

**Press briefing by Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano at the Prime Minister's Office for members of the foreign press**

12 April 2011

Mr. Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations: So now we would like to start Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano's press conference. First, Mr. Edano has his initial remarks, to be followed by a question and answer session. Mr. Edano, please.

Mr. Edano: A month has passed since the disaster. Therefore, on this occasion, I had wanted to meet directly with the members of the foreign press. The great earthquake took away the lives of 23 foreign nationals and already 13,000 lives have been claimed, and 14,000 people's whereabouts are still unaccounted for. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to those whose valuable lives have been taken, and express my sympathy to the bereaved, the families of the victims.

More than 130 countries and close to 40 multilateral organizations as well as 1,500 or more non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have expressed their willingness to provide general support and assistance, and a large amount of donations have been extended from abroad as well. It was a sad occasion where we really felt the circle of solidarity and compassion from the world community. Therefore, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the warm support that has been extended to Japan from different parts of the world.

It is truly regrettable that the disaster had brought forth the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant incident. It has caused much concern and anxiety on the part of the international community and also on Japan. We believe that bringing the crisis under control should be the utmost priority and we are working very hard, and in this process we have obtained the advice and help of foreign governments, international organizations, private businesses, and experts. Today, we made an announcement that the accident corresponds to the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) level of 7. It is positioned as a most serious nuclear incident on the INES. We recognize this to be a very serious incident.

Now, as of today, if you look at the total amount of radioactive substance released so far, it is only 10% of what was released in Chernobyl. The nuclear incident has not claimed

any lives. We have not seen any individuals who have suffered from high levels of exposure, so we are committed to bringing the situation under control so that this accident will not result in harm to the health of the people.

The instruments at the nuclear power plant failed to function because of power loss. Therefore, immediately after the accident, we were unable to have access to any data, so it is in that circumstance that we had to work against the disaster. Therefore, it has caused concern inside and outside of Japan about the lack of transparency of information, but I would like to assure you, whatever information and data that the government had possessed had been shared with the entire community of the world and in Japan without any delay and in the fullest accuracy. We have instructed every organization to promptly disclose information and we are committed to do so. We will continue to disclose information at the highest level of transparency.

Now, at this juncture, I would like to talk about Japanese products including agricultural produce. Ungrounded false rumors have been spread. As a result, agriculture, forestry, and fishery products have suffered from tremendous damages. It is truly regrettable, and adverse impact has been seen in industrial products as well. You would agree that Japan places the utmost importance on the quality control of farm produce and agricultural products. So what is distributed and shipped to the market are the products that are safe and secure. I would like to emphasize this point. And we will continue to provide all the information, including the radiation levels at different monitoring posts and the results of the testing of agricultural produce. We will assure the highest level of transparency. We hope that the governments concerned will remain calm and objective without resorting to excessive import control.

The disaster this time was the greatest crisis for Japan during the postwar period. But, as you know, in 1945, we had the devastating aftermath of World War II, but we had witnessed a miraculous recovery and reconstruction in that aftermath. Even under very difficult and dire circumstances, we managed to muster the strength of every citizen of this country to rebuild this nation. So in this reconstruction process, we have to go beyond just reinstating the original status. We have to be involved in a creative activity to create our future, and in doing so, we need to fully respect the needs and desires of the citizens in each region while gathering the collective knowledge and wisdom of all the people in this country. So we are in a very challenging and difficult time, but we should prevent harmful health hazards to the people of this country, and we need to

respond to the cordial encouragement and spirit of solidarity and we need to steadily follow the path of regeneration, which is the best way to respond to the outpouring of support.

Mr. Shikata: Please give your name and affiliation. Please limit your question to only one, and please use the microphone when you ask a question. Ms. Lee.

QUESTION (Ms. Lee, Hong Kong Phoenix TV): My question is on the nuclear accident. Immediately after the accident, you said that the accident was at level four, while foreign countries claimed that it should be scaled at level 6 or 7. So, it took one month to announce that it falls under level 7. Therefore, your countermeasures against the accident may not have been fully sufficient, given the fact that you had underestimated the situation at the nuclear power plant. Or do you think that you have done all that you have been required to do, that you have done everything you should have done?

Mr. Edano: The further expansion of the implications of the accident, bringing the accident under control, and providing instructions to the residents for evacuation – all those actions have been taken based on the data that was then available at each point, and we have considered all the factors that were in position, and we have tried to avoid the worst scenario. In this context, we have tried to make a decision and advised different actions, including evacuation. So, at different points of time, the evaluation or the scale of INES was based on the accurate analysis of the data we had available. Today we published, based on the data that we have accumulated, that the situation corresponds to INES level 7. But we have always taken the action to prepare for any eventual development where there could be a massive release of radioactive materials. Therefore, the announcement made today is different from the actions and decisions that we have been making at different points in time.

QUESTION (Mr. Eckert, Reuters): I understand there was a telephone conversation between Prime Minister Kan and his Chinese counterpart, Wen Jiabao. Can you tell us what Prime Minister Kan told the Chinese leader in terms of what you are doing to control the radiation and are you having similar conversations with other leaders in this region? Thank you.

Mr. Edano: I was not in attendance when the Prime Minister talked to his counterpart in

China, Premier Wen, so I cannot report to you the details of the conversation. But, of course, I am sure the Prime Minister expressed his sincere appreciation for all the generous support and assistance that has been extended by China. And also I have been reported that Prime Minister Kan has also explained what he has explained to you also at the press conference earlier. I am sure the Chinese Premier has expressed his wish for the highest level of transparency of information, but I am not aware of any particular request that was made by the Chinese counterpart.

QUESTION (Mr. Lee, Yonhap News): In order to place the nuclear power accident under control, I am sorry, I have to ask about the situation of other nuclear power stations. I know that you are busy on Fukushima, but close to Korea there is Monju, the fast breeder reactor in Fukui. And last year I hear that there was an incident over at Fukui, and the measures taken had ended up in a major failure, and the person who was responsible for the countermeasures, I hear, had committed suicide. So, Korean people are concerned about the status of the Fukui Nuclear Power Station and what will be the sources of information that we should inquire to have access to accurate pieces of information.

Mr. Edano: With regards to Monju, the fast breeder reactor, we are now in the process of having to address the incident over at the Fukui Nuclear Power Station. Not only Monju, but the power stations throughout the country are thoroughly reviewed in terms of their safety as a result of this earthquake and tsunami and nuclear accident this time, and the government had given instructions already to take countermeasures starting from the nuclear power stations that are prepared to do so. So in the future, if these reactors can resume their operations, the standard of safety that we have to comply with is going to be much more rigid and higher than the standards that we used to have before this disaster. Now, concerning the status of Monju, I am sorry today I do not have detailed information at hand, and maybe Mr. Nishiyama from the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency NISA does not have that information today, but you should inquire with NISA for the specifics of the status of Monju.

QUESTION (Mr. Wallace, The Australian): I wanted to talk to you about the upgrading of the incident today. It was a very dramatic upgrading from 5 to 7, which suggests that you rather dramatically underestimated the scale of the disaster initially. I wanted to ask if any foreign government has expressed concern about that underestimation and if you think that it has cost you any standing in the international community.

Mr. Edano: So as far as our response to the nuclear power station accident is concerned, this is not based on the level of INES, as I have mentioned at the outset. At each point in time after the accident, based on the information that was available to the government, and trying to anticipate every possible scenario, how we can prevent deterioration of the situation, and in order to address the anticipated worst case scenario, what should be the instructions given to the citizens in the periphery, should we evacuate the residents or not, had been figured out, which is not based on the INES level. So we have not underestimated the level of the damage of the accident. Now the review of this INES level is because we had managed to gather an objective set of data and detailed analysis had been carried out based on this gathered data, so the result of the assessment and review had to be released as soon as possible to the international community. That is what we did today. So already at the start of the accident, our assumption was that this was a very grave and serious accident.

QUESTION (Ms. Nakamoto, Financial Times): Hearing that the assessment has gone up from 5 to 7 gives ordinary people the impression that the situation has significantly worsened. Is this your view, that the situation at Fukushima has become much, much worse?

Mr. Edano: The situation at Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant is not deteriorating. Rather, it has not worsened. I am sure NISA will give you a more detailed report, but since the middle of last month, March, the spatial radiation dosage has come down substantially and we are continuing to see a decline. And also the cooling of the reactors has reached a relative stability. Of course we have many hurdles to overcome to bring the entire situation under control, and also in terms of the contaminated water, we have caused anxiety and concerns of the international community, but we are always on alert and vigilant trying to find whether we have not overlooked anything. The situation has not worsened, and whilst it is slow, there is a steady improvement. We are making progress, but because the data are showing more stability, we can understand the situation with more accuracy, and based on that we have made the announcement that has been referred to earlier. The change of the evaluation may cause anxieties and nervousness on the side of the people. We did foresee that possibility, but we believe that it is important for us to share the accurate information with the community, and that is why we have made the announcement today.

QUESTION (Mr. Germis, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung): This level 7 is described as not only having a major release of radioactive material but widespread health and environmental effects. So if this is true, what are the health effects you have up until now, and, because now you have the exact data, what is what you fear could happen if the situation will not be under control in the next four weeks, and I do not know how long it will last.

Mr. Edano: In trying to respond to your question, there are two bodies that have conducted the estimate of the amount of radiation that has been released. In the peripheral area, now they're able to monitor the radiation doses, and they conducted a reverse calculation to estimate how much has been released from the nuclear power plant, and that exercise was now possible with reasonable data. Therefore we have increased the monitoring posts of the radiation level and the dosage and as a result of obtaining more accurate information we are now able to estimate the total amount of radiation released. Now, in close vicinity to the plant, within the 20km radius from the plant, we do recognize that the risk continues to be high, and we have not been able to conduct sufficient monitoring or measurements, therefore we cannot make any definitive statement as to what would be the long-term environmental impact. But yesterday we issued new instructions to the local municipalities about the evacuation.

If we can continue to control the radiation level or the release of radioactive substances, as we have been able to do in recent days, then we believe that we'll be able to contain the environmental impact in that peripheral area to a certain level. So the question is when we'll be able to totally stop the release of radioactive substances. We believe that is a priority and we are doing our utmost to do so. I'm afraid we cannot completely stop the release in a matter of weeks, but the release has come down substantially and we will continue to do our utmost to bring the release to zero. We are looking at a multiple number of options and approaches.

QUESTION (Mr. Kincaid, The Economist): Mr. Kan, in his previous remarks, called on Japan to rise above this calamity, similar to in the post-war world, but we know that for the first few years after the war Japan was politically a mess. It took the 1955 system, a sort of unity government to create the motor, an engine, of the Japanese economy to rise above its calamity. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) faces not opposition parties but obstructionist parties. What can the DPJ do specifically to get political cooperation from your political rivals? Thank you.

Mr. Edano: Well, I was born in 1964, so I have to admit that the situation prior to the establishment of this 1955 system is only something that I learned from history textbooks, but the visible achievement may have come forward after 1955. But right after WWII, from 1945, our predecessors had steadily made progress in the reconstruction of this country. They had been making progress which led to the high growth economy in 1960 and beyond. That is my recognition of what Japan managed to do after WWII.

So for several years from now I think Japan will have very challenging times in various aspects, but we do have this economic strength and also the technological might and capability that should be fully leveraged towards this reconstruction of the country. If everybody stands together in the near future I am confident that we can really resurrect. From 1945 to 1955 Japanese politics may not have been stable, I admit that, but in terms of politics at certain times the ruling and the opposition parties would harmonize and get together, and at certain times they may be in fierce rivalry, which I think is quite natural for politics to show a visible outcome, and so there are various views of the political situation of this country. But as Mr. Kan stated in his press conference, since the disaster took place in the past month, the steering of the Diet had been supported by the members of the opposition parties. They submitted very constructive proposals and have also given us very helpful ideas, so they have gone beyond the boundary of political parties. The opposition members have indeed been very cooperative and supportive of our undertaking, so we shall cooperate in areas where we can. Of course, because of the difference of our political views we may be in confrontation in other areas but I'm still confident that we can manage reconstruction of this country.

QUESTION (Ms. Menon, The Hindu): How would raising the level from 5 to 7 actually change your disaster management policies on the ground? How would it make a difference to that? And secondly, if I could ask an India-related question. India has banned the import of Japanese agricultural produce. What is the nature of this agricultural produce and do you think that is a panic reaction? Would you like to respond to that?

Mr. Edano: First, on the first question, as I have mentioned on a number of occasions, recognizing that it is a level 7 is not a new development. We have always recognized the seriousness of the situation and have taken actions that we believe to the best, but as the

result of numerous data, we have concluded that under the IAEA scale, it would correspond to 7, and we have made that public. So it does not mean that we have neglected to take any actions. Bringing control to the situation and instructing the evacuation of residents are all based on the data that was made available, so we are confident that we have taken the right actions. So we don't have to change our actions.

On your country's question, the reaction of the Indian people to Japanese products. Now, through the diplomatic channel of Japan, we'll make sure that we provide the Indian authorities with full and accurate information without delay to avoid any misunderstanding, and if there's any reactions which are not grounded in scientific facts, I'm sure that eventually the situation will be solved. I have been assured with reports that actions will be taken, so I would like to urge the members of the press that you cover the news and provide accurate and correct information to your people.

QUESTION (Mr. Knittel, Freelance): Kyodo News quoted you today, saying that in the end the radiation from Fukushima Daiichi could be higher than that from Chernobyl, although it is initially thought to be only 10% that of Chernobyl. Could you comment on this please. I think Kyodo News quoted you about it, Mr. Edano, or it was TEPCO.

Mr. Edano: No. As I have stated at the outset, the government bodies of Japan, that is NISA and the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC), based on scientific data, have different approaches for making estimates, but this is all based on objective data. This objective data would be below the level of Chernobyl, and is about 10% of the level of Chernobyl. The basic data that had been the basis of estimates has been disclosed. In making public the results of NISA and NSC, it is expected to disclose the process that NISA and NSC had gone through to arrive at this estimation. If experts do the analysis based on this data, I don't believe that the result of the estimate would show a major difference. The data that is the basis of the estimate, at least what the government has access to, has all been disclosed, including to the foreign press.

QUESTION (Mr. Carrer, Ilsole 24ore): My question is about the foreign aid coming into Japan. I spoke with some foreign government officials and some of them told me that it is not so easy to help Japan in the sense that some countries, it seems, were told to wait a bit or not to be too enthusiastic in trying to help Japan. Don't you think in some cases the Japanese government's attitude should have been more flexible in allowing this foreign help to come in quicker?



Mr. Edano: As a matter of fact, more than a dozen years ago we had the Great Hanshin Earthquake and in those days, we enjoyed many offers of support from foreign countries, but then the Japanese system did not allow the acceptance of such generous support, so it was very unfortunate for the victims. We were also very sorry for those foreign communities that were so generous in extending support. That was a lesson learnt in Kobe.

So based on that lesson, we have decided to operate as flexible a system as possible so that we can promptly accommodate different offers of assistance. We have tried to make institutional changes over the years. After the disaster, Prime Minister Kan, myself and other members of the government were not bound by the existing system of rules. We have instructed all relevant parties to be flexible in accepting offers of assistance and cooperation, but notwithstanding such instructions, it may have been the case that Japan was not able to fully accept the kind offers from different foreign institutions. Then, of course, we will review and evaluate that, and in the future we will definitely try to correct the situation and improve.

Mr. Shikata: This concludes Mr. Edano's press conference, thank you very much.

Mr. Edano: Thank you very much.