water into the spent fuel pool of Unit 1 yesterday. Regarding stagnant water in the turbine building, we are moving the water in the condensate storage tank to the separation pool surge tank. After we complete this action, we will move the water in the hot well to the condensate storage tank to enable us to pump the stagnant water in the basement of the turbine building into the hot well.

After we complete this action, we will move the water in the hot well to the condensate storage tank to enable us to pump the stagnant water in the basement of the turbine building to the hot well. We will place cameras to watch the depth of water of the vertical part of the trench of Units 1 through 3, which can be operated from remote places. Regarding the reactor of Unit 2, the temperature of the pressure vessel began to decline after we increased the amount of pure water introduced on 30 March. Regarding the spent fuel pool, we introduced pure water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 2 with a tentative electricity driven pump. Regarding stagnant water, we moved the water from the condensate storage tank to the suppression pool surge tank, so we are now ready to move the water from the hot well to the condensate storage tank. Regarding the reactor of Unit 3, parameters of the reactor are relatively stable. Regarding the spent fuel pool, yesterday we threw 105 tons of pure water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 3, with a concrete pumping machine. Regarding the stagnant water of Unit 3, today, we moved the water in the hot well to the condensate storage tank as a precondition to move the stagnant water to the hot well of Unit 3. Regarding the spent fuel pool of Unit 4, we threw 140 tons of water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 4 with a concrete pumping

machine today. In addition to those, one barge ship of the US Navy, full of pure water, arrived at the port of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, yesterday, and today we began introducing pure water from the ship to the tank of the site. Lastly, today, we sprayed synthetic plastic to make sure that radioactive dust does not fly over to the other places. This is a trial and after seeing the results we will use it in the other places in the site. That is all for my report today. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you Mr. Nishiyama. Then, I would like to ask my colleague from MEXT to go next.

Mr. Kawarada: Good evening. I am Kawarada of MEXT. We are conducting monitoring of posts out of the 20km zone of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. We are looking at the airborne concentration of nuclides and other parameters on a continuous basis. There is one thing that I would like to mention. There are three points where the dosage was higher as a result of vehicle reading. We took the samples and we checked the plutonium's concentration of 238/239, and also the ratio of the plutonium. Please refer to page 10. As a result, 238 was not detected. Neither was 239 nor 240. None of those were detected. Uranium 235/238 ratio was equivalent to the natural proportion. Those are the new pieces of information that I am going to convey to you.

The analysis of plutonium will take place. The samples were taken on the 22 March, but it took this much to conduct an accurate analysis. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Mr. Shinano of the Nuclear Safety Commission, please.

Mr. Shinano: Thank you. This is the evaluation of the environmental radiation monitoring results. This is a daily report. The original was released in Japanese at 16:45 on 31 March. And the data that we have used was published between 20 March, 16:00 hours, and 31 March, 10:00 hours.

First, regarding the spatial radiation dose rate, relatively higher doses were detected in some locations, but those do not affect people's health. First is the radioactivity in the air compared to one day ago. There were points where the levels of iodine 131 and cesium 137 were higher than a day ago, but, in any case, once they are above the limit, they do not pose an adverse effect on the human health. Those two points were different from those areas where the peak was recorded. So the weather conditions may have had

an effect on the readings or values.

The third is the aviation monitoring. We are still soliciting with the parties concerned whether the measurements at low altitudes and low speeds could be conducted. On the seawater, no new information was presented. This does not mean that monitoring was not conducted. It so happens that no information was available by the time we conducted the evaluation. But tomorrow we will share with you our evaluation going back to the period that the evaluation has not been conducted.

Fifth is environmental radioactivity levels surveyed by prefecture. There was no new information on drinking water or tap water. Therefore, after tomorrow, we will share with you the results retroactively. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you very much. Now, I would like to ask Mr. Yokota of MHLW to speak.

Mr. Yokota: Hello, my name is Yokota of the MHLW. I would like to talk about the results of food analysis, which were conducted yesterday. The samples were from eight prefectures. The total number of samples was 111 samples altogether. Of them, eight vegetable samples were from Ibaraki, one vegetable sample from Tochigi, as well as beef from Fukushima, and three samples of produce vegetables from Chiba showed results which exceeded the provisional limits. For the beef sample, this is the first time that we received a beef sample which exceeded the provisional limit. As far as this is concerned, all of the beef coming from the same cattle is under storage and has not been placed in circulation. There will be a reexamination conducted on this beef sample. I just received an update as a result of a reanalysis and no radioactivity was detected in the sample beef.

Also, there is one sheet of paper which is a sum-up of the radionucleotide test results carried out since 19 March. 780 samples were taken. Of them, 137 were found to exceed the provisional limit, maximum allowable limit. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you, Mr. Yokota. Let’s move on to Mr. Matsunaga.

Mr. Matsunaga: Thank you, Mr. Shikata. The day before yesterday I mentioned the response to import-related measures taken by foreign countries and regions concerning

the nuclear power plant accident. In that regard, I referred to the statement provided by Ambassador Otabe at the Trade Negotiations Committee of the World Trade Organization (WTO). There, he requested members not to overeat by implementing unfair import regulations and restrictions. I'd like to provide follow-up information in that regard. Yesterday, a briefing session was convened at the headquarters of Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in joint cooperation with MOFA and METI. That was a briefing session provided for the foreign countries present in Japan. I also would like to mention other government meetings in that respect. MOFA has been addressing the issue of import-related measures taken by foreign countries and territories concerning food and others imported from Japan in response to the nuclear power plant accident. The Ministry has been gathering relevant information through our overseas missions and been providing information and explanations to the diplomatic corps and international organizations in Tokyo. The Ministry also has been approaching those countries taking excessive measures. The number of countries taking measures to restrict the import of agricultural products imported from Japan has been increasing. We take this development seriously. In this regard, a meeting at the State Ministers' level was convened yesterday upon the request of MOFA under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuyama. The meeting shared relevant information and discussed countermeasures. MOFA reported the current state of foreign countries' import regulations. Reports were also provided by other relevant ministries. Specifically, the meeting agreed to fully explain to other countries and territories that we have been explaining relevant information through our foreign missions and that we continue providing relevant information to the respective foreign embassies in Tokyo. The meeting also agreed that we would continue fully explaining the measures taken by the government of Japan – suspensions of shipping and procedures of food safety tests undertaken to date. With respect to the certificates of origin requested by European Union, we are already prepared to issue them covering the matter requested by European Union. With respect to fishery products, it was reported in the meeting that the existing sanitary related measures would be taken further thoroughly. It was reported in the meeting that foreign countries would be duly reminded that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Air Transport Association (IATA) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) had issued press releases respectively stating that there is no restriction on travel to Japan, as reported from me and other officials at previous briefings here. Countries and territories would also be informed duly that the readings of radiation monitoring at Tokyo, Yokohama ports and metropolitan ports are updated twice a day and made available at the website of the

Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport. The Government of Japan will continue watching closely the import regulations taken by other countries and territories and take necessary measures. Information regarding the measures taken by major foreign countries will be made available at MOFA's website soon. Thank you very much.

Mr. Shikata: I'd like to open the floor for questions. Please limit your question to one and please identify yourself with your name and affiliation.

QUESTION (Christoph Neidhart, Suddeutsche Zeitung): Question for Mr. Nishiyama. The Japanese press has been quoting experts saying it will take at least a month for a cold shutdown of the reactors and to make those fuel rod pools safe it will take three to five years to really stabilize the whole situation and 30 years to decommission the plant. Do you share this assessment or do you have more optimistic guessing? Please don't say you don't know because that would be read as a confirmation of these numbers. Thank you.

Mr. Nishiyama: Currently, we are trying to create a sustainable cooling system while in the process of cooling the fuel and cooling the spent pool fuel. In that process we need to inject water, but we are faced with a difficult situation in which the water that we have to inject for cooling is on the other hand hindering the work that needs to be done. So we are working hard now to pump out that water as soon as possible so that we can move on with our work. It is difficult to predict at the present moment how long that work will take. I can only say at the present moment that we will do our best to be able to do so as soon as possible.

And so when we bring the reactors to a cold shutdown, we will probably provide appropriate shielding for the radiation. And eventually there will come a time when we will be able to take out the fuel rods that are inside. But I would expect that it would take a considerable amount of time until we will come to the time when we will be able to take out the fuel rods inside.

The subsequent procedures for decommissioning will take in the order of 10 to 20 years looking back on the experience in Japan and throughout the world.

QUESTION (Kosaku Narioka, Dow Jones Newswires): I know you are removing water from the turbine buildings and trenches so that you can reestablish the cooling systems,

and it appears to me that the progress you have been making in removing water seems to be very slow. Does this mean you believe you have some leeway in the state of reactors? In other words, you are not particularly worried about the state of reactors at this point?

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, regarding the work for removing the water, we are now considering all possible options. And also we are looking for every available tank within the premises of the nuclear power station, and also we are trying to use any place that we can keep the waste. And if necessary, we are also looking at the possibility of transferring it outside, so we are considering a variety of different means. And for instance, we are also borrowing the knowledge and ideas of other organizations such as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) of the United States and AREVA of France in considering all possible options.

And by gathering and tapping upon all different kinds of ideas from different countries, we are now considering various different options. The status of the reactor is at the moment stable to a certain extent, but we cannot be overly optimistic. And we have to remove the water as soon as possible and create and establish a sustainable cooling system.

QUESTION (Dennis Normile, Science): I am not sure whether this question should go to Mr. Nishiyama or to the gentleman from MEXT, but it concerns the amount of radiation and the amount of nuclides that have been released into the environment. I know you are doing a lot of monitoring. Have there been any calculations or studies or simulations of the total amount of radiation that has been released and any simulations or computer studies of where that radiation in the atmosphere and in the oceans might be going?

Mr. Nishiyama: We have to study about how much radiation is expected to be released at the end of the day, and we are now considering how specifically to do so, so we are not in a situation where we can supply that information to you at the moment.

Mr. Shinano: If I may respond to that question from the position of someone who is actually doing the monitoring, one form in which the radiation is released is in the form of gas. That can be measured in the form of spatial radiation dose rate. Also, there is gaseous matter that is released that can be identified by sampling, such as iodine 131,

cesium 137, and these would be released into the atmosphere, and partly into the sea.

QUESTION (Daniel Leussink, Asia Times Online): I have a question which is perhaps a follow-up on this, because the amount of radiation that would be released would depend on the amount of damage done to the fuel rods. Previously, the government of Japan has said there has been partial damage to the fuel rods, but could Mr. Nishiyama please explain a little bit more in detail about what partial damage means? Is that partial damage to every single rod? Or does that mean that part of the rods is damaged and other parts of the fuel rods are not damaged? And what is the minimum amount of damage that has been done to the fuel rods?

Mr. Nishiyama: What we mean by damage to the fuel rod is that the fuel rod has been slightly out of the water and has gone to high temperatures, which has led to the zirconium on the outside to melt and react with the water. We do not know for sure to what extent there was damage to the fuel rods. The government of Japan considers that, for all of the reactors from Units 1 to 3, there has been at least 3% or more damage to the fuel. That is why we have registered a level of five, based on the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES).

QUESTION (Christoph Neidhart, Suddeutsche Zeitung): Another question for Mr. Nishiyama. TEPCO has obviously again made a blunder with measurements, this time about radioactivity in table water. Can you explain what happened this time? As we know, TEPCO is the only institution measuring around the plant. Wouldn't it be time for the government to have someone else measure the radioactivity?

Mr. Nishiyama: The mistake that TEPCO made this time in the analysis of the data was for the reason that there was a misunderstanding regarding the contents of the program that is being used to determine how a certain nuclide acts in relation to its parent nuclide.

This is the second time in recent days. TEPCO itself is saying that they intend to do the analysis with expert advice from now on. In any event, the gathering of the data and analyzing it with expert advice will be done by TEPCO going forward as well.

QUESTION (Yamaguchi, AP): I have a question for Mr. Nishiyama or perhaps Mr. Matsunaga might be the appropriate person to respond. Currently from the United States

France and other countries we hear rumors of a variety of equipment, such as robots and pumps, being offered. Can you tell us if you know about any actual equipment that has been provided, and is planned to be used? Can you also provide us with information regarding any such equipment from overseas countries that is already in use?

Mr. Nishiyama: To the extent that I am aware, from the United States we have been provided with protective suits, and we have also actually been provided with fresh water that is being transferred with their barge vessels.

From AREVA of France we have received protective suits, protective masks and protective gloves, and as of now we have also received two vehicles for environmental measurement.

These are some examples, but in addition to these material offers, very important offers that we are receiving from overseas include knowhow as well as recommendations.

Mr. Matsunaga: I just want to make one additional comment. In the telephone conversation held between Prime Minister Kan and Chancellor Merkel of Germany, I am aware that there was mention, from Chancellor Merkel, about providing robots. I am aware that the actual provision of these robots is going to be considered, after we check on the actual need and possibility.

QUESTION (Khaldon Azari, PanOrient News): Mr. Nishiyama, I think that many times you did not answer the question of what is the worst case scenario. That is a policy it seems. So I would like to ask you, what is the best case scenario? Scientifically speaking, what would be the best way to solve this problem other than pumping the water, which you said is taking a long time? If it snows for example, or if something happens, how do you think it would be solved?

Mr. Nishiyama: We consider that the strategy that we are now working with, and to somehow bring the strategy that we are now working with to a success, to be the best case, and also the minimum case required. The actual substance of the strategy that we are now working with is to create a sustainable cooling system, through a heat exchange with sea water, while cooling the fuel with water, and to bring the fuel to a cold shutdown. This is what we have to achieve.

QUESTION (Daniel Leussink, Asia Times Online): Perhaps also for Mr. Nishiyama, but maybe also if somebody else wants to answer this question. The Japanese are known throughout the world as being amazing engineers; take for example the train system in Tokyo, or the Shinkansen, or the robots which were just mentioned, so it is kind of remarkable in a way, that putting a set of basic pumps and basic pipelines could take many, many days for the Japanese, because you are specialized in engineering solutions. But on the other hand, the Japanese are also known as people who sometimes seek a consensus, and then after getting consensus, they act on that, but taking consensus can take a long time. My question is, with devising a cooling system, what were the key points to overcome, when you decided on this strategy?

Mr. Nishiyama: There are different dimensions to this, but I think the most challenging point is that this time we suffered damage from the tsunami and we had a lot of water around us. However machinery that runs on electricity is at the same time vulnerable to water. So the most challenging part is that at the same time we have to restore electricity and restore the cooling system, but our work is hindered by the radiation.

And also at the initial stage, the power source was lost due to the tsunami, and the two major difficulties we faced were how to get the electricity online and also how to secure the water. These two difficulties resulted in the damage to the fuel. So looking back, I believe in the initial stages these were the two major difficulties.

Mr. Shikata: The very last question. Dennis?

QUESTION (Dennis Normile, Science): Mr. Yokota from MHLW – I believe you cannot discuss monitoring radiation in marine products – that is probably the Fisheries Agency, is that correct?

Mr. Yokota: To the extent that I know.

QUESTION (Dennis Normile, Science): Okay, my understanding – I was looking at the Fisheries Agency web page today, and my understanding is that fishing has been stopped in Fukushima and the neighboring prefectures and that fishing is continuing in Chiba Prefecture but that the products are being monitored. Do you know what the plan for monitoring is in the future? Of course the fish do not know where the prefecture lines are, they could go anywhere. Would that monitoring of seafood products have to

be widened to other areas? And, perhaps this is something MHLW can address, could the radiation in the seawater prevent people from swimming in the ocean this summer?

Mr. Yokota: First of all, regarding the fish, as you have mentioned, Chiba Prefecture is subject to monitoring because fishing activities are continuing. Whereas in the case of Fukushima Prefecture, since fishing activities are not going on at the moment because of the earthquake, monitoring is not done. If fishing activities are to be resumed in Fukushima Prefecture, they will also be subject to monitoring, and the fish products or the fish that are caught will probably be subject to screening as well. In response to your second question about radiation in seawater, we probably would need to follow and study the extent of the concentration of radiation in seawater.

Excuse me, I want to make one correction. As you can see on page one, although limited, we have checked or screened two marine products from Fukushima Prefecture, and the result was that there were no marine products that exceeding the action level.

Mr. Shikata: Also, you have probably seen the paper distributed by the NSC – point four, "Environmental sample," where there is a reference to the nature of marine products – it is the second page – which I quote, "It is considered that the concentration of radioactive materials emitted into the seawater will be considerably thinned since it is proliferated along with the tidal current" and so forth. So there is a kind of unique nature in terms of the proliferation of radioactive materials in the ocean.

Very last question.

QUESTION (Khaldon Azari, PanOrient News): Just a follow up. The fish are moving, so if you prevent fishing in Fukushima, we do not know if the fish stay in Fukushima or move to other parts of the country. Are you taking this into consideration when you check the marine products that are served in Japan in general? Thank you.

Mr. Yokota: On the point you made that fish move around, in that sense, that is why we are monitoring and screening the fish taken in Chiba Prefecture, and at the moment we have not found any samples that exceed the action level.

And also, as expert opinion has stated, the radiation that is emitted into the sea, is actually spread through the tidal waves and is diluted and dissipated in the process, and

would be considerably diluted before it is taken in by fish.

Also, iodine has a relatively short half-life of eight days, so it would be assumed that the level of iodine would be considerably lowered before any intake by human beings.

Mr. Shikata: A very short one, yes.

QUESTION (Yamaguchi, AP): I have a question to Mr. Nishiyama. I understand that the measuring machine for measuring the dose rate has been reduced in number due to the earthquake, and at one time the workers had to share these dosimeters. From when has that taken place? Was it from the beginning? And how long has that situation continued? It is provided by law that each worker should have one dosimeter, with the exception of when it is extremely difficult. The case that was encountered this time – was that allowed as an exception? In other words, did you receive an enquiry from TEPCO, and was there communication between the authorities and TEPCO, and has this situation been permitted by the authorities as an exception?

Mr. Nishiyama: It is my understanding that the special measure in which a dosimeter was shared by groups and there was one dosimeter per group was a situation that could not be helped because of a considerable amount of dosimeters being destroyed by the earthquake.

And according to the Nuclear Regulation Law, which is a law under the jurisdiction of METI, it is provided that a company is to act in accordance with the safety provisions which are to be provided by each company. Under this emergency situation I believe it can be recognized that this was a measure that was in accordance with the safety provisions.

Mr. Shikata: This concludes today's briefing. During the weekend, on Saturday and Sunday, I think we will have probably one briefing, most likely Sunday evening, at the Prime Minister's Office. And there may be one at the Foreign Press Center tomorrow evening, as things are prepared. Thank you.