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

4 April 2011

Mr. Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations: Good evening. We are now starting today's press briefing for international press. My name is Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations at the Prime Minister's Office.

In fact, Mr. Nishiyama is still briefing the Japanese press and he will probably be on his way to the Prime Minister's Office soon, so we will get started with the briefings from other colleagues of mine from the Japanese government.

First, I would like to make a couple of points based on Chief Cabinet Secretary Mr. Edano's press conferences today. I would like to choose just two points Mr. Edano mentioned in the morning. One is in relation to the emission of contaminated water from Unit 2. Water with high levels of radiation has been leaking, as you know, into the sea from a pit in the reactor. We are trying to stop the leakage at the pipe underground in the premise of the reactor. At the same time, we are trying to stop the water leakage on the sea side of the reactor. We are working on it on both fronts. In any event, we think that we have to do everything to stop the leakage of the contaminated water into the sea as soon as possible, and the government is urging the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) to act quickly on this issue.

Also, in terms of the general trend of the release of radioactive materials, unfortunately a certain amount of release of radioactive materials from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant still continues, but the current amount of release is much lower than the highest amounts of release that we saw in the past and that is from Mr. Edano's press conference this morning.

In the afternoon, he touched upon the new guidelines or policy in terms of the control of the shipment of food items. The Prime Minister is the head of the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters, and regarding the issue of resorting to regulations of food shipments or lifting those regulations based on the advice coming from the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC), the government examined the guidelines. What we have decided is, regarding the areas for implementing or lifting those regulations, the new approach will be to divide the prefectures into cities or towns or villages, taking into

account the spread of contamination areas and other factors. There will be a more detailed analysis of what is going on in each unit – such as city or village – and the area will be determined in accordance with those results.

Number two is when we will lift those regulations on shipments. Taking into account the conditions of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, we will carry out weekly examinations and if the results of our survey are under provisional regulatory values three times in a row, then the lifting could be realized. However, at the same time, as long as there is continued emission of radioactive materials from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, we will carry out tests every week even after those regulations are lifted.

Let me just update you on the situation surrounding the Japanese government relief operations and also the statistics surrounding the impacts of this East Japan Great Earthquake. As of today, the number of confirmed dead is 12,175 and the number of people who are missing is 15,489. The number of people who have been rescued is 26,632. The number of confirmed displaced persons is 162,000, a little over that.

There are still relief operations being carried out by the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), police, fire service, and maritime safety agencies. As for the SDF, the number of personnel being deployed at this juncture is a little over 106,000. Police, around 2,700; fire service is 1,300. This is the end of my initial remarks, and now I would like to ask my other colleagues starting with Mr. Takeshi Matsunaga, Assistant Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), please.

Mr. Matsunaga: Thank you very much. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to update you about foreign assistance with respect to the earthquake.

We have circulated three different kinds of papers, and if you look at this two-page matrix with respect to assistance-in-kind, I would like to touch upon the assistance of the Republic of Korea as well as Iran.

Concerning the Republic of Korea, we have mentioned in the matrix with respect to their provision of relief supplies which arrived on 19 March and 27 March. In addition, I would like to mention their further additional relief supply which arrived this afternoon. This afternoon, a flight loaded with relief supplies from the Republic of

Korea arrived at Hanamaki Airport in Iwate prefecture. Based on the needs in the quake-stricken areas, the government of the Republic of Korea provided 20,000 masks, 20,000 bars of soap, 3,500 pairs of gloves, as well as 2,800 portions of boil-in-bag rice including seasonal ingredients. They will be provided in Iwate prefecture.

To date, the government of the Republic of Korea has provided foodstuffs, water, and so on. From the government, Mr. Lee Myung-bak, President, and Mr. Kim Sung-hwan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, expressed their condolences and sympathy and sent messages that the government of the Republic of Korea and its people will offer their utmost cooperation to Japan. The government of Japan deeply appreciates the cooperation of the government of the Republic of Korea.

Next, I would like to touch upon the assistance of Iran. In the matrix, there is a reference to the provision of canned foods. In response to the earthquake, Iran expressed to offer relief supplies of 50,000 canned foods. Among them, 35,000 of the cans, which are referred to in the matrix, had been delivered to the quake-stricken areas. The remaining 15,000 of canned foodstuffs arrived at Narita Airport on 31 March, and were subsequently delivered in the disaster-stricken areas. The government of Japan would like to reiterate its deep gratitude for the cooperation of Iran.

Next, I would like to mention the newly announced monetary donation from Brunei. The government of Brunei informed us today that it would offer a monetary donation in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake. We have received letters of sympathy from His Majesty, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, His Royal Highness, Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and others. At the Japanese embassy in Brunei, a book of condolences was signed by The Honorable Pehin Dato Lim Jock Seng, who is Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Also, a book of condolences was signed by The Honorable Pehin Dato Yahya, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, as well as by The Honorable Pehin Colonel (Rtd) Dato Yasmin, Minister of Energy, and also by The Honorable Pehin Dato Isa, who is the Speaker of the Legislative Council. The government of Japan expresses its deep gratitude for the solidarity and cooperation of the government and people of Brunei.

Next, I would like to mention about the dispatch of IAEA experts. You may be aware of the dispatch of two IAEA experts who are referred to in another matrix. On the second page, we included a reference to two boiling water reactor experts of the IAEA. They

arrived at Narita Airport yesterday and the area of their activities is under coordination. The assumption is that they are to work in Tokyo and Fukushima Prefecture.

Lastly, I would like to talk about the reference which I made the day before yesterday. I mentioned about the visit of Mr. Browne, the UK Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. Jeremy Browne. The day before yesterday, I made the announcement that the visit was scheduled to take place last weekend. However, unfortunately the visit was canceled due to the cancelation of his flight. That is all for my explanation. Thank you very much.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you. Now, I would like to move on to Mr. Itaru Watanabe, the Senior Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

Mr. Watanabe: MEXT is continuing monitoring activities and the papers we provided by MEXT show the updated data we observed. In this paper, there are readings of sea-area monitoring out of Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant, but the data is the same as yesterday's paper, because the data is not collected every day. But, we will provide you with new data from tomorrow, if new data is obtained. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Next, Mr. Shinano of the NSC.

Mr. Shinano: Thank you. We have two reports from the NSC. We have two documents, the daily report, which we have issued every day. This is the assessment of the data on environmental monitoring. The other is the minutes of the NSC regular meeting which was held this afternoon.

So, let us start with the daily evaluation of the environmental radiation monitoring results. On the whole, like as up to yesterday, there have been no major changes, so the situation is not at a level where there would be a negative impact on health. Let us look at each of the items. This report is based on the information published between 1:00, 2 April, and 1:00, 3 April. The first point is the spatial radiation dose rate. Relatively high radiation dose rates were measured at some points, but they were not at the level that would have a negative health impact. So this is the same as usual.

Second is radioactivity in the air. Compared to the data for one previous day, yesterday's

data is smaller. Iodine 131 and cesium 137 are both lower than the allowable limits.

Next is aviation monitoring. The altitude between 300m and 1300m were measured. Some measurements were taken between these two levels. And four environmental samples: inside the sea, as well as on the sea surface, as well as the depths of 130m to 160m. The iodine 131 and cesium 137 readings at these three points were observed or collected, and depending on some of the monitoring points, there are areas where the measurements were higher than the day before or were lower than the day before. But, as I have said all along, none of the measurements are to the level that would have a health impact, or which would pose a health hazard on the human body.

Next is environmental radioactivity level surveys by prefecture. For drinking water, compared to the previous day, iodine 131 and radioactive cesium were slightly higher, but they are both below the levels of indicators relating to food and tap-water intake. So those are the results of the environmental data evaluation. Next, going on to the second document, which is the agenda of a regular meeting of the NSC, which was held this afternoon.

The NSC regarding this accident has constantly been receiving data from NISA and has been carrying out necessary analysis. In addition to that, in a more formal manner, we have the regular meetings of the NSC which are held every Monday afternoon, and reports are made by NISA to the NSC regular meetings. There are several items, and the first two are directly related to the accidents that we have now. The first is the effect on the nuclear power plants by the Great East Japan Earthquake. The situation regarding the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant has been reported. The content of this report has been given on a daily briefing from my colleague every day, or some of the information that we had received during this meeting is a little older than what you have already heard. I believe that you are aware of the information even better than what was reported then. The second agenda item was the emergency safety countermeasures to be implemented at other power plants based on the Fukushima Daiichi and Daini Nuclear Power Plant accidents. NISA has reported to us some of the instructions that were given by NISA. Regarding this, at this foreign correspondents briefing that was held on 30 March, explanation has already been made. NISA has instructed each of the power utilities, for example, to secure the emergency power source, as well as maybe a fire-extinguishing pump so that the cooling functions can be maintained under emergencies. If you would like to have material, you would be able to see this on the

homepage in Japanese on the NISA website, and I believe the English version is being prepared right now. Therefore, you will be able to see them very shortly.

Mr. Shikata: Mr. Fumi Kaji, Director of Inspection and Safety Division of Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW).

Mr. Kaji: Today we have prepared two documents and handed them out to you. I have one that is the overall outline and the overall results of the testing that we have done as well as the samples. Another horizontal one, which is printed on both the front and the back, this is the result of the testing that was announced yesterday. When you look from the very top you will see that in Fukushima Prefecture, you will see them from the middle of this horizontal sheet in the lower part. I think you will see *shiitake*. This is a kind of mushroom, I am sure you know. And in parenthesis, it says "hot house cultivation." In other words, they are actually raised in-house, or in the hot house. You will see that numbers there are low. If you go to the back of the sheet, third from the bottom of this chart you will see *shiitake* which is grown outdoors and there is one case where you see a value that exceeds the provisional standard. For the first time for *shiitake* we found and detected those that exceeded the provisional standard limit.

Mr. Shikata: Mr. Nishiyama has arrived. I would like to ask Mr. Hidehiko Nishiyama, Deputy Director of NISA to have opening remarks.

Mr. Nishiyama: Thank you, Mr. Shikata. Sorry for being late. I'd like to explain the recent status of the plants of the Fukushima Daiichi site. Regarding Unit 1, the parameters of the reactor of Unit 1 are relatively stable now, though the pressure is slightly going up. We continue to move the water in the hot well to the condensate storage tank. This is the preparation to pump up the stagnant water to the hot well.

Secondly, Unit 2. Regarding the reactor, the parameters of the reactor of Unit 2 are relatively stable. Regarding stagnant water, we continue to move the water in the hot well to the condensate storage tank. We added one pump today. This is the preparation to pump up the stagnant water to the hot well. Regarding the water flowing from the crack in the wall of the pit where electric cables are stored, to the sea, we have been identifying the route in which the radiated water flows from the trench attached to the turbine building of the Unit 2. However, we are not quite sure what kind of route the

water is taking, so we are still in the process of identifying the route by which the water flows to the pit and to the sea. Regarding the space in front of the intake of Unit 2—the place where Unit 2 takes water from the sea, and where the radiated water is now falling from the crack in the wall near the pit—we will close the space with a silt fence. We'll also close the space which embraces intakes of Units 1 through 4, which means we will create a pond type of a thing in front of the intakes of the four units.

And we have some news. This afternoon, we approved TEPCO to release some slightly radiated water to the sea as an emergency measure. This is the water input by the tsunami to the radiated waste building, and also the underground water, which is appearing around Units 5 and 6. This is because we have an emergency situation, which is the leaking of the water, which I mentioned earlier, from the crack near the pit to the sea. We suppose that that water has originated from Unit 2, so we'd like to stop the leaking from Unit 2 to the sea. For that purpose, we needed to make the radiation waste building empty so that we can bring the stagnant water around Unit 2 to the radioactive waste management facility. And also we have underground water appearing around Units 5 and 6 which seems to be penetrating into Unit 6, so that may hurt the important equipment in Unit 6. So we approved TEPCO to release the underground water, which is slightly radiated, to the sea. So in total, we approved TEPCO to release water from the radiated waste management facility and the underground water appearing around Units 5 and 6. That is related to Unit 2.

I would like to move on to Unit 3. Regarding Unit 3, the parameters of the reactor of this unit are relatively stable. And we are throwing 75 tons of pure water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 3. Regarding the stagnant water of the Unit 3 turbine building, we began to move the water in the hot well to the condensate storage tank. This is the preparation for dealing with the stagnant water itself.

Regarding Unit 4, we threw approximately 180 tons of pure water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 4 yesterday. The US Navy's barge ships introduced pure water into the tank at the Daiichi site, and one ship got refilled with pure water from Japan's Self Defense Force and reentered the port of the site. We are now assessing the effect of the sprayed synthetic plastic, not to allow radiated dust to fly over to other places. That is all for my report. Thank you very much.

Mr. Shikata: Now I would like to open the floor for questions, and when you ask a

question, please identify yourself and limit it to one question.

QUESTION (Mr. Narioka, Dow Jones Newswires): I have a question to Mr. Nishiyama. You just said you approved TEPCO to release some slightly radioactive water into the sea. What is in the water, and by that I mean, what kind of radioactive substances are in that water, and at what level? And relative to the amount of radioactive substances that are currently leaked out from the cracks on the pit near the Number 2 Reactor, is this more or is this less? And if I may, lastly is this going to be the last release of this kind of water? Thank you.

Mr. Nishiyama: In response to the first part of your question, the water that we have approved to be released to the sea does have some level of radioactivity, but a very weak level of radioactivity.

And if I may give you some data as examples of what I mean by a very weak level of radioactivity, for instance, in the basement of Unit 6 where we have the highest level of radioactivity of the water, even the highest level of radioactivity would be in the order of for instance for iodine-131, 20Bq/cm^3.

And regarding the level of concentration of radioactive material in the water that is seeping through the crack on the side of the pit of the facility for Unit 2, we do not know at the moment any fluctuation or changes in the amount of radioactive material in that water.

An regarding the last of part of the question of whether this will be the last release of water with radioactive material, we do wish to be able to avoid as much as possible releasing water including radioactive material into the sea. But this is an emergency measure in order not to discharge any water with a high level of radioactivity such as the stagnant water found in Unit 2. I am not able to say for certain whether or not this will be the last discharge, last release, but we certainly would like to avoid releasing any such water into the sea as much as possible.

QUESTION (The Economist): We are all non-specialists here, and you are the specialist. But as a non-specialist and a journalist, I have to think that this was sort of predictable. You are dumping hundreds of tons of water on the reactors every day, and the reactors themselves are contaminated, so of course the water is going to be contaminated.

Granted there is a leak, granted there are different sources of the contamination and different parts of the areas being contaminated. But it does not seem like you need to be a genius to figure out you are going to have a problem of contaminated water and you are going to need to store it somewhere. So, again as an outsider, it seems strange that this was not foreseeable two weeks ago and that you could have made some preparations to take the water, granted a large quantity, and store it rather than have to dump it so that if you needed to use these pools you could empty them and use them for more contaminated material. My question is, could this have been foreseen? But there is a second point to it; I recognize that you have just answered that you want to avoid having to do this again. What preparations can you do today to avoid having to dump water tomorrow? What are your policy options from a science and public policy point of view? From a common engineering point of view, what are your options to store this rather than dump it?

Mr. Nishiyama: The reason why we had to take this emergency measure was because we recently found the phenomenon that water that is thought to be coming from the reactor of Unit 2 was being released into the sea from the crack in the pit.

Until then, since we were injecting large amounts of water we were trying as much as possible to find, within the premises of the power plant, some container with which we could dispose of the water. Other ideas included, for instance, storing the water in a mega float, or storing the water in a barge, and those ideas are under preparation. But each of these ideas takes time until they can really be used. Until that time we could not leave the leakage unattended. That is why we decided to take the measure that we did today.

QUESTION (Mr. Neidhard, Sueddeutsche Zeitung): I have a question for Mr. Shinano and Mr. Nishiyama. It is a rather general question, maybe a knowledge question. Mr. Shinano said today that his commission was having a meeting and the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) reported to the commission. What actually is the relation between your two institutions? Is NISA a subordinate to the commission? And if we talk about these commissions, how many former bureaucrats are working in your institutions, and how many former employees of your institutions are on the payroll of TEPCO? Thank you.

Mr. Nishiyama: Let me go first. First of all, nuclear energy is primarily the

responsibility of the company that is operating the facility. NISA is in a position to supervise the operator. The NSC is in a position to supervise NISA, and to provide advice to it. That is the structure.

We do not have former employees or bureaucrats of NISA who are now serving as a member of the NSC, but we do have a few former employees or bureaucrats of NISA working in the secretariat of the NSC. And I believe there are two former bureaucrats that are now working for TEPCO.

Mr. Shinano: Mr. Nishiyama has just explained the relationship between NISA and the NSC. Although this may be a repetition, if I were to explain the relationship in my own words it would be as follows.

First of all, NISA is an organization that executes administrative responsibilities by directly supervising the operator, while on the other hand, the NSC is not in a position to directly supervise the operator, which is TEPCO in this case.

For instance, in normal situations, not in a situation like the one we have now, which is an emergency, the NSC has two major roles. Our first role is to lay down the guidelines and basic principles, based on which NISA will implement their safety regulations. Secondly, our second role is the role of double checking whether the safety regulations are being implemented properly in accordance with those principles and guidelines.

Furthermore, in case of emergency incidents like the ones that we face now, the NSC will have an additional role of providing technical advice to the various government ministries and agencies. I believe this point is a very major difference between NISA and the NSC.

Accordingly the NSC is not an organization that directly executes administrative measures. The NSC is made up of five expert members of the commission, and the secretariat, which I am working for, comes under the five commissioners of the NSC, and our role is to support the work of the commissioners, and the secretariat has about 60 to 80 members. The secretariat that I just mentioned is of course comprised of experts, including experts in science and technology, as well as experts in administration.

Mr. Nishiyama: If I may just make one additional remark. It may be easier for you to understand the relationship between NISA and the NSC, if you could consider that it is similar to the relationship between the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ARCS).

Each country has their own regulatory and administrative organization where each country has outside experts on their board, in order to hear their views. The NSC of Japan can be regarded as something similar to the function that the ACRS is playing under the NRC of the United States, but in a more reinforced form, and also in an independent form, based on law.

Mr. Shikata: One thing, Mr. Kaji of MHLW has to leave. Are there any questions related to food items?

QUESTION: Looking at your list of items, it seems that you are being very selective in terms of what you area restricting, and what you are measuring and seeing that there is no problem with. But in terms of consumer confidence, it would seem that for the entire area where there is some contamination, people would be reluctant to have to eat from, even if the sum is elevated yet within your safety region. Wouldn't a precautionary approach be to restrict all trade of edible goods from that region? Why have you decided not to take that approach?

Mr. Kaji: The reason is, it is only three weeks after the incident, and timing wise, actually the radioactive materials fall from the sky onto the food, particularly onto vegetables which have large wide leaves and leafy vegetables, and what happens is that the radioactive material falls onto these leaves and accumulates and attach to the leaves, but for instance potatoes and other vegetables that grow underground would be different, and also crops that are grown indoors would have a lower level of contamination, as you can see from the data, and therefore it is our view that it would be too stringent to restrict all crops from the entire contaminated area.

QUESTION (Ms. Kolonko, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung): Since it seems to be established now that radioactivity is going to leak for months, why don't you extend the evacuation zone? Wouldn't it be better to evacuate too many people than too few people?

Mr. Nishiyama: On that point, we are now trying to keep down the radioactivity as much as possible going forward. There is, however, still the possibility that the radioactivity that has already been released into the air may be carried with the water, and be released with the water, but going forward we expect that the radioactivity in the air will be going down. As I have mentioned just a moment ago, the levels of radioactivity in the atmosphere are becoming considerably lower in various regions, and since the level of radioactive material is expected to be improving considerably we do not see a need to further expand the evacuation area, because evacuating an area does become a burden for the residents.

QUESTION (Mr. Smith, CNN): Will water from reactor units other than Unit 2 be transferred to the waste treatment facility once it is discharged? And in general how confident are you that water will be transferred from the reactors to the waste treatment facility without further leaks?

Mr. Nishiyama: Regarding the stagnant water in units other than Unit 2, we wish to take the approach of moving it to some container nearby, one after another, and we intend to control that process so that we can prevent any leakage from occurring, and so we believe we can prevent any leakage from occurring unless something abnormal happens that we don't even know of. And for your information, the diagram of the operation is shown on the third page from the back, in the materials that we have distributed to you today.

Mr. Shikata: Given the time limitation we have to be closing.

QUESTION (Mr. Normile, Science): A couple of questions about the water leaking from the pit near Unit 2. I am sorry if some of this has been explained before. Is it clear where the water is coming from that is going into that pit? What are the nucleide concentrations in that water? If this is leaking through a crack, and you are not sure of the route to the sea, does this mean the groundwater in the region is being contaminated? And is there any monitoring, or will there be monitoring, of radiation in the groundwater? And concerning radiation in the groundwater and in the seawater, at what point does it become a concern for human health? This is for Mr. Nishiyama, and some for Mr. Shinano.

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, regarding the water that appears to be flowing into the sea

from the pit, it is not clear whether it is flowing from the pit, but in any event this water has a very high level of radioactivity, so we believe it is highly likely that the source of the water is the reactor of Unit 2. And currently we are doing a nuclide analysis of the water that is flowing from the pit, and we believe that we will be making this public in the near future. We do not know clearly from what route that water is coming, but we believe that it is somehow leaking out from Unit 2. And also regarding groundwater, underground water, as well, we are doing a monitoring of the underground water, including a nuclide analysis, so we believe this will be made public when we know the results. Regarding the radiation level I also would like to have some advice from the NSC, but I wish to make the point that radiation levels in the sea become diluted and become dissipated to a considerable degree, and so the current levels would not have any effect on human health, but going forward we probably would need to look into mainly marine products absorbing the radioactivity, which would in turn be ingested by humans.

Mr. Shinano: The NSC has concern regarding contaminated water, not only the water that is flowing out of the pit, but also for instance the stagnant water found in the basement of the turbine building of Unit 2. The NSC up to now has given advice to NISA on seven occasions regarding the contaminated water. For instance one of the advice that we gave was to not only take preventive measures to prevent the contaminated water flowing into the sea or underground water, but also to strengthen the sampling of underground water and seawater. And I understand that the sampling has been increased and strengthened taking into account the advice that we have given. Regarding the effect on marine products, for instance, when we take into account the effect of the half-life of iodine as well as the effect of the dilution through the tidal waves, we consider that the level of radioactivity would be considerably decreased by the time human beings ingest marine products, and therefore we consider that it would not have an effect on human health. Having said so, however, we consider that it is important to properly monitor fish, seaweed, and other marine organisms and to confirm that there really is no problem and that there would be no effect on human health.

Mr. Shikata: I would like to close this evening's press briefing. We will be holding a briefing again tomorrow evening or tomorrow night, so please come back. Thank you very much for coming.

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