



CABINET OFFICE

**Statement by Mr. Shozo Azuma,
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At the Opening Ceremony
of the Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**

10 May 2011

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Honoured International Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by congratulating the group on the opening of the third session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. I also want to express my gratitude to the secretariat that put so much effort in organizing the session.

On 11 March, nearly two months ago, an earthquake of the strongest-ever magnitude of 9.0 occurred in Japan. This brought on the disaster we are now calling the Great East Japan Earthquake: a complex disaster of an earthquake, a tsunami, and a nuclear power plant accident. More than 25,000 people are dead or missing.

The Japanese government promptly responded to this mega disaster. I myself was dispatched to the affected area on the very day. Since then, I have been responsible for the investigation of damages and the coordination with the local governments.

The devastation in the affected area was beyond words. The inundation spreads more than 561 square kilometres, an area as large as Lake Geneva. Houses and industrial bases were literally washed away in the coastal towns. One hundred thirty thousand people still remain at the evacuation shelters. The government is taking every possible measure for the recovery of the lives and livelihoods of these people.

Aid was provided from the people around the world, including more than 20,000 personnel deployed by the United States Forces in Japan and 24 search and rescue teams

dispatched by countries from Asia to Africa. This outpouring of support and solidarity encouraged the people of Japan. I sincerely express my gratitude to the kind support from the international community on behalf of the government of Japan.

Regarding the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Station, we have mobilized all available resources for bringing the situation under control at the earliest possible date. Specifically, in response to the government instructions, the operator Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) released a “Roadmap towards Restoration from the Accident at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station.” The government will conduct regular follow-up to ensure safe and appropriate implementation of the steps indicated in the roadmap and to achieve required safety. Moreover, the government has taken every possible measure to ensure the safety of all food and other products, based on strict scientific criteria. We will continue our efforts to maintain transparency and provide accurate information in a prompt manner. Let me clarify that, except for the areas adjacent to the power plant, there is no influence of radiation and people live their lives as usual.

Sixteen years ago, Japan was severely hit by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Ten years later, we hosted the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Hyogo Prefecture, which had brilliantly recovered from the disaster. The then-adopted “Hyogo Framework for Action” has been the global milestone for disaster risk reduction.

The scale of the current disaster far exceeds that of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and the reconstruction process may take a longer time. We believe, however, that it is our obligation to share with the international community the lessons learned through this painful experience and through our efforts to rebuild a resilient society, so that we can repay the kindness offered to us from all over the world.

For this reason, Japan will reinforce its support to UNISDR and to Asian countries through the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre and other institutes and promote the implementation of the Hyogo Framework during the latter half of the term until 2015.

Moreover, we strive to contribute to the formation of a new policy framework, which should consider such emerging issues as climate change adaptation and the lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake. Although Japan must carefully monitor the progress of this complex disaster and other issues, it is ready to host the third World

Conference on Disaster Reduction to further promote international cooperation in disaster risk reduction. For the preparation, Japan is planning to organise a high-level international conference in Japan next year in order to share the experiences and lessons of the large-scale disasters that arose frequently in the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can promise you that Japan will fully recover from the disaster. I express my gratitude again to all the representatives from the member states, regions, and international organizations, and know that this meeting will be an important step towards a safer world against all natural hazards.