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

5 April 2011

Mr. Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations: Good evening. I would like to start today's briefing by Japanese government officials. I think Mr. Nishiyama is still conducting his briefing for the Japanese press, and as soon as he finishes it he will come later, so let us get started with the officials who are present at this juncture. My name is Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations at the Prime Minister's Office.

Let me just introduce to you a couple of points Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano mentioned this morning and this afternoon at his press conferences. In the morning, there was reference to the issue of discharging the water with the lower level of radioactive materials from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the sea. On this issue, he made a comment that this was an unavoidable measure in order to prevent a high level of radioactive water from leaking into the sea, but he regrets very much the measure that we had to take.

At the present time, we are preparing for taking preventive measures against the spread of the released radioactive water into the sea. At the same time, we will continue to dispose of the highly-contaminated water at the nuclear power plant carefully. And he mentioned that at some points near the ocean, by making use of a fence or something like that, we intend to prevent that water from spreading, and what kind of measure is deemed to be the most effective at an early juncture is being explored. So we are trying to prevent the spread of the released radioactive water into the sea and the measures are being explored.

Next, in the afternoon, he made an announcement on the issue of radioactive iodine in marine products. The current list of indicators concerning food and drink intake regulations does not include the provisional standard values for marine products. The Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters asked the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC) on this issue whether it is appropriate to use the provisional standard values used for food items, except for drinking water, milk, and dairy products. And this is something basically about vegetables, whether the provisional standard values used for vegetables could be applied to marine products. And the NSC came up with advice that

as a provisional measure, this could be the case. And based on this advice from the NSC, the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters instructed the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) to apply the values applied to vegetables to marine products. The MHLW will take measures immediately.

So these are the salient points coming from Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano's press conference and I would like to ask my colleague from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Mr. Takeshi Matsunaga, Assistant Press Secretary, to go next. Thank you.

Mr. Matsunaga: Thank you, Mr. Shikata. Good evening. I would like to explain some information with respect to foreign assistance.

First, additional information concerning the assistance from United States forces. The US Marines have dispatched about 140 personnel of its Chemical/Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) and about 100 personnel of the CBRIF arrived in Yokota Airbase by yesterday.

I also would like to mention about Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa's visit yesterday to the USS Ronald Reagan. He expressed his gratitude for the US forces' cooperation in response to the great earthquake. On board the US aircraft carrier, the Minister also conveyed Prime Minster Kan's message.

Next, I would like to touch upon relief money from the African Diplomatic Corps (ADC). Last Wednesday, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Mr. Chiaki Takahashi received a courtesy call from 10 African ambassadors representing the ADC. The acting Dean of the ADC, H.E. Mr. Stuart Harold Comberbach of Zimbabwe and other participating ambassadors of African countries offered their condolences for the damage caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake, and expressed the solidarity of African countries with Japan.

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corp then stated that the ADC had decided to cancel the African Day events which had been scheduled in May this year, and instead to donate the relevant budget for the events, equivalent to ¥1.2 million, for those effected by the disaster. Mr. Takahashi expressed his deep appreciation for the support and the message of sympathy and encouragement from African countries.

Next, I would like to update you about the number of embassies in Tokyo temporarily closed. In response to a question previously, I explained the number of embassies in Tokyo which are temporarily closed. On the previous occasion, I mentioned that fourteen embassies in Tokyo are temporarily closed. As of 16:00 today, 12 embassies are still temporarily closed. The embassies of Switzerland and Senegal reopened today.

At this point in time, that is all from me. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you, Mr. Matsunaga. Then, I would like to ask Mr. Itaru Watanabe, Senior Deputy Director-General of the Science and Technology Policy Bureau of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), to go next.

Mr. Watanabe: Thank you. I would like to explain the documentation issued by MEXT.

So, I would like to explain the documents issued or prepared by MEXT. I believe you have on hand the documentation prepared by MEXT. As usual, MEXT continues the environmental radioactivity monitoring and the updated data is indicated in the document. I would like to point out three things. First of all, page ten. Please turn to page ten.

Page ten – I am sorry, this is only in Japanese, and by tomorrow I believe, the English version of this documentation will be available. I am sorry, we did not have time to make the translation, we will show you just the Japanese today. But this is the result of monitoring in Iitate Village, which is located 30km northwest from the nuclear power plant. As far as Iitate Village is concerned, the radiation dose readings were relatively higher than the other regions, so Fukushima prefecture conducted very detailed monitoring with many samples, and also measured the spatial radiation dose rate at many locations, and we have aggregated the results here. So the content is spatial radiation dose rate as well as the radioactivity concentration in the soil and the radioactivity concentration of airborne dust. Compared to other locations, the number of samples are much larger so that we could grasp the overall situation in Iitate Village.

And another point I would like to raise is on page 17, which is the result of ocean or sea-area monitoring. The data on page 17 is as of 3 April, that is the day before yesterday. Sampled data readings as of the day before yesterday, or 3 April, and the resulting evaluation. The sampled locations are shown on page 18 in a nautical map

about 30km off of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Also, two locations along the coast to the south of the nuclear power plant. On page 21, there is a series of graphs of sampling data over a period of time, time-wise readings. The samplings are taken on every other day: One day, all of the odd numbered monitoring posts, and the next day, the even numbered monitoring posts. Of course, there are some areas where the readings have increased, but most have come down. Also, number 10 is the closest to the land, and on 30 March, there was relatively high reading of iodine, but on 3 April, that level has dropped to less than half of that maximum figure. We would like to closely monitor the trends going forward.

As for readings of the sea area, pages 22 and 23 indicate that from today, MEXT will enhance the sea-area monitoring, as of today. And I think the content is as written on page 22: One is that we will install 5 monitoring buoys. The sampling points and the specific locations are shown on page 23, so please refer to that document. In the sampled areas, there are automatic elevator floating buoys. Five automatic elevator floating buoys. And these buoys will automatically sample the sea water temperature as well as the salinity levels, current direction, flow, velocity, and such water mass properties in these five locations. By using this, we will be able to take some basic data on the dispersion of radioactive materials. The buoys, themselves, cannot measure radionuclides, but by measuring the temperature of the seawater and the current direction, we believe that this will be very useful in our future analysis.

Secondly, we have added or increased the number of sampling points. Please refer to page 23. If you could look at this chart, you will see that up to now we have taken samplings of a point 30km off the coast of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, and two points to the south, but from today, we added two other sampling points to the north, and this is indicated on the map as A and B, and we want to continue the sampling around the adjacent sea in a concentric circle. Now, sea area 2-1 is wrong. This top number here should be sea area 1-1 and not 2-1. The bottom one is sea area 2-1. So, since we started the monitoring today, the results will be coming out the day after tomorrow or the day after that. I wanted to report to you that we did strengthen our sea-area monitoring. That is my key message today. Thank you.

Mr. Shinano: Now, the Nuclear Safety Commission will give us a daily report on the evaluation of the environmental radiation monitoring results. Today, I would like to explain to you about the results between 13:00 on 3 April, 2011 to 13:00 on 4 April,

which was announced by MEXT. This is further away from the 20km, which is the evacuation area of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Generally speaking, there is no major change from the values that we saw yesterday.

The first is the spatial radiation dose rate. It is in some places somewhat higher than normal, but it is not the dose that would impact the health of the people.

Next, the radioactivity in the air. Compared to the data of the previous day, there is some increase. As a result, cesium is below the limit of concentration. However, for iodine, it is somewhat over the concentration limit.

As for the aerial monitoring, there has not been any new data obtained.

For the environmental sample, for the sea water, there was no new information provided. It is not that it was not monitored, but the information was not compiled by the deadline. Therefore we would provide you with the evaluation results when we report to you these numbers tomorrow.

Fifth is the environmental radioactivity levels surveyed by prefecture. As for the drinking or tap water, there is somewhat of a decline of the concentration of iodine 131 and radioactive cesium, and both of these values are below the limit. So this concludes my report.

Mr. Shikata: Now I would like to ask Mr. Hidehiko Nishiyama, Deputy Director-General of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), to go ahead.

Mr. Nishiyama: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I would like to update the status of the Fukushima Daiichi site. Regarding Unit 1, the parameters of the reactor of Unit 1 are relatively stable. We are still transferring water from the hot well to the condensate storage tank. This is in preparation for pumping up and storing the stagnant water in the turbine building into the hot well.

Regarding Unit 2, the parameters of the Unit 2 reactor are also relatively stable. Regarding stagnant water, first of all, we are transferring the water from the hot well to the condensate storage tank as preparatory work for pumping up and storing the stagnant water in the hot well. To prevent highly radiated water from spilling from the

crack on the outside wall of the pit where electricity cables are stored, we are now searching the route of the water which probably comes from Unit 2. We poured some tracer into the ground this time, not to the pit or the vertical part of the trench. Rather, we put the tracer in the ground under the pit. We found that the tracer came from the crack and we found that there is a certain route below the bottom of the pit, where certain layers of stones or pebbles are. So we are now injecting water glass to fill the room where the radiated water flows.

At the same time, as I reported yesterday, we allowed TEPCO to release 10,000 tons of slightly radiated water from the radioactive waste disposal system to the sea, so that we can find space where we can store the highly radiated water in the turbine building and the trenches of Unit 2. Since highly radiated water is flowing into the sea, we found this action urgent and inevitable. According to TEPCO's report, which was published today, nuclide analysis regarding areas surrounding highly radiated water spilling from the crack on the wall outside of the pit shows very high levels of radioactivity, including those of iodine 131 and cesium 134 and 137. We will execute our plan to enclose the area with a silt fence as soon as possible, and with some other measures in the near future. And we also brought in a kind of sandbag to the place where the water may flow into the outside of the intake area.

Regarding Unit 3, the parameters of the reactor of Unit 3 are relatively stable. Regarding the spent fuel pool of Unit 3, yesterday we threw pure water to the spent fuel pool. We will transfer the water in the hot well to the condensed storage tank to prepare for the pumping of the stagnant water to the hot well.

Regarding Unit 4, we are flowing – and actually we finished very recently the throwing of water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 4. We found actually yesterday's operation to throw the pure water into the spent fuel pool of this unit was not successful. Therefore, we are using a concrete pumping machine with a camera on top.

Regarding Units 5 and 6, yesterday, as I reported last night, we found that underground water came into the building of Unit 6. That may endanger the important part of those Units 5 and 6, which are connected. And we think that the water may harm the most important function of cooling the reactor. So we allowed TEPCO to release this slightly radiated, actually underground water, into the sea. The volume of underground water is 1,000t for Unit 5 and 500t for Unit 6. That is all for my report today. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you Mr. Nishiyama. Now I would like to open the floor for questions. When you have a question, please identify yourself, your name and affiliation.

QUESTION (Mr. Neidhart, Sueddeutsche Zeitung): Mr. Nishiyama and Mr. Shinano, yesterday you explained the responsibilities of your respective institutions, and this was mostly control and surveying TEPCO. Mr. Nishiyama, you are surveying NISA as well. Now considering that Fukushima 1 was designed for a 5.4m tsunami and that there were several warnings in the Diet, in commissions of the Diet, and there was a lawsuit going on in Fukushima against the plant to make the plant more safe, and considering that Onegawa was designed for a 9.1m tsunami and did not suffer heavy damage, do you think your institutions bear some responsibility for this whole nuclear catastrophe because obviously you did not force TEPCO to meet necessary standards? As well, we know that there were tsunamis even higher than this time in 1933 and in 1896 and in 1500. And this was discussed in the Earthquake Commission of the Diet. Thank you.

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, regarding earthquakes and tsunami, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency is in the position of inspecting whether or not the nuclear power generation plant of the operator complies with guidelines that have been provided by the Nuclear Safety Commission.

And currently we are at the stage of back-checking nuclear power plants that have been constructed in the past based on the guidelines that have been developed after entering into 2000.

And regarding the tsunami, we were precisely at the stage of going into evaluation against tsunamis. We started with checking the resilience or strength of the nuclear power plants vis-à-vis the oscillation from the earthquake. We have more or less completed checking the strength or resilience of the nuclear power plants against earthquakes, and we were about to go into a double-checking for tsunami when we suffered this very huge disaster.

And so far, regarding earthquakes – for earthquakes as I mentioned previously, we have more or less completed the back-checking, but for the evaluation of the tsunami, we believe we have been undertaking an evaluation including and reflecting the most

updated findings and knowledge that we have. But in any event, considering what has happened this time, after everything is settled and stabilized we will have to review our approach, including checking what has happened in the past and also checking on the means that we have come up with to deal with issues as they come up.

Mr. Shinano: My colleague Mr. Nishimura has just explained about the history of our work in reevaluating the nuclear power station at Fukushima. As I have explained yesterday, the NSC develops guidelines based on safety inspections, and we have been reviewing these guidelines based on the most updated knowledge and findings that we have. I believe the NSC has been doing everything within its power so far. Chairman Madarame of the NSC has responded to a number of questions in the Japanese Diet, that is, the parliament, which I would like to describe to you. First of all the Chairman of the NSC in his response to a question in the Diet responded that the earthquake that we encountered this time was beyond what we had expected and I believe that we need to have a global review of the levels that are expected. Chairman Madarame went on to further say that as one involved in nuclear energy, personally speaking, his feeling is that he wishes to apologize for what has happened this time.

Mr. Shikata: Next question.

QUESTION (Mr. Azhari, PanOrient News): Just a quick question for Mr. Nishiyama. I understand that the story was that nuclear plants shut off automatically when the earthquake took place. Then, the cooling system starts, and that is supposed to be generated by the outside electric power. And then, the tsunami came and destroyed this equipment that is supposed to generate electricity for the cooling. Can you give us some timeline about this? Like how long it usually takes for the emergency generators to work and to cool the system, and according to your records how many minutes after the earthquake did the tsunami hit?

Mr. Nishiyama: After the earthquake this time, the emergency power generators started moving right away after the earthquake came. It was about one hour later that the tsunami came. And when the tsunami came, the emergency power generator stopped moving. According to our calculation, it takes between five to seven hours for the reactor core to start to incur damage. And if I may supplement, the main important equipment that became dysfunctional as a result of the tsunami include the diesel power generator, the system for bringing in outside power source, and the seawater pump.

QUESTION (Mr. Kenneth, The Economist): I've got a family of questions. There are eight of them altogether. Let me start with the first and simplest, which is, of the roughly 10,000 tons of radiated water that are going into the sea, that you've permitted TEPCO to go into the sea, what is the radiation level? Is it 100 times the legal limit? What is the figure that you have?

Mr. Nishiyama: Roughly speaking, the level of radiation would be approximately 100 times the concentration limit of radioactive material in areas which are outside the area in which the radiation level is controlled. We have distributed a document that describes precisely the point that you have raised in your question, so can you please refer to the press release that we have distributed.

QUESTION (Mr. Kenneth, The Economist): A second question might be answered in that as well, which is Unit 5 and Unit 6, where you are dumping 1,000 tons and 500 tons of radioactive contaminated water. What is the level there?

Mr. Nishiyama: From the same prospective as I mentioned earlier, that is for the areas that are outside radioactivity management monitoring area, the highest level would be around 50 times the concentration limit.

QUESTION (Mr. Kenneth, The Economist): Great. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Ken, could you limit your question so that others could ask questions? Maybe you could take another round, but please go ahead on this one.

QUESTION (Mr. Kenneth, The Economist): OK, let me defer questions on that and I will come back to it if I need to. Let me go into the question of marine life then. Fish do not obey areas - they swim everywhere. Can you please tell me the type of fish and maybe the quantity of fish and other marine life that generally pass through Fukushima, and that area where the contamination is taking place, and then where they go to, and roughly the time it takes for them to go to certain areas. So for example, if you wanted to, for safety reasons, prevent fishing, you obviously would not just prevent fishing today in Fukushima, you would prevent fishing maybe in three weeks in Fukuoka. I am not a marine biologist but I am sure that the Government of Japan is thinking about these issues for public safety grounds. Please can you inform me, and if you cannot, can

you commit to returning tomorrow night and informing me?

Mr. Shikata: Since we do not have an official from MHLW or Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), I would probably defer to their experts' response hopefully tomorrow evening. But let me just give you some of the information or perspectives from myself. First, out of various samplings I guess there are eight kinds of fish being monitored, and there was one sample which is a young lance, that is a kind of sand eel, that exceeded the level that I referred to at the outset. I understand the figure obtained was 4,080Bq/kg and the provisional standard value that was decided today is 2,000Bq/kg. So this particular fish, fishing off the coast of Ibaraki, it is northern Ibaraki which is close to Fukushima, the fishing activities have been suspended. As you point out, there are issues regarding how fish navigate and swim around. Our understanding is that MAFF is of the view that they will try to grasp where those fishing vessels are carrying out fishing activities and where their ports are, and so MAFF is trying really hard to monitor fishing activities and harvests so that those fish that exceed the limit will never be distributed in the market. So since we have decided the provisional standard values, if they exceed them there is a possibility that those distribution of particular fish will be suspended. Naturally, in relation to fish swimming around, it is necessary to monitor in a wider area, we understand that. And also we are aware of the need to monitor various kinds of fish, and that is exactly what is being carried out. On this issue, both MAFF and MHLW are collaborating to prevent the contaminated fish from being distributed in the market.

QUESTION (Mr. Habibur Rahman, Muslim World): We have been hearing various media criticism about TEPCO regarding this incident for the last three weeks. I was really shocked. Pakistan, my country, also has atomic installations, as you know. The day before yesterday I had a chance to talk with one of my friends in Pakistan, and I was really shocked. He, as Mr. Nishiyama mentioned that we were not expecting this earthquake and tsunami of magnitude 9 or something. In ordinary buildings I have during the drills been told by the engineers that some buildings in Tokyo can face an earthquake much higher than magnitude 9. Maybe the whole building can move, but it cannot fall down. So my question is why did we fail to expect an earthquake and tsunami of a level which has in the past also happened so many times, maybe more serious than this one? So this building and this installation, I think we are saving faces of each other, and we are not giving consideration to what happened if something worse happened, and why we were not prepared to make this, such a dangerous installation,

which has been criticized by a lot of people in the world, and even then we are installing it for the benefit of the human beings, and not taking into account much higher levels of damage that such construction can face at any time of the history. I think we have used the words that we are evaluating, we are reviewing, and we are checking and back checking and so many things - it should have been done before we construct these kind of installations.

Mr. Nishiyama: We faced both the earthquake and the tsunami this time, and based on our past experience for the earthquake we did all the back-checking that was required and the power plant had adequate strength to resist the earthquake, and Japanese nuclear power stations like Japanese buildings up to now have hardly experienced any damage from earthquakes. For the tsunami however, the tsunami that we experienced this time was far larger than anything that we could imagine from past experience in history. Unfortunately it was not something that we could have predicted. If there is any way in which we can predict these events we would like to consider, but the tsunami this time was far beyond what we could have predicted.

QUESTION (Mr. Neidhart, Sueddeutsche Zeitung): I just want to follow up on three points. First on what you just said, Mr. Nishiyama, there is work done by Mr. Koji Minoura saying that in 1500 a tsunami reached 4km behind the coastline in the Sendai area, which is not far from Fukushima. So Mr. Shinano said the guidelines were revised. Were the guidelines for tsunamis revised when you revised the guidelines? Second question, Mr. Nishiyama just said on my colleague's question that five to seven hours after the cooling stops you know the reactor starts to be damaged. Does that mean that Friday at midnight on the 11th that you would already have known that the reactors have been damaged so that you would have had to declare a nuclear emergency? And the third question, Mr. Nishiyama you said that water from under that pit is leaking out into the sea. Does that mean the water table is contaminated?

Mr. Shinano: Let me respond to the question about the revision of the guidelines. The guidelines for tsunami have most recently been revised in 2006. In that most recent revision the guidelines refer to tsunami as follows: In the guidelines that have been most recently revised, it provides that consideration should be given to the fact that there is no risk of any serious damage to the safety function of the facility, even in the case of a tsunami which can appropriately be expected that it would be very rare that such a tsunami would occur while the facility is in use.

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, for Unit 1, which faced a difficult situation first among the four units, on 11 March at 15:42 there was a total loss of A/C power. Also on the same day, 11 March, at 16:36 we were unable to inject water into the emergency core cooling system, and as a result, an emergency situation was reported in accordance with the relevant law. Subsequently, on 12 March at 01:20, a little past midnight, it was decided to vent, because the pressure in the containment vessel was increasing abnormally. In any event, what I have been describing to you is shown in detail in the document that we have distributed to you. In response to your question about the water table, we believe that the soil layer filled with pebbles and small stones which is found between Unit 2 and the pit we consider is probably playing the role of guiding the water to the pit and into the sea. But we do not believe that it is spreading as far as the underground water.

Mr. Shikata: We have got to close now, but one last question.

QUESTION (Mr. Kenneth, The Economist): It is on that last question, in terms of the water table. Have you tested the water table, yes or no? Do you have the findings of what the water table is? If so, will you disclose it, and if not then why haven't you already? If you haven't tested the water table, when will you test the water table? What are you waiting for?

Mr. Nishiyama: We have already taken samples of underground water, and have done a variety of different analysis. I don't remember where that was disclosed. I believe it has been already disclosed, but if not we will disclose it.

Mr. Shikata: We would like to conclude today's briefing. We will hold another round of briefing tomorrow evening as well. Thank you very much for coming.

(END)