

Japan: The Road to Rebirth
By Naoto Kan
Prime Minister of Japan

At 14.46 on March 11, Japan was hit by one of the most powerful earthquakes in recorded history. We are now making all-out efforts to restore livelihoods and recover from the series of tragedies that followed the Great East Japan Earthquake. The disaster left more than 28,000 people dead or missing, including foreign citizens.

Since March 11, Japan has been strongly supported by the international community and our friends around the world. On behalf of the Japanese people, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude for the outpouring of support and solidarity we have received from over 130 countries, nearly 40 international organizations, numerous NGOs, and countless individuals from all parts of the world. The Japanese people deeply appreciate the *Kizuna* (a Japanese word for "bonds of friendship") that has been shown to us by friends around the world. Through this hardship, we have also come to truly understand the meaning of "a friend in need is a friend indeed."

After the earthquake struck, many people expressed their deep sympathy towards victims, including the President of the Republic of Fiji, H.E. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Fiji, H.E. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola who have signed in person the book of condolence at the Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Fiji. Support has also come from private entities and countless individuals mainly to Fiji Red Cross and Japanese Red Cross. The cordial attitude that the Government and the people of the Republic of Fiji have demonstrated toward us has deeply touched the hearts and minds of the Japanese.

That Japan has experienced nuclear accidents at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant whose severity was assessed as most serious based on an international scale is extremely regrettable and something I take it very seriously. Bringing the situation at the plant under control at the earliest possible date is currently my top priority. I have been working at the forefront of efforts to tackle this troubling situation, leading a unified effort by the Government. I have mobilized all available resources to combat the risks posed by the plant, based on three principles: first, give the highest priority to the safety and health of all citizens, in

particular those residents living close to the plant; second, conduct thorough risk management; and, third, plan for all possible scenarios so that we are fully prepared to respond to any future situation. For example, we continue to make the utmost efforts to address the issue of outflow of radioactive water into the ocean from the plant. In addition, the Government has taken every possible measure to ensure the safety of all food and other products, based on strict scientific criteria. We have taken highly precautionary measures so that the safety of all Japanese food and products that reach the market has been and will continue to be ensured. In order to assure domestic and foreign consumer confidence in the safety of Japanese food and products, my administration will redouble its efforts to maintain transparency and keep everyone informed of our progress in the complex and evolving circumstances at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant.

I pledge that the Japanese Government will promptly and thoroughly verify the cause of this incident, as well as share information and the lessons learned with the rest of the world in order to prevent such accidents from occurring in the future. Through such a process, we will proactively contribute to global debate to enhance the safety of nuclear power generation. Meanwhile, from a comprehensive energy policy perspective, we must squarely tackle a two-pronged challenge; responding to rising global energy demand and striving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat global warming. Through the "Rebirth of Japan" I would like to present a clear vision to the entire world – that includes the aggressive promotion of clean energy - that may contribute to solving global energy issues.

The Great East Japan Earthquake and the resulting tsunami are the worst natural disasters that Japan has faced since the end of the Second World War. Reconstruction of the devastated Tohoku region will not be easy. However, I believe that this difficult period will provide us with a precious window of opportunity to secure the "Rebirth of Japan." The Government will dedicate itself to demonstrating to the world its ability to establish the most sophisticated reconstruction plans for East Japan, based on three principles: first, create a regional society that is highly resistant to natural disasters; second, establish a social system that allows people to live in harmony with the global environment; and third, build a compassionate society that cares about people, in particular, the vulnerable.

We, the Japanese people, rose from the ashes of the Second World War, using

our fundamental strength to secure a remarkable recovery and the country's present prosperity. I have not a single doubt that Japan will overcome this crisis, recover from the aftermath of the disaster, emerge stronger than ever, and establish a more vibrant and better Japan for future generations.

I believe that the best way for Japan to reciprocate the strong *Kizuna* and cordial friendship extended to us by the international community is to continue our contribution to the development of the international community. To that end, I will work to the best of my ability to realize a "forward-looking" reconstruction that gives people bright hopes for the future. I would wholeheartedly appreciate your continued support and cooperation. ARIGATOU.