

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS AT RECEPTION HOSTED BY JAPAN TO MARK ONE-YEAR  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREAT EAST ASIA EARTHQUAKE  
New York, 8 March 2012

Ambassador [Tsuneo] Nishida, Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

こんばんわ。

*Konbanwa.*

["Good evening."]

皆様にお会いできて光栄です。

*Minasama ni oaidkite kouei desu.*

["It is a pleasure to be meeting you."]

Thank you very much, Your Excellency Ambassador Nishida, for hosting this reception.

Thank you also for organizing the wonderful concert at the United Nations on Monday evening.

I was deeply impressed by the performers. The drumming was so powerful. I felt energized by the music. It was truly inspiring.

When I visited Fukushima last August, I expected to be shocked by the chaos – but instead I was surprised by the order. Despite such extensive damage, there were already signs of recovery.

Just a few days ago, UN experts reported that Japan is making enormous progress. In Sendai alone, they are processing 460 tonnes of waste every day. Across the region, they are recycling. Old debris is being used for new buildings. This is very heartening.

日本の力強い復興を応援しています。

*Nihon no chikarazuyoi fukkou wo ouenshite imasu.*

["I voice my strong support for Japan's vibrant reconstruction efforts."]

In Fukushima, I was especially encouraged by the people.

Young people spoke to me honestly about their struggles and their concerns.

One said, “There are many people less fortunate than us, so I want to study ways I can do something for the rest of the world.”

Despite being in the midst of tragedy themselves, they thought of others beyond Fukushima. They were looking to prevent future tragedies everywhere.

日本の皆さんの頑張っている姿を見ると勇気づけられます。

*Nihon no minasan no gambatteru sugata wo miruto yuuki zuckeraremasu.*

[“I gain strength from watching the Japanese people’s efforts to overcome [the disaster].”]

The United Nations is also focused on prevention.

I have sought to raise the profile of nuclear safety and security on the international agenda. In the weeks after the accident, I brought together experts from across the UN to examine what happened and come up with recommendations for the world.

The high-level meeting on nuclear safety and security in September set us on course towards real progress. Later this month, the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul will surely advance this cause.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The bright students of Fukushima gave my wife and me two gifts that we will always cherish.

One was a doll called “Kokeshi”. You may know this is a traditional craft associated with the hot springs in Tohoku.

People go to hot springs to heal. So this gift was symbolic of healing.

The other doll they gave me is called “Aka beko.” It is a red cow. Hundreds of years ago, the red cows of Tohoku were said to be the hardest working. So this gift was symbolic of resilience and hard work.

Healing. Resilience. Hard work. These are needed in any region hit by disaster.

強い心を持って歩を進められることを、応援しています。

*Tsuyoi kokoro wo motte ho wo susumerareru kotowo, ouenshite imasu.*

[“I hope you keep moving forward with strong hearts.”]

In Fukushima, I spoke about *kizuna* – our bonds of friendship.

*Kizuna* also means international solidarity.

The United Nations stands by Japan, just as Japan has always stood by the United Nations.

ありがとうございます。

*Arigato gozaimasu.* [“Thank you very much.”]

Thank you.