

Minister Gemba's Speech at a Reception in Commemoration of the Great East Japan Earthquake

March 12, 2012

Most of the people who are here today, including many ambassadors I believe, must have been also present at yesterday's ceremony. I decided to host this reception in memory of the victims and also out of my gratitude to all of you.

Once again, I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to the victims. Yesterday, we heard some bereaved family members talk about the loss of their loved ones. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our renewed gratitude from the bottom of my heart to the people who are with us here today and to the international community for their truly warm support to us. This great earthquake gave us an opportunity to reconfirm "kizuna" or the bond of friendship that we have with you. We in the Japanese Government have renewed our determination to proactively promote international cooperation, certainly including ODA.

We had an unprecedented disaster, with an earthquake, tsunami and a nuclear power plant accident put together. We have been on a steady path to recovery and reconstruction from such an unprecedented disaster, although I admit that there are differing views on this.

We intend to achieve, by all means, the sort of rebirth that will be based on a solid vision for reconstruction which serves as an anchor and a firm objective so that we can make the disaster-stricken areas, including Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate prefectures, even better places.

I would like to ask you for a special favor. It is about addressing reputational damages. Take, for example, Aizu region, a sightseeing spot in Fukushima Prefecture which happens to be the constituency of Mr. Kozo Watanabe here, who will say a few words later. The district's radiation dose is 0.08 microsievert to 0.14 microsievert per hour. Some of you may be aware that it is the same dose of radiation that is registered, say in our neighbor city Seoul or in New York City. I would greatly appreciate it if you could help our efforts by relaxing various restrictions.

I have one more thing to tell you. We would like to gather wisdom around the world to the affected areas, and disseminate initiatives taken in the disaster-affected areas to the world. We are planning to host a number of international conferences in these areas, including a High-Level International Conference on Large-Scale Natural Disasters to

be held on July 3 and 4. We are considering holding the conference primarily in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, as well as in other cities in Fukushima and Iwate prefectures, namely 3 disaster-hit prefectures. Through the conference, I'd like you to witness ongoing reconstruction efforts and the process of creating a "resilient society."

Today, once again, I'd like to express my wholehearted gratitude to all of you here for your support given so far in with the aftermath of 3/11. We have various panels and videos here for you to see today. These show our reconstruction efforts and I wish you will bring what you have seen back home. I would like to extend my warm thanks to all of you for being with us today. Thank you very much.