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

22 April 2011

Mr. Yoshimitsu Kaji: Today's briefers are, on your left, Mr. Kaoru Shoji, Deputy, International Shipping Division, Maritime Bureau from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT); Mr. Hidehiko Nishiyama, Deputy Director-General of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA); on your right, Mr. Shinichi Kawarada, Advisor to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT); on your right, Mr. Masanori Shinano, Counselor Secretariat of the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC); and on the extreme right is Mr. Eiichi Yokota, Senior Technical Officer of the Food Safety Department of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW).

So let me start from the contents of today's briefing from Chief Cabinet Secretary Mr. Edano. This morning, Mr. Edano mentioned about the planned evacuation zone and emergency evacuation preparation zone.

The prime minister, as head of the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters, has issued instructions to the governor of Fukushima Prefecture as follows: Designation of planned evacuation zones in the area outside of the 20km radius from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station; there are areas where radioactive materials emitted from the power station which have accumulated as a result of climate and geographic conditions, and in some localized areas, these accumulated volumes of radioactive materials are at high levels.

In view of this criteria said by international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which stated that for the purpose of protection from emergency exposure situations, our references to levels should be set in the band of between a 20 and 100mSv effective dose. In the case that the residents continue to remain in the designated area, their accumulated exposure to radiation could increase further. There is a concern that in the period of one year following the accident, the accumulated radiation volume could reach 20mSv in these areas. It has been decided to designate them as planned evacuation zones. This measure will cause great hardship for the residents living in these areas, but in view of the potential impact on their health, they are requested to evacuate in a planned manner to another location.

The planned evacuation zone designation is to be applied to the following areas that are outside of the 20km radius of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. These are the village of Katsurao, Namie, and Iitate, part of the town of Kawamata, and part of the city of Minami-Soma. The specific procedure relating to evacuation from the planned evacuation zones will be coordinated between local, prefectural, and the central government working in a close manner. The planned evacuations are expected to be implemented in approximately one month's time.

Regarding the designation of an emergency evacuation preparation zone, in addition, with regard to the area located within an area of a 20 to 30km radius from the nuclear power station, the advice to shelter indoors that has been in effect to date has been lifted. However, given the status of the power station, which has not yet been fully stabilized, there remains a possibility that an emergency response may have to be made. And, therefore, excluding the area that has been designated as a planned evacuation zone, it has been decided that all other areas in the 20 to 30km radius shall in principle be newly designated as an emergency evacuation preparation zone, in which preparations should be made so that the residents can take shelter indoors or evacuate by their own means in the event of an emergency.

In these areas, residents should be able to evacuate using their own means and accordingly certain people, particularly children, pregnant women, persons requiring nursing care, and hospitalized patients, are requested not to enter the area. People wishing to enter the emergency evacuation preparation zones for essential purposes, such as engaging in business and work, shall not be prevented from doing so. The emergency evacuation preparation zones designated is to be applied to the following areas that are within a 20 to 30km radius of the nuclear power station: The towns of Hirono and Naraha, the village of Kawauchi, and parts of the cities of Tamura and Minami-Soma. Measures for response for these areas will be conducted under the cross-cooperation between local governments, prefectural governments, and the central government.

Concerning the re-designation of the no-entry and evacuation zone, the demarcation of the no-entry and evacuation zones will be revised at the time when the release of radioactive materials from the power station is deemed basically controllable, which will be six to nine months from now, according to the roadmap published by TEPCO,

after the gathering and announcing of data from environmental monitoring. Although the new zoning will cause great inconvenience to the people who are evacuating, we would like to appreciate their understanding and cooperation on these measures. So, let us turn the table to Mr. Nishiyama from NISA, METI. Mr. Nishiyama, please.

Mr. Nishiyama: Thank you. I would like to briefly update the status of each plant of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. First, regarding Unit 1, the parameters of the reactor have been stable, although we changed and increased the amount of water we are placing into the reactor. Actually, a few days ago it became lower than the amount we usually pumped in, so we recovered to the previous status. We are continuing to inject nitrogen to the reactor containment vessel of Unit 1.

Regarding Unit 2, we have a plan to inject pure water to the spent fuel pool today to cool down the spent fuel. And the reactor is stable right now.

Regarding Unit 3, the parameters of the reactor are stable and we have a plan to throw water with a concrete pumping machine to the spent fuel pool this afternoon.

Regarding Unit 4, we are placing the device to measure the depth of the water in the spent fuel pool of this unit. About the water transfer from the trench of Unit 2 to the irradiated waste disposal system, the work has been done very steadily and we saw a 2cm lower surface of the water in the trench this morning compared with yesterday. We will have to work to remove the debris from the place around Unit 3 by a remotely controlled system today, and we have removed 40 containers of debris so far. That is all for my report today. Thank you.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you very much, Mr. Nishiyama. Next, it is going to be Mr. Shinichi Kawarada from MEXT.

Mr. Kawarada: Good afternoon. On behalf of MEXT, let me report to you that out of the 20km zone of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, we have conducted the measurement of different monitoring posts, but we have nothing new to report to you. Therefore, for the offshore, we would like to talk about the ground monitoring. This is the monitoring out of the 20km zone of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. In addition, we are taking the readings from the prefectural monitoring posts covering nationwide.

Now, there is this question of allowing people to temporarily return to their homes within the 20km, and for that purpose we are taking the measurements of that area. So let me go one by one.

First, for the area outside of that 20km zone, please turn to page 6. The trend for the spatial dose rate is shown here. During the past fortnight, also, there has been a declining trend, and I would say, particularly, during the past two weeks, the level remained flat, with some ups and downs, but they are marginal. So that is out of the 20km zone. Now, there are also prefectural readings available. The environmental radioactivity level by each prefecture is shown on page 16. Of course, it includes Fukushima, but there are other prefectures, including Ibaraki, and you will note that compared to the times of normalcy the readings are a little bit higher; that is also the case for Saitama, but for other areas the doses are the doses of the times of normalcy.

And for the first time this time, we have attached a document on monitoring within a 20km radius. TEPCO, as well as MEXT, jointly conducted these measurements within a respective scope of responsibility, and pages 27 and 28 indicate the reading in map form. On page 27, first of all, the black hashed area is the mountainous zones, which are not inhabited by people. They are mountainous zones. So, excluding those dark hashed zones, this is the map of the readings of air dose rates, and the trend, as you can see, is the same for pages 27 and 28, and the same for pages 26 and 27. The trends are the same, and the trend is that the closer you get to Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the higher the air dose rates. For example, at a point some 3km from the plant, about 100μR per hour. There are about four points or four monitoring posts with that level of reading, and when you look at the spread, you will see that like for the data of beyond 20km, the areas to the northwest of the plant tend to measure higher rates of air dose. So, these are the results mapped for the readings within the 20km radius. So, that is all for the MEXT report.

Mr. Kaji: Mr. Masanori Shinano from NSC.

Mr. Shinano: Thank you very much. I have two documents being prepared from the NSC. One is the report we issue on a daily basis, which is the evaluation of the environmental radiation monitoring results, the daily results. Also, the other is the

agenda for the 24th Extraordinary Meeting of the Nuclear Safety Commission, which was held yesterday and the day before.

First of all, I would like to share with you the evaluation by the NSC of the environmental radiation monitoring results. Today's evaluation results are based on the information published between 10:00 on 20 April, 2011, and 14:00 on 21 April. So, on the whole, we have not observed data which may have an impact on health.

So, looking at the individual items, first of all, concerning the ambient radiation dose, as our colleague from MEXT explained earlier, for areas within the 20km radius of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, such data has been published anew, and we added this as part of our evaluation of the monitoring results. And, as he said, higher spatial radiation dose rates appear to be observed in the northwestern regions of the plant. However, none to the level that would have a negative impact on health.

Second is dust samplings in the air. For iodine, there was a slight increase, but for cesium 137, no cesium was detected in the dust samplings.

Fourth is environmental samples. The surface of the sea, plus the lower layers, plus dust above the sea were measured, and cesium 137 and iodine 131 were either not detected or were about the same levels as previously.

Next is environmental radioactivity level surveys by prefecture. For drinking water, which is the second item, for iodine, the iodine measurements have come down, but for radioactive cesium, there has been a slight increase, but they are all below the maximum allowable limits for ingestion or consumption. So those are the results of the evaluation.

Next, moving on to the other document I have prepared. Yesterday and the day before, the 24th Extraordinary Meeting of the Nuclear Safety Commission was held. Let me briefly outline the agenda. Chief Cabinet Secretary Mr. Edano made several announcements yesterday, and he talked about the evacuation zone for Fukushima Daini Nuclear Power Station being reduced from 10km to 8km. Also, for Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, the areas within the 20km radius from the plant, which had been designated an evacuation zone, will be newly designated to a legally binding off-limits zone or caution zone based on law. Of course, they will be receiving advice from the NSC on the designation of these zones, so that is why the NSC held extraordinary

meetings yesterday and the day before, to provide technical advice to the government. And the agenda, as is written here, this is very legal terminology being used, so it is difficult to understand, but the content is what I have just explained. The materials used as the basis for the discussion at the meetings can be viewed from the NSC's webpage, so please do refer to the webpage.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you very much Mr. Shinano. Next is Mr. Eiichi Yokota from MHLW.

Mr. Yokota: Thank you. Good afternoon. Yesterday MHLW received a series of the results of the tests of the food samples from 11 local governments. We have received reports on the testing of raw milk, agricultural produce and other products. Altogether we have received reports on 62 samples tested. You will note that they are all below the provisional limits, so we do not recognize any problem. For your reference we have included in the back of the package the accumulated sum of the past findings.

Also, at the very end we have the list of instructions associated with food by the Director-General of the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters. Those entail the new changes effected. Raw milk from a part of Fukushima and also spinach from a part of Tochigi – the shipments that have been restricted are now lifted. The restriction has been lifted. Thank you

Mr. Kaji: Next from MLIT, Mr. Kaoru Shoji.

Mr. Shoji: Our minister has made an announcement on the radiation measurements at ports in Japan. Please refer to the MLIT information. Export containers and ships will be subject to radiation measurement and it talks about how we are going to issue the attestation document. The attestation document will be issued by a public entity in Japan.

In addition, we will also be posting the results of the atmosphere and sea water radiation measurement in ports. We have provided such information in the past too, but to ensure the reliability of the ships and containers that are shipped out of Japanese ports, we have added this new measure. Thank you.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you Mr. Shoji. One correction from Mr. Shinano from the NSC.

Mr. Shinano: Yes, thank you. I talked about the evaluation of the radiation monitoring results. I may have used an expression that may invite some misunderstanding. I did not mean to say that it will not harm any residents within 20km, rather I was talking about outside the 20km zone that it will not harm human health. So it is not within the 20km but outside it, because within the 20km zone, people are advised to stay out, to evacuate, so I was referring to the area outside of the 20km zone.

Mr. Kaji: The last person is from MOFA, Mr. Takeshi Matsunaga.

Mr. Matsunaga: Thank you, Mr. Kaji. Today I would like to report to you about the meeting between the prime ministers of Japan and Australia, Mr. Kan and Ms. Gillard. Yesterday I explained to you about the courtesy call of the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Matsumoto, on Prime Minister Gillard. After the courtesy call, last evening, the two Prime Ministers had a discussion. Two of the focuses at the meeting were earthquake and tsunami, and the other was nuclear safety.

I would like to first explain about the discussion about earthquake and tsunami at the meeting. At the meeting, Prime Minister Kan expressed the sincere gratitude on behalf of the government of Japan for the assistance provided by Australia. Prime Minister Kan emphasized Japan's determination to overcome the recent tragedy and revitalize Japan, with a view to creating a new future. Prime Minister Gillard expressed solidarity with Japan and she also emphasized the Australian government's confidence in Japan's ability to recover quickly and to continue to play a strong and active role in the international community and global economy.

Next, the other focus at the meeting was nuclear safety. In that respect Prime Minister Kan expressed his determination to resolve the situation at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and confirmed that Japan would continue to provide information to the international community with maximum transparency, in relation to the response to the accident, as well as on the safety of Japanese products. In that regard, he called for measured responses from the international community based on sufficient scientific evidence. He also expressed his determination to thoroughly review the accident of the nuclear power plant in due course and to share these experiences gained from the accident with the international community. The two prime ministers recognized the need to enhance their cooperation with the IAEA to globally strengthen the safety standards of nuclear power generation.

Among other focuses at the meeting, the outcome of the meeting was summarized in the joint-statement the two prime ministers issued after the meeting. That's all from me. Thank you.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you very much, Mr. Matsunaga. Now we would like to open the floor to take your questions. Please?

QUESTION (Mr. Lloyd Parry, The Times): Yesterday the government announced that it will begin to legally enforce the 25km evacuation zone because this is judged essential to protect the health of people who might go in there. Why has this decision been made now? In other words, why has the government, for six weeks, allowed people to endanger their health by returning to the area? And the second question. There have been reports that MEXT is to raise the maximum levels of radiation allowed annually for children. How can this be justified? Why is there one standard during normal times and a different standard during the emergency when radiation is actually being emitted?

Mr. Nishiyama: Up to now, these regions have already been subjected to the instructions of the government for evacuation. Therefore the people who have gone back to this area, or people who had stayed in this area have been pulled out, and are exceptional people who did not follow the instructions of the government so far. The announcement this time has been based on the judgment by the government that if this situation continues, it would not be for the benefit of the region as a whole and it would disadvantage such individuals, who would enter these areas, because if they come out of these areas, the radiation contamination of these individuals may affect other people outside of this area. Therefore such a decision had been made.

Concerning the timeliness of the announcement and the judgment made by the government, I believe there will be diversified opinions, but I believe that the basic principle of these instructions to be given is first of all to resort to measures that would not restrict the freedom of the residents living in these areas, which means that it did not have a legal forcing effect. However looking at the surrounding situation and the circumstances, there has been a decision reached, to implement measures that would have legally binding force.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you very much, Mr. Nishiyama. The second question is going to be covered by Mr. Kawarada from MEXT.

Mr. Kawarada: Around the time the school semester is being resumed, we have been reviewing the radiation level that needs to be applied to the school children. We have consulted with the Fukushima prefectural government – we being the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters at MEXT – and have consulted with the governor of Fukushima Prefecture and the Fukushima prefectural government to finalize this standard to be applied.

So what you have heard is the announcement that was made concerning this criterion which refers to the criteria that has been established by ICRP and IAEA for nuclear emergency situations, which is 20 to 100mSv per year. There is another criterion that is to be applied after the nuclear emergency situation is placed under control, and that is 1 to 20mSv per year, so we have adopted this criterion of 20mSv and have monitored the spatial dose rate so it would surely be below this criterion of 20mSv per year.

If the area and the school is below this 20mSv per year criteria, we have recommended that they can continue their normal schooling activities. However, in areas where the radiation level is very close to that limit of 20mSv, we have recommended that careful monitoring shall be continued so that the radiation level will be carefully watched. So that was the gist of the announcement made by MEXT recently.

QUESTION (Mr. Lloyd Parry, The Times): Sorry, could I just follow up with a follow-up question for Mr. Nishiyama? Thank you for your answer. I still don't understand why it is justified to pose restrictions on freedom of movement this week, but it wasn't a good idea to do that in the first few days after the disaster, when presumably radiation levels were higher?

Mr. Nishiyama: In the first few days after the accident, indeed the radiation dose must have been relatively high, so by providing information that there needs to be evacuation in the peripheral area, I believe the residents naturally wanted to evacuate under such an emergency situation and there was very little need to force these people to come out of these areas. So as long as we provided that an evacuation would be required, we believed that there was very little need to constrain the freedom or limit the freedom of movement of these people, because naturally they would like to go out of these regions.

However, the situation has changed recently since the radiation level in these areas has come to be stabilized, and one outcome of these stabilized radiation levels was that there were some incidents of theft reported in these regions. Of course there had been some people who used to live in this area who would go back home to get their belongings, but overall the security situation of these regions had been deteriorated. Therefore a judgment has been made, that at this current point in time there needs to be a measure taken which has coercive effects.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you very much, Mr. Nishiyama. Next question please. Go ahead.

QUESTION (Ms. Lee, Hong Kong Phoenix TV): I have a question for Mr. Nishiyama. One has to do with the currently ongoing work to remove the highly contaminated radioactive water from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. I understand that the work is being facilitated. Still, it is being reported that it will take at least a month. So at this current point in time, it has been pointed out in some reports that there is the possibility of this high radiation level contaminated water being leaked into the sea. Have you identified the root of the leakage of this water into the sea? Is there a measure or a way to really identify the leakage of this contaminated water into the sea? The second question has to do with ground water. There have been reports that ground water with high radiation levels under Unit 2 may be leaking into the sea. What is the situation concerning this ground water leakage possibility?

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, to answer your question concerning water which is contaminated at a high radiation level, we are currently moving this water to the radioactive waste treatment facility and the leakage of this contaminated water has already been stopped. Our view is that the leakage of this contaminated water is not going on.

Looking at the results of the monitoring, the result tells us that the radiation level is relatively high compared to normal times. However, if there is such a leakage of contaminated water going on, then the values should be much higher than what is currently monitored. Therefore, in terms of the monitoring of outcomes and also visibly confirming that there is no leakage, we believe that such an incident is not taking place.

Now concerning ground water, as you have pointed out, under Unit 2, the ground water under the so-called sub-drain had a relatively high concentration level.

However, the movement and the speed of the ground water flow is quite slow. Monitoring the well that would have access to the ground water, so far we have not detected any radioactive contamination of the ground water. Therefore, I believe that we do not see any possibility of such contaminated ground water to be leaked and released into the sea.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you very much, Mr. Nishiyama.

QUESTION (Ms. Lee, Hong Kong Phoenix TV): A follow-up question please. You said that contaminated ground water would not be released into the sea, however, there are views that the contaminated water that was reported to have been released into the sea in past had originated from ground water. What are the grounds or evidence for you to say that there would be no leakage of contaminated ground water into the sea?

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, the contaminated water that was leaking into the sea in the past in Unit 2, which was reported to be the contaminated water from the pit is considered to have gone through the gravel and the layers of sand and gravel in the ground below the turbine building and the trench.

Therefore, rather than having suspicion of the contaminated ground water being the source of the leakage of contaminated water in the past, we have identified these roots for the water to flow under the ground level, which seemed to be the passage of this contaminated water. So it is not the case that radioactive contamination had filtered through the soil underground into the ground water. As a result of carrying out investigation of the geology of the surrounding area, we have learned already that the flow of ground water in the vicinity is very slow.

Mr. Kaji: Next question please.

QUESTION (Mr. Wang, Xinhua News Agency): My question is for Mr. Nishiyama. It seems that earthquakes just keep jilting Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and its vicinity, but do you think they will be a threat to the reactors at the plant? What

additional measures will be taken to handle these earthquakes and their impact, let alone the typhoons in the summer?

Mr. Nishiyama: Thank you. As far as the emergency preparedness and measures against possible earthquakes is concerned, we have asked all the nuclear power stations throughout the country to take necessary measures to be completed by the end of the month, so that even if there is a major earthquake or tsunami, just like the ones that hit the Fukushima nuclear power stations, and even if there is a loss of the power supply and the cooling system, there would be no damage to the spent fuel as well as the fuel rods.

As far as the mid-term measures to ensure safety is concerned, we currently have a guideline to ensure the safety of nuclear power stations at the time of an earthquake or a tsunami. We shall incorporate in this guideline the experience we had from the major earthquake and tsunami this time, so that by implementing the provisions of the guideline we can ensure the safety of nuclear power stations. So we will ensure that all nuclear power stations will satisfy the requirements laid out in these guidelines.

At the time of a typhoon, the building strength and the intensity of the buildings of the nuclear power stations are designed in a way that they will fully endure the force of a typhoon, based on the data of typhoons in Japan historically and it is possible to adjust and fine tune the operations of the nuclear power stations to ensure the safety of the nuclear power plant at the time of a typhoon.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you. Maybe one last question? Go ahead.

QUESTION (Ms. Lee, Hong Kong Phoenix TV): I have a question to the representative from the NSC concerning the disclosure of data from SPEEDI, the system that makes use of massive amounts of the government budget. Since 11 March, the only disclosure made of SPEEDI data was on 23 March and 5 April, so why do you not frequently release the data that has been simulated by SPEEDI? What are your plans to disclose the plan in the future.

Mr. Shinano: SPEEDI is a system to evaluate the possible dissipation of radioactive material by entering the data of the direction of the wind and the topography in the region, based on how much radioactive material, and when and how it was released.

However, this time, because of the tsunami and the blackout at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station we were not able to obtain data concerning the source of emission and how much was released originally. Therefore, with the lack of such data, which has to be the basis of the analysis by SPEEDI, this SPEEDI system was not able to implement its original function.

What we did this time was, based on the environmental monitoring data that was observed in the surrounding areas of the nuclear power station, we back-calculated, in other words we did some reverse mathematics to calculate the possible radioactive material released from the nuclear power station and made an estimation of the distribution of radioactive substances in the surrounding areas.

As I have explained at the outset, SPEEDI is originally a system to forecast. However, the data that was released two times up to now is not the forecast for the radioactive material dissipation in the future. Rather, it was the possible distribution of radioactive material in the vicinity based on the monitoring results of that area.

Therefore, there are some limitations imposed on the use of these systems, and what we are doing right now is to improve the precision and accuracy of the calculation as much as possible, so that if we have a high level of accuracy of the calculation by this system, the SPEEDI system would be capable of exercising its original function or something close to its original function. We would like, as much as possible, to publicize that data, which would be useful. That is what we are expecting.

Mr. Kaji: Thank you very much. We would like to close today's briefing. Thank you very much for your attendance.