

Japan-EU Inter-parliamentary Conference

Remarks by Mr. Masayoshi Yoshino,

Minister for Reconstruction

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of the House of Representatives)

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I am Masayoshi Yoshino, Minister for Reconstruction. Thank you for giving me this precious opportunity.

There are three messages that I want to share with you today.

First, reconstruction is moving steadily ahead.

Second, the food in Japan is safe.

And third, we want many people in Europe to come to the Tohoku region and taste its specialties.

1. March 11, 2011

On March 11, 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake struck Japan, and the coastal areas of the Tohoku region, including Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima, suffered extensive damage from the tsunami. Simultaneously, the nuclear power station accident happened causing significant damage especially in Fukushima Prefecture.

My home in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture, was also

damaged by the tsunami.

2. Gratitude for support provided by the international community

Immediately after the disaster until now, more than 160 countries and regions, many of which were European countries and international organizations, have provided us with various forms of assistance.

Japanese in the affected areas—myself included—were able to push ahead for reconstruction thanks to such assistance. Again, I would like to express my sincere gratitude.

3. Current state of reconstruction

Reconstruction is moving steadily ahead. Infrastructure in the disaster-affected areas has mostly been restored and the number of evacuees, which was 470,000 at its peak, is currently in the order of 60,000.

4. Reconstruction from the nuclear accident

Immediately after the accident at the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, the dispersal of radioactive substances led to evacuation orders being issued in 11 municipalities surrounding the Power Station. Currently, decontamination, radioactivity attenuation and natural

factors have resulted in the air dose rates within an 80-kilometer radius of the Power Station decreasing by about 74% since November 2011.

Fukushima Prefecture is about 130 times larger than the City of Paris. Of this, the areas under evacuation orders is 370 square kilometers, about 3.5 times larger than Paris. In most of Fukushima Prefecture, normal life is being conducted.

This slide shows the comparison of air dose rates in various places in the world. We can see that the rates in major cities in Fukushima Prefecture do not differ much from many cities around the world.

The rate in Iwaki City, my home town, which is within the 50-kilometer radius from the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, is almost the same as the rates in Paris and Berlin.

5. Damages caused by negative reputation

The biggest challenge in promoting reconstruction in areas affected by the disaster, particularly Fukushima Prefecture, is the elimination of the negative reputation associated with the nuclear accident.

Safety is ensured for Japan's agricultural, forestry and fishery products through thorough testing for radioactive substances and thorough production and distribution management based on this testing.

Moreover, Japan's standard limits for radioactive substances in food are the strictest levels in the world. Necessary measures are in place to ensure that foods are not distributed in the market if testing confirms that a standard limit has been exceeded.

The standard limit in Japan is that general foods that exceed the limit of 100 Becquerels per kilogram are not released on the market.

In comparison, the upper limit set in the EU is 1,250 Becquerels per kilogram.

Speaking of standard limits for radioactive substances contained in the food produced in Japan, the figures for vegetables, tea, and livestock products have not exceeded the standard limits for the past five years, since fiscal year 2013.

No bags of rice produced in Fukushima Prefecture have exceeded the standard limits since 2015.

As for marine products of Fukushima Prefecture, test operations and their surveys are conducted by the Prefecture. According to the results of the surveys, the proportion of marine products of Fukushima Prefecture exceeding standard limits has also been zero percent since April 2015.

Japan's food monitoring has also been evaluated as appropriate by the IAEA and FAO.

Fukushima Prefecture is an area that produces safe and tasty foods.

Its peaches are especially well known. Peach juices produced in Fukushima Prefecture is provided for you during today's coffee break. Please enjoy.

I hope that the consumers in Europe would also experience delicious foods in Fukushima Prefecture. In this regard, I am grateful of the EU's easing of the import regulations last December.

6. Invitation to visit Tohoku

The Tohoku region is full of touristic appeal, such as natural beauty, historic legacies, local cuisine and sake.

Kamaishi City in Iwate Prefecture will host one of the venues for the 2019 Rugby World Cup.

And during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games baseball and softball events are going to be held in Fukushima Prefecture and soccer events in Miyagi Prefecture.

I hope that many people in Europe will take these opportunities to visit the Tohoku region and experience its appeal first-hand.

Knowing the current state of reconstruction and experiencing the attractiveness of the region and its foods will help push forward the recovery process from the Earthquake. It is my hope that the members of the European Parliament will have an opportunity to visit Tohoku region.

Thank you.

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