

13 March 2012

**Remarks by Ambassador Yoshikawa for the Reception
(the Great East Japan Earthquake Memorial Event)**

(Wednesday 14 March 2012 at 18h30 in Salle George Marshall)

Mr. Secretary-General,
Fellow Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before starting the reception, I would like to ask you to join me in a minute of silence in remembrance of those who lost their lives in the Great East Japan Earthquake. (Silence)

Thank you very much.

On the 11th of March one year ago, an earthquake of magnitude 9.0 struck Eastern Japan. The earthquake was followed by a huge tsunami and a nuclear accident. All these incidents combined resulted in an unprecedented disaster leaving more than 19,000 people dead or missing and a very large material damage.

Recovery from the combined devastation of this magnitude is not an easy task, and we are still struggling. But, the people of Japan have shown great solidarity and unity in a time of difficulty. Even those who most suffered remained civil and orderly. People from other regions rushed to the affected areas to provide help.

We have also been reassured by the quick and warm response from the international community that showed its solidarity with Japan. Support came from all over the world. I myself received a number of heartfelt messages from fellow ambassadors and from the Secretary-General, as well as from people I met on Parisian streets. Members of the OECD Secretariat donated a large sum of money to the affected people in Japan. I will not forget them.

Secretary-General Gurria visited Japan one month after the earthquake, together with the Nuclear Energy Agency Director General Mr. Echávarri. The Secretary-General expressed to the Prime Minister Naoto Kan the OECD's commitment to support Japan. IEA Executive Director Mme van der Hoeven also visited Japan and provided valuable input to the on-going review of our energy policy.

We are sincerely grateful for all your efforts. To return the favors for your kind actions and warm considerations, we try to share our experiences and the lessons learned from the Earthquake. I hope this afternoon's Conference was one of such attempts.

Now, I would like to share with you some aspects of Japan's recovery and the current situation. You can see the on-going efforts of recovery through the panels and videos placed here in the lobby as well as the George Marshall Room.

First, the affected areas are firmly on their way to recovery. Most parts of Japan have returned to normal. There are no major obstacles hindering tourists, foreign students and businesspeople from visiting, studying and working in Japan.

Second, on the nuclear accident, last December, the government of Japan announced that reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station were brought to a condition equivalent to a “cold shutdown.” The accident in the station has thus been settled. There remain, however, many challenges such as decontamination, health management, compensation and decommission of the reactors. They are being treated with the utmost importance and urgency.

Third, on the energy policy, following the nuclear accident, Japan is reviewing its energy policies, including nuclear, in a comprehensive manner. My government intends to formulate a new energy strategy by this summer. Japan faces energy constraints, but this challenge can be an opportunity to be innovative.

Avant de terminer, je voudrais ajouter quelques mots d’appréciation en français.

Depuis le désastre du « 11 mars », j’ai été très touché par la solidarité témoignée par les français.

La semaine dernière et cette semaine encore, de nombreux évènements commémoratifs ont eu lieu en France.

Juste pour vous donner deux exemples. Une messe spéciale pour les victimes du tremblement de terre a été dite à la Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris. A 6 heures 46 du matin le 11 mars, plus de 1000 personnes se sont rassemblées sur l'esplanade du Trocadéro en mémoire des victimes.

Je tiens à vous dire combien ces gestes encouragent le peuple japonais et également nous, les Japonais vivant à l'étranger.

I wish to thank you for your presence and for your support. We continue to count on your friendship.

Thank you very much.

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