

10 Years Since the Great East Japan Earthquake

10 years ago on March 11, 2011, Japan was struck by an unprecedented disaster. In the Great East Japan Earthquake, more than 20,000 lives were lost from the earthquake and tsunami. The processing of the accident at the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station is still ongoing to this day.

Immediately after the earthquake struck, Japan received countless amounts of support and encouragement from all over the world. In addition to receiving relief supplies and monetary contributions from many countries and regions, people from around the world also rushed to the affected areas to help search for missing persons and provide support to those who were in need. Many Japanese people felt a strong bond ("kizuna") with countries and regions around the world.

10 years after, there are still residents who are living in evacuation shelters, and challenges remain in the path toward reconstruction. However, the affected areas are steadily moving forward through reconstruction support, and their bonds with the world are becoming stronger than ever before.

For example, import restrictions on Japanese food products, imposed by 55 countries and regions after the TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station accident, have been removed by 41 countries and regions as of the end of 2021. The volume of agricultural, forestry, and fishery exports from Fukushima Prefecture returned to pre-earthquake levels in 2017 and has since recorded historical highs for three consecutive years. (See Chapter 3, Section 3, 4(3) on page 300 for details on the import restrictions placed by each country on Japanese food products.) It is extremely regrettable that there are still countries and regions maintaining import restrictions

on Japanese food products even a decade after the disaster. MOFA is requesting these countries and regions remove the restrictions as soon as possible based on scientific evidence, as well as working toward expanding the export of Japan's agricultural, forestry and fishery products.

Efforts are also ongoing to develop hubs for international intellectual exchanges and business, as well as hubs that can serve as the source for innovation. This includes the Fukushima Hydrogen Energy Research Field, a research and development center for hydrogen and renewable energy.

Furthermore, over the past 10 years, Japan has utilized the lessons drawn from the Great East Japan Earthquake toward further strengthening international cooperation on disaster risk reduction (DRR), which it had already placed great importance on since before the disaster. In 2015, Japan hosted the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction*¹ in Sendai where it advanced the concept of "build back better" as a commitment shared by the international community. Japan contributed to incorporating the vision of DRR into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Japan also took the initiative for the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on World Tsunami Awareness Day in the same year, thus endeavoring to promote DRR education internationally. In recent years, natural disasters have become more intense, with extreme weather events becoming more frequent due to climate change. In light of this, Japan is working to further strengthen international cooperation through DRR.

The following is an introduction to various initiatives implemented by MOFA in 2021 to mark the 10 years since the Great East Japan Earthquake.

1

Statement by the Foreign Minister, and Commemorative Events Held in Countries/Regions Worldwide

On March 11, 2021, which marked 10 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake struck, the Foreign Minister issued a statement*² to convey the status of steady reconstruction progress in the affected areas, as well as to express gratitude to countries and regions around the world. Commemorative events marking 10 years after

the earthquake were also held in 2021 in countries and regions that have sent their warm support and encouragement to Japan from the time immediately after the earthquake till the present day. (See the Column on pages 331, 332 or 333.)

1 Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
https://www.mofa.go.jp/ic/gic/page3e_000305.html

2 Statement by the Foreign Minister
https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000178.html



COLUMN

Commemorative Events to Convey Gratitude and Messages of Friendship to Countries/Regions Around the World

- A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed

(1) Report from Japanese Diplomatic Missions in the U.S.

In March, Japanese diplomatic missions in the U.S. came together as one to hold a series of events to express Japan's gratitude to the U.S., which has provided a lot of support toward reconstruction and recovery since the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The events adopted "Unshakable Friendship" as their common slogan. This slogan resonated with many people and was widely used across U.S. government agencies, renowned organizations, and the general public. Video messages expressing gratitude from those in the affected areas and embassy staff were played a total of about 2 million times and shared widely.^{Note1} In addition, on March 11, marking 10 years

since the disaster, a full-page advertisement was published in U.S. paper, The New York Times, with a message of gratitude for the support, including "Operation Tomodachi," conducted by the U.S.

Furthermore, the Japanese Embassy in the U.S. produced cherry blossom sculptures in cooperation with local artists, so as to express gratitude to the U.S. once again in the milestone decade since the Great East Japan Earthquake. In March, the sculptures were set up in Washington D.C. to coincide with the National Cherry Blossom Festival held in the springtime every year. After the exhibition was concluded, the sculptures were donated to universities that have deep ties with Japan and other relevant organizations, and have now become a familiar symbol of Japan's gratitude and Japan-U.S. friendship to many citizens.

The series of events were mainly held online due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Japan-U.S. friendship, which has continued throughout such difficult periods, truly embodies the saying "A friend in need is a friend indeed," and resonated with many people.



Logo for the common slogan



Social media postings by embassy staff expressing their gratitude to the U.S. (from the Instagram account of the Embassy of Japan in the United States of America)



Attendance by Ambassador Tomita (second from left in the photo) and others at the presentation ceremony of the cherry blossom sculpture to Randolph-Macon College in Virginia, the alma mater of Taylor Anderson who died in the tsunami. Ms. Anderson had been a teaching assistant at a school in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture, when the disaster struck.

Note1 See below for details on the "Unshakable Friendship" project
<https://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/events/unshakable-friendship.html>



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(2) Report from the Embassy of Japan in Australia

10 years have passed since the day that is remembered so vividly by the Japanese. Following the disaster, Japan was very fortunate to receive support from all over the world. Australia was among the countries that moved extremely quickly to provide assistance, beginning with then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard's visit to the Tohoku region immediately after the earthquake struck, and extending to the transportation of food and high-pressure water pumps by the Australian Defence Force, and search and rescue efforts by the police, fire and ambulance services. Australia's assistance was not limited to just emergency support. Since 2012, it has also been conducting a homestay program, inviting junior and senior high school students who lost one or both parents in the disaster to stay with families in Australia. This program has been conducted every year since, but has been temporarily suspended as of March 2022 due to the impact of COVID-19.

In April, with the aim of conveying Japan's gratitude, the Embassy of Japan in Australia invited about 200 Australians who had engaged in recovery efforts, including members of rescue teams engaged in emergency support and host families who hosted Japanese students to the Ambassador's residence. In her video message for the event, then-Prime Minister Gillard emphasized the stoicism and resilience she had observed among the survivors in the disaster areas. Those who had participated in homestays in Australia (senior high school students at the time of their homestays) kindly thanked their host families, while one of them stated in a matter-of-fact way that he has no memory of the first couple of years following the disaster. Guests to the event enjoyed food produced in the affected areas as well as quality Japanese sake from the Tohoku region. Australia does not currently impose any import restrictions on Japanese food produce. Its continued support immediately after the earthquake and thereafter speaks of the maturity of mutual understanding and trust between the two countries. In the opening remarks delivered at the reception, Ambassador Yamagami repeatedly stated that Japan will never forget what Australia has done for Japan.



Visit by Prime Minister Gillard to Minamisanriku Town (April 2011) (Photo: Minamisanriku Town)

2

Initiatives Implemented Through Diplomatic Missions Overseas

(Promoting the Attractions of Japan's Regions, Including the Disaster Areas, Promoting the Export of Products, Tourism Promotion, etc.)

MOFA has been implementing support initiatives through its diplomatic missions overseas, such as appealing countries and regions to lift import restrictions on Japanese food products, sharing the attractiveness of Japan's regions including the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, and promoting exports of prefectural products and tourism. In 2021, the appeal and characteristics of Japan's regions, including Fukushima Prefecture, were introduced overseas through initiatives such as the "Project to Support Overseas Presentations to Promote the Attractiveness of Regions" that was held mainly online in China (from December 2021 to February 2022), and an in-person reception that was held at the Consulate-General of Japan in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, in cooperation with Fukushima and other Prefectures (January 2021). The event booth at the Consulate-General of Japan in Ho Chi Minh City offered



Tasting booth for Japanese sake and whiskey produced in Fukushima Prefecture (Photo left center: Consul General Watanabe at Ho Chi Minh City) (January 29, official residence of the Consul General of Japan in Ho Chi Minh City)

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(3) Report from the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association

In the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, Japan received donations exceeding 20 billion yen and warm encouragement from our neighbor, Taiwan.

To convey Japan's gratitude once again at the milestone mark of 10 years after the earthquake, the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association held the Tohoku Friendship Special Exhibition in Taipei City in March for a 12-day period. About 20,000 people visited the exhibition, including President Tsai Ing-wen. The opening ceremony was attended by firefighters who engaged in rescue activities at the disaster areas soon after the earthquake struck, and they sent their cheers and encouragement to the areas affected by the disaster.

The exhibition included panels showing Ishinomaki Hibi Shimibun in the form of handwritten wall newspapers, produced on the day after the earthquake disaster, as well as displays of photographs showing scenes of reconstruction in Tohoku and colored paper with messages of thanks from many manga artists in Japan. Visitors looked intently video messages from people in the disaster areas speaking tearfully about how they would never forget the warm hands of Taiwanese volunteers who came to debris-filled towns even as everyone was trying to escape, and distributed relief supplies one by one to the people in need.

Over the past decade, Japan and Taiwan have helped each other whenever natural disasters have occurred. It was a heartwarming 12-day event that allowed both sides to reaffirm the deepening of the friendship between Japan and Taiwan through the circulation of goodwill.



Tohoku Friendship Special Exhibition (March, Taipei)

Japanese sake and whiskey produced in Fukushima Prefecture, which were well-received by the guests.

At Japan House London, which serves as a hub for strategic communications, an extra-large "Akabeko" (folk toy from Aizu region) was displayed within the premises

through cooperation with Fukushima Prefecture and the Fukushima Prefectural Association in London. "Akabeko" toys were also sold in the shop and featured on the website, and were well received (March 2021).

3 Cooperation with Foreign Media**(Dissemination of Accurate Information on the Safety of Japanese Food Products and the Status of Reconstruction)**

Through cooperation with foreign media, MOFA is making efforts to disseminate accurate information on the safety of Japanese food products and the status of reconstruction.

In 2021, through MOFA's cooperation with the media, Euronews (a European news network) produced a special program featuring efforts toward safety and security in the aftermath of the TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station accident (such as progress in decontamination, decommissioning efforts including handling of ALPS treated water,^{*3} reviews by the IAEA). While focusing on recovery efforts targeted at the local economy, the program also looked at Fukushima Prefecture



Press tour for foreign media in Tokyo (November 1 and 2, tour of TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station)

as it continued to work hard toward recovery amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The program was broadcasted and distributed in 13 languages. MOFA also cooperated with the media from the countries and regions that deployed rescue teams immediately after the earthquake on the press coverage of local governments and other parties that accepted overseas rescue teams.

Furthermore, through press tours, briefing sessions for foreign media in Tokyo, as well as invitation programs of journalists and TV crews from overseas, MOFA provides

the latest information and cooperates with media on such matters as the current status of TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, decommissioning work, efforts related to the handling of ALPS treated water, the safety of Japanese food products, and the status of reconstruction. In 2021, MOFA cooperated with a Turkish national broadcaster on press coverage related to the 10th anniversary of the earthquake, and conducted online briefings to about 60 members of the press from the ROK on the progress of reconstruction and other topics.

- 3 ALPS treated water is water that is processed by devices such as ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System) to ensure that radioactive materials other than tritium surely meet the regulatory standards for safety.

4 Study Tour to Koriyama Area (Visit to Fukushima by Diplomatic Corps in Japan)

In November 2021, MOFA and Koriyama City in Fukushima Prefecture co-hosted a study tour to the Koriyama collaborative core urban area for diplomatic corps stationed in Japan. Diplomatic corps from 13 countries participated in the tour. Through sampling of food and visits to agricultural sites, they gained a real sense of the reconstruction of Fukushima Prefecture 10 years after the earthquake. They also experienced the attractions of the Koriyama collaborative core urban area as an agglomeration of cutting-edge medical technology, and deepened their understanding of the cur-

rent state of Fukushima Prefecture through interactions with the local residents. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Uesugi Kentaro welcomed the diplomatic corps to Fukushima Prefecture, and expressed his hopes that the participants will actively communicate their experiences on the tour to their home countries and to the world. The Parliamentary Vice-Minister added that he looks forward to seeing Fukushima's attractiveness be conveyed widely across the world through the tour participants.



Participants visiting a strawberry farm in Fukushima Prefecture (November 26, Sukagawa City)



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Uesugi exchanging greetings with participants on the tour of Fukushima Prefecture (November 25, Koriyama City)

5 Production of Videos on Japan's Policies (Providing Accurate Information on the Situation in the Disaster-Affected Areas and the Initiatives by the Government of Japan)

MOFA is working to ensure that the international community gains a proper understanding of the earthquake disaster and the status of reconstruction by providing accurate information on the situation of the affected areas and the initiatives by the Government of Japan, thereby eliminating reputational damage as well as restoring and improving Japan's image. In 2021, MOFA has released a video showing Tohoku as it continues to

make progress toward recovery, featuring the interactions at the time and afterwards between people from the countries and regions that had provided support to the affected areas and people from the affected areas who had received support. MOFA has also released a video on the current situation in Fukushima as it moves forward on reconstruction, introducing its rich resources for tourism such as nature, food, culture, and local

industries. With regard to the progress on the decommissioning of the TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, a video was released in July, featuring interviews with Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and another expert, to convey that Japan's handling of ALPS treated water is in line with international practices and it is safe and feasible.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, held from July to September 2021, was regarded as the "Recovery and Reconstruction Games." MOFA communicated with the rest of the world about the attractions and exchanges of "Arigato" Host Towns for Supporting Reconstruction, through the production of videos featuring influencers to promote the attractiveness of Host Towns.



"Fukushima's progress on safety and reconstruction" (released on YouTube on July 28, 2021)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ld3e1ik_GH4
 (English version)



6 Strengthening Cooperation with the International Community in the Area of Nuclear Safety

In November, the IAEA held a five-day experts' conference (in hybrid format) in Vienna on the occasion of 10 years after the TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station accident.

The purpose of this conference was to reflect on the lessons and experiences drawn from the actions taken by the respective countries and international organizations throughout the decade after the earthquake disaster, and to identify pathways for further strengthening nuclear safety in the future. It was attended by regulatory authorities, power utilities, nuclear experts, and academia from various countries, who engaged in lively exchanges of views.

Following opening remarks by IAEA Director General Grossi, Ambassador Hikiyama Takeshi, Permanent Representative of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna, delivered remarks in which he noted the importance of strengthening nuclear safety and introduced the status of nuclear safety initiatives in Japan. He also spoke about Japan's contributions toward strengthen-

ing global nuclear safety in cooperation with the IAEA, alongside Japan's continued efforts to realize nuclear safety.

At the special session of the conference on ALPS treated water, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Hagiuda Koichi presented a video message in which he explained the Basic Policy on handling of ALPS treated water at the TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, and stated that Japan will work to widely disseminate the results of reviews conducted by the IAEA on the safety of ALPS treated water.

In addition, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Nuclear Energy Agency (OECD/NEA) released a report in March, titled "Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident, Ten Years On: Progress, Lessons and Challenges." This report introduces the activities that the OECD/NEA has been engaged in with the international community after the accident, and proposes future activities for the international cooperation program.