

OPENING REMARKS BY H.E. MR NAOTO KAN
PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN
AT THE MDGS FOLLOW-UP MEETING

2 JUNE 2011

TOKYO

I would first like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the fact that more than 300 participants from over 100 countries and 20 international organizations have gathered here at this MDGs Follow-up Meeting today. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank for the warm words of sympathy and generous assistance extended by our friends in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake. We have never been more grateful for the bonds between people as well as between countries. We, the people of Japan, will never forget the warm consideration extended to us. I would like to express my sincere gratitude once again.

Last September I attended the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Summit. What I highlighted at the Summit was that it is important for people around the world to unite under the single and explicit set of goals compiled as the MDGs in tackling international challenges such as poverty.

At the Summit I also presented my vision of the "least unhappiness society," explaining that the role of political leaders is, first and foremost, to minimize as far as possible the sources of such misery. I believe that political leaders should strain their ears to detect the smaller, weaker voices of the vulnerable, which are often silenced by bigger voices. This vision coincides with the concept of human security, which lies high on the global agenda.

Based on this philosophy, I announced Japan's contribution as the "Kan Commitment," which consisted of assistance in the health sector to save people's lives and assistance in the education sector to foster the future of children.

Through such measures, Japan will provide the utmost assistance to

realize in the world “caring societies” that are considerate of each individual and “robust societies” where people can explore a bright future on their own feet.

However, we are still only halfway towards meeting these goals. In order to attain the MDGs by 2015, it is of vital importance to accelerate the international drive to this end. From this perspective, I emphasized at the MDGs Summit the importance of following up on the progress made and proposed hosting an international conference. Although it has been only a short while since the Great East Japan Earthquake, I am pleased that we are able to hold today’s conference as originally planned. I hope you will take this decision as the expression of Japan’s resolve to continue playing an active role in the international endeavor to achieve the MDGs.

At this Follow-up Meeting I understand that you will have detailed discussions on the progress made particularly in the field of health and education and on concrete measures to be taken for achieving the goals. I strongly hope that you will make the most of this opportunity to focus international efforts on the period remaining before 2015 and to make significant contributions to attaining the MDGs.

As I stated earlier, the people of Japan experienced the cordial “bonds” (Kizuna) with the international community. This has made Japan all the more determined to act with the rest of the world and contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. Thus, I hereby reconfirm my unwavering determination to continue to faithfully implement the international commitments we have made, including the “Kan Commitment.”

At the same time, the achievement of the MDGs will become possible only when the international community works together. Thus, I call for concerted efforts by all of you here—various partners from developing, developed, and emerging countries, international organizations, civil society and the private sector.

Before concluding, I would like to express, once again, our profound appreciation for the “strong bonds” (Kizuna) and “cordial friendship” extended to us by all of you and the other members of the international community. So

how can we genuinely reciprocate such bonds and friendship?

I believe there is only one thing we can do.

The only way is for us to get through this time of difficulty and regenerate Japan into an even better country. It is to make Japan a country that can contribute even more to the international community. I am convinced that this is the way to truly return the favor.

Everyone in Japan wishes to repay the act of friendship in this manner.

I conclude my remarks by reiterating my heartfelt welcome to you all.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.