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Remarks by Minister Masayoshi Yoshino

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Thank you for giving me this precious opportunity.

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

First is that reconstruction is moving steadily ahead.

Second is that food in Japan is safe.

And third is that we hope that many people would visit 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

From immediately after the disaster until now, more than 160 countries and regions and international organizations, have provided us various forms of assistance.

It is thanks to such assistance that the Japanese in the affected areas—myself included—were able to push ahead for reconstruction. 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 about 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% compared to November 2011.

In Japan, there are 47 Prefectures. Fukushima Prefecture is one of them. Of the whole Fukushima Prefecture, dimension of areas under evacuation order is about 2.7%.

In the most part 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, and in particular, reconstruction in Fukushima Prefecture, is the elimination of 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 of the strictest level in the world. Necessary measures are in place to ensure that foods are not distributed in the market if the 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 USA, for example, is 1,200 Becquerels per kilogram.

Speaking of 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 five years since fiscal year 2013.

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 % since April 2015.

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

6. Invitation to visit Tohoku

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

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

Today, the cuisine using specialties in Tokyo and the Tohoku region are at your disposal. Please enjoy.

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.

Knowing the current state of the reconstruction and experiencing the attractiveness of the region and its foods will push forward the recovery process from the Earthquake.

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

Thank you.

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