

Remarks by H. E. Mr. Akio Egawa, Ambassador of Japan to Zambia  
On the Occasion of the Reception in Commemoration of  
The Great East Japan Earthquake---Towards “Open Reconstruction”  
Residence of the Ambassador of Japan, Lusaka, March 15, 2012

Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year on March 11, Japan was hit by one of the most powerful earthquakes in recorded history. The disaster left nearly 20,000 people dead or missing, including a number of foreigners. The physical damage was truly devastating and extraordinary. It triggered the starkest crisis our country has faced in a generation.

During the trying period when this disaster occurred, people demonstrated that human beings can be selfless and shine brilliantly even during times of untold difficulties. A town official relentlessly sent emergency broadcasts until the last moment, calling out to the residents to escape. He vanished in the massive waves of tsunami. An American woman, who was teaching English at elementary and junior high schools on a Japanese Government program, handed over all her students to the safety of their parents' hands. She went missing thereafter. Her body was recovered later. Today her parents are engaged in activities to benefit those school children, following the wishes of their deceased daughter. Similar stories abound.

Our thoughts go out to all the victims of the tragedy and to people around the world whose lives have been devastated by natural disasters.

Japan has received warm and generous offers of assistance from our friends around the world in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami. We will never forget the outpouring of support and expressions of solidarity that Japan received from various parts of the world. For this we feel deeply indebted and forever appreciative.

I am deeply thankful to the Zambian people for their sympathy and support. I would especially like to thank Associated Printers Limited, NGOCC (NGO

Coordinating Council), Diamond Electronics Limited and a group of musicians from Mongu for their actions to support Japan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although there still remain some 70,000 evacuees who live in temporary housing, struggling in their daily lives, Japan is steadily recovering. Remarkable progress has been made over the past 12 months in the most pressing issues: reconstruction of the areas affected by the earthquake and tsunami; full decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and decontamination of the affected areas; and revitalization of the Japanese economy.

The infrastructures and the economy of the disaster-struck areas have been steadily rebuilt. The supply chains for the manufacturing sector have been fully restored. A budgetary and legislative framework was established that laid out many of the strategic tools for reconstruction. The Reconstruction Agency was set up as a Government body. Monitoring and testing of food products have been strengthened, while about 1 trillion yen, or 120 million dollars, in state funds have been provided for the decontamination of residential areas close to the nuclear power station.

Through the creation of special reconstruction zones and other initiatives under the concept of "open reconstruction," the disaster-struck regions will stimulate new domestic and overseas investment, creating jobs, driving the restoration of industries and enhancing innovation. Japan's expertise in energy efficiency and wealth of innovative technologies can be utilized in creating a model for growth and sustainability that we can share with the world.

Japan's disaster-management measures are being comprehensively reviewed and strengthened to build resilient communities and ultimately a country able to withstand natural disasters. This is another area where Japan can share its knowledge with the rest of the world. Japan is convening a Ministerial-Level International Conference on Large-Scale Natural Disasters in July this year in the earthquake-struck areas.

We are seeking to pursue an open and cooperative approach with our international partners and exploit the promise of new growth areas. Sectors such as energy, the environment, health and nursing care hold significant potential as leading growth industries where Japan can tap innovative ideas and investment from the private sector, including foreign direct investment, and play a leading role globally. We want to create conditions to support increased international interest and investment in Japan, not only in business but also in tourism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In recent history, Japan seized rapid economic expansion from the ashes and desolation of World War II, and we built the most energy-efficient economy in the world in the aftermath of the oil crises in the 70's. On the anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, we remember that today we face a challenge of similar proportions. Our goal is not simply to reconstruct the Japan that existed before March 11, 2011, but to build a new Japan. We are determined to overcome this historic challenge, working closely together with the international community.

Lastly, we have today a photo exhibition of the earthquake and subsequent reconstruction. Please feel free to go inside the building and view the exhibition.

We are serving sake, a Japanese rice wine, made in Fukushima Prefecture, one of the areas most hard hit by the disaster. This is my gesture of solidarity with the people of the disaster-struck areas.

Thank you very much.