

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan,
at the High Level Segment
of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction**
March 14, 2015
Sendai, Japan

Madame President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Four years have passed since the occurrence of the Great East Japan Earthquake, which caused unprecedented damage. I am honored to host the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction here in Sendai, which is showing signs of vigorous reconstruction from the disaster, with the cooperation of the UN and national governments.

I have visited the disaster-affected areas almost every month since I assumed my position as Prime Minister. I have listened to the voices of the many local people who say, “We want to build a society that is resilient to disasters, and we want to build a hometown that is better than before the earthquake.”

Starting from this earnest wishes, Japan is working on the reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake based on the idea of “Build Back Better,” which aims not simply to recover the same situation that existed prior to the disaster, but rather build a society that is more resilient to disasters than before.

We are working to build disaster-resilient communities, including through the relocation of residential quarters to safer areas, strengthening seawalls, the development of evacuation routes and evacuation buildings, and thorough disaster risk reduction education and training.

In the wake of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake 20 years ago, many lives were lost due to collapsed houses and fires. Japan worked

on further strengthening the institutions on earthquake-resistance and seismic isolation based on the lessons learned from that event.

We are now working on further investment in disaster risk reduction based on the lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station.

It is necessary to take a thorough hands-on approach and collaborate with local governments, private companies, non-governmental organizations, research institutes, and the media to realize fine-tuned reconstruction in a way that takes into consideration the sensitivities of disaster victims. Furthermore, it is important to support the life of the people affected by the disaster in cooperation with the businesses and enterprises that generate local dynamism, and the non-profit organizations that support local communities.

Those who faced the most difficult circumstances in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake were women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. We address disaster risk reduction by paying attention to these people and with their active participation. We attach importance to this approach to disaster risk reduction based on the notion of human security.

Japan, as a country that has accumulated knowledge and technology for disaster risk reduction through experiencing numerous natural disasters, has promoted cooperation to reduce the number of disaster victims, as well as their suffering, as much as possible in the international community. To advance this contribution even more vigorously, I hereby announce the “Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction.”

With this initiative, Japan will implement cooperation for disaster risk reduction special to Japan that effectively combines three approaches: (i) non-material assistance, such as human resource development and institutional development, (ii) material assistance

centering on the development of quality infrastructure, and (iii) the promotion of global and region-wide cooperation.

For this purpose, in the coming four years, Japan will provide cooperation amounting to 4 billion US dollars. And Japan will train 40 thousand government officials and local leaders to play a leading role in national efforts for disaster risk reduction and post-disaster “Build Back Better.”

Disaster risk reduction is the most important challenge for both developed and developing countries. For developing countries in particular, where 90% of disaster victims are concentrated, disaster risk reduction is a great challenge with a view toward sustainable development and adaptation to climate change. It is therefore necessary to give top priority to disaster risk reduction toward the post-2015 development agenda and the formulation of the new framework of climate change, namely promote the “mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction” in the world.

Madame President,

I would like to renew my appreciation for the assistance extended from all over the world since the occurrence of the Great East Japan Earthquake four years ago. Thanks to this assistance also, reconstruction is making a rapid progress. I hope you will take this opportunity to witness the vigorous reconstruction of Tohoku.

Disaster risk reduction is indeed an effort of mutual assistance. To return the favor, Japan will contribute to the international community with our knowledge and technology. Let me conclude my statement by promising to further advance our cooperation for disaster risk reduction based on Japan’s new cooperation initiative for disaster risk reduction as well as Sendai Declaration and the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, which will be adopted at this Conference.

Thank you for your attention.