

## **Lecture by the Governor of Iwate**

Thank you TOMODACHI –Tsunami Disaster Reconstruction Report–

### **1. Introduction**

Mr. Drew Schufletowski, Foreign Service Officer of the United States Department of State, Mr. Gary Moriwaki, U.S.-Japan Society Board of Directors, distinguished guests, my old friends, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, I am deeply honored to hold “Thank you TOMODACHI –Tsunami Disaster Reconstruction Report” here in New York to express my appreciation for the assistance of so many people with Iwate's reconstruction efforts.

Since the March 11 disaster, Japan has received strong support from the world. On behalf of the people of Iwate Prefecture, I would like to thank the people of the United States, as well as other countries and regions for your encouragement, condolences, and support. You have been there for us since immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami until this very day.

Our reconstruction is a combination of “Community-based Reconstruction” and “Open Reconstruction”.

Today, as a way to thank everyone for their support, I would like to talk about how we are tackling disaster reconstruction in Iwate Prefecture.

### **2. A overview of disaster damage**

At 2:46 p.m. on March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck the Pacific Ocean off the coast of the northeast Japan. The earthquake, and the tsunami, left over 18,000 dead and missing throughout Japan. Along the coastal areas of Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures, many towns and communities were completely destroyed, leaving over 340,000 people in the disaster zone displaced.

Iwate Prefecture suffered enormous damage to its coastal regions, with 4,672 dead and 1,145 missing as of July 31, 2013. With around 25,000 houses partially or completely destroyed, there are approximately 37,000 living in temporary housing.

The coast of Iwate is known as a ria coast or “sawtooth coast”, with many narrow bays leading inland, where the ocean meets steeply sloped mountains. This leaves a limited amount of flat land for fishing villages and small fishing ports, with small-scale fisheries around the inlets. In areas where there is more flat land, seafood processing factories and comparatively modern factories have been built. The tourism industry is prosperous, with a mix of modern hotels and traditional inns. During the disaster, these precious flat areas were ravaged by the tsunami, resulting in catastrophic damage that caused the loss of municipal functions, as well as the industrial infrastructure.

A local government leader and many municipal workers lost their lives. 11 Iwate prefectural police officers and 98 fire fighting officers and volunteers died in the line of duty.

### **3. Support from the international community and the Open Reconstruction**

#### **(1) Support from the international community**

Immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake, I received countless messages of sympathy and encouragement for Japan, and offers of support from the world. I received emails from friends I had met while studying in the United States, which was a great encouragement to me. Iwate received monetary donations and relief supplies, and support teams from various countries, regions, international organizations and NGOs around the world arrived in the disaster areas to carry out relief efforts.

These support teams cooperated with their Japanese counterparts to diligently engage in search and rescue efforts, debris removal and medical treatment. They overcame the language barrier and formed a bond with the local people, and the presence and activity of these relief workers was a pillar of support to the survivors.

In particular, the United States quickly provided support after the earthquake. I received a phone call directly from Mr. John Roos, the Ambassador to Japan at the time. President Obama telephoned the Prime Minister to pledge America's full support, the President reaffirmed the strong relationship between the United States and Japan.

This quick response from the American government gave great encouragement to many of the Japanese people, myself included.

The United States armed forces carried out dedicated relief activities immediately following the earthquake. These activities were named "Operation Tomodachi" after the Japanese word for "friend".

Operation TOMODACHI saw the deployment of 24,500 military personnel, 24 ships and 189 aircraft to provide solid support for the disaster areas.

Also, 144 members of the American Rescue Team International assisted in the search for missing persons in Ofunato City and Kamaishi Cities in IWATE.

In addition, there were various activities to support disaster relief in New York and many other places around the United States.

The Japan Society, which has graciously provided the space for today's event, started a relief fund and collected over \$13 million. A great support was received from the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of New York, the Nippon Club, the Japan Foundation, the Lions Club, the Japanese American Association of New York, and from members of every prefectural association.

According to the Japanese Red Cross Society, the United States made the highest amount of donations in the world.

One of the most important aspects of our reconstruction efforts is the development of the human resources. Introduced by Ambassador John Roos, the American government and the US-Japan Council are pushing forth the "TOMODACHI Initiative" that invites young people from the affected areas to study in the United States.

I've had a chance to meet the young people who have returned from their studies in the United States, and what impressed me was that they found their own new goals. The TOMODACHI Initiative gives these young people power to stand individually, and will help change Iwate to reconstruct itself.

We have received all kinds of support, including humanitarian relief, assistance with search and rescue, various charitable movements, and donation collection drives. These have not only been from government bodies, but also from US-Japan exchange organizations and countless private citizens.

According to a survey in March of this year, the aid by the US left the strongest impression on our people. The people of Japan and Iwate were touched by the sympathy of the people of America, and those feelings remain in our hearts.

Once again, let me express my deep-felt appreciation for the support of the people of the United States of America.

## (2) Open Reconstruction

Since the earthquake, aids have been given by companies, research institutions, NPOs and volunteers from the world. Under Iwate Prefecture's fundamental policy of "Open Reconstruction", we recognize the importance of going forward with the reconstruction as we deepen these connections.

The affected areas still need support. Iwate Prefecture along with industrial, financial, and educational organizations have collaborated to form the "Iwate Tomorrow Design Organization," which runs a website called the "Reconstruction Bridging Project." This project connects people who want to help and matches them with the needs of the disaster survivors.

Following this policy of the "Open Reconstruction", we found that people and groups from the world have connected to the affected regions, and the recovery of Iwate Prefecture is being accomplished through these connections. I hope our experiences of the Disaster and the various recovery efforts help to prepare for future disasters in other regions, to revitalize local regions anywhere in the world.

## **4. Achieving a Community-based Reconstruction and Cooperation with Local Governments**

### (1) Fundamental policies

A "Community-based Reconstruction" is another fundamental policy of us.

Community-based reconstruction means that the reconstruction must rebuild local communities, return jobs to local areas, and allow as many people as possible to resume living in their

hometowns.

The vision and plan for this recovery must be based on the opinions of the local people. The participation of women and young people is essential to this process.

The Great East Japan Earthquake has created a necessity for local governments all across Japan to connect with each other on an unprecedented scale. Immediately after the disaster, emergency fire response teams and the police inter-prefectural emergency rescue unit gathered in Iwate to carry out rescue operations. This year, 163 officials were sent to the Iwate prefectural government and 519 officials were sent to the disaster area municipalities in Iwate from local governments around Japan.

In this way, local governments all across Japan are voluntarily forming a network of mutual support during disasters, along with increasing their autonomy.

Combining local potential with the power of connections with others fuels the reconstruction efforts in Iwate.

Based on these ideas, Iwate Prefecture drew up the "Iwate Prefecture Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Reconstruction Plan" on August 11, 2011.

The Reconstruction Plan aims to “protect life, to live together with the sea and land, and to create a homeland Iwate”. The Reconstruction Plan is scheduled for 8 years, and the three targets for recovery are "Ensuring safety", "Rebuilding lives" and "Rebooting industries".

I would like to explain more about the efforts being made to meet these three targets.

## (2) Ensuring safety

As we looked at the effectiveness of the existing disaster prevention facilities against the tsunami, we realized that it is difficult to provide protection with only hard countermeasures. However, we have been able to see firsthand how effective regular evacuation training is in each region.

Based on these results, we are moving forward with something we call “multiple-disaster preventative community development”. Anti-tsunami measures such as storm surge barriers for coastal protection are combined with "soft" countermeasures such as evacuation planning. Hard countermeasures alone cannot prevent all damage. Evacuation is a measure against human

casualties, but we must accept that there will inevitably be some material damage. We must consider that our best course of action is to mitigate disaster damage, so that we can truly plan to ensure human safety.

As part of the reconstruction community development, Iwate is moving and rezoning residential areas to higher ground getting the consensus of local citizens. Reconstruction community development is proceeding step by step in all of the affected areas in the prefecture.

### (3) Rebuilding Lives

Even now, 2 years and 5 months after the disaster, approximately 300,000 people in Japan are still displaced, with nearly 37,000 people in Iwate Prefecture living in temporary housing.

Taking a "socially inclusive" stance, Iwate Prefecture has paid close consideration to all disaster survivors, especially focused on women, senior citizens, children, young people, and non-Japanese residents, to provide livelihood support for the displaced.

Mental support for the disaster survivors is provided by the Iwate Mental Care Center.

In addition, Disaster Survivor Counseling Support Centers have been opened in four locations. These centers provide counseling, answers to inquiries and access to lawyers and financial planners in order to help disaster survivors rebuild their lives.

We are also maintaining and upgrading the health care system in the disaster areas. Temporary clinics have been set up, support is being provided for the recovery of medical organizations, and damaged prefectural hospitals are being rebuilt.

As for the reconstruction of education, Iwate is restoring and upgrading damaged school facilities, and introducing a new "Iwate Reconstruction Education" program to cultivate the human resources who will be strong power in the recovery and development of Iwate Prefecture.

### (4) Rebooting Industries

Iwate Prefecture is the leading prefecture in finishing, fish farming and other aquatic cultivation.

In order to revitalize local fishery industries, the fishing and aquaculture industry are being

advanced and upgraded. This is with the fishing cooperatives and local fish markets at its core.

As damaged industries to rebuild, many companies have taken out loans to pay for loans due to the massive damage suffered as a result of the disaster, regardless of how successful the business was in the past. The Iwate Prefectural Industrial Reconstruction Organization was founded to deal with this problem. In cases where a new loan from a financial institution would enable a company to rebuild in the future, the old debt is bought up in an effort to ensure that as many companies as possible are able to rebuild.

## 5. Iwate – rebirth through reconstruction

### (1) World Heritage site Hiraizumi as a symbol of recovery

Now, let us talk about longer-term things. In June 2011, 3 months after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, ancient city Hiraizumi was declared a UNESCO Cultural Heritage site, the first World Cultural Heritage site in the northeast Japan. It became a beacon of hope for recovery, and gave courage and pride not only to Iwate, but to the entire northeast Japan.

Hiraizumi has a Buddhist temple and garden complex that arose from the disaster of a tragic 12th regional century war. It was created as a monument to everlasting peace, and as a way to recover from the chaos of war.

The cultural assets of Hiraizumi, the Golden Hall of Chuson-ji Temple and the Pure Land Garden of Motsu-ji Temple, as well as the other buildings, gardens and ruins are all splendid, beautiful reminders of the past. Yet, they are more than simply attractive. 900 years ago, the prayers for peace made in Hiraizumi express the values that could be shared with the world: the ideal that "peace and harmony" are for all people, whether friend or foe, and for all creatures, including animals birds and fish.

We have taken this ideal to heart, and been trying to integrate it into our reconstruction efforts.

### (2) Bid for the International Linear Collider

The International Linear Collider is a large-scale particle physics research facility incorporating

over 30 kilometers of tubing in underground tunnels, which is planned to build somewhere in the world. Last week, the Kitakami Mountain range in Iwate Prefecture and Miyagi Prefecture was chosen as the candidate site in Japan.

This big project will cost approximately 800 billion yen, and construction is expected to take 10 years. Once the facility is running, several thousand researchers from around the world will come to work at the facility.

It is expected that the International Linear Collider will bring new industry to Iwate as research related companies move in to do business. With thousands of researchers and their families, northeast Japan will become a hub for human knowledge.

Iwate Prefecture, with neighboring tsunami affected prefectures, considers this a symbol of recovery, and is trying to raise awareness both among citizens and within the business world. For this reason, Iwate Prefecture and neighboring Miyagi Prefecture are working diligently on the bidding process to ensure that this international project is built in our region.

### (3) Expanding international exchange, with America and other countries

Our connections to the world have grown through the support we have received for our reconstruction. We believe that, with these overseas connections, we can raise people who understand cultural diversity and work from a global perspective.

I believe that study abroad programs such as the "TOMODACHI Initiative" that I mentioned earlier are very valuable in promoting this perspective, and I am very thankful for them.

Tonight, ten high school students are attending this event. As part of our Open Reconstruction, we will continue exchanges with the United States and other countries, with the goal of educating "global-minded young people".

At the reception that will follow shortly, you can sample the "Iwate Beef" *wagyu* that we are so proud of. In February of next year, we will be running a promotional campaign in the U.S. to showcase food products from Iwate, which will be aimed at buyers from local restaurants, department stores and wholesalers, with Iwate beef as a central focus.

We plan to continue developing the promotion so that every American will have a chance to

taste food from Iwate, and I believe that exchange between the US and Iwate will continue through our food cultures, too.

## 6. Conclusion

Finally, I must express my heartfelt gratitude to the groups and people who provided support to make today's event possible: the Japan Society, the US-Japan Council, the Japanese Embassy in New York, JETRO New York, CLAIR New York, and the New York Iwate Prefectural Association.

The road to recovery is a long one, and it is definitely not easy, but Iwate Prefecture will recover through our community-based, open reconstruction, and Iwate will be even more vibrant than before. Thanks to the support and solidarity shown to us by the United States and the rest of the international community, we will rebuild. I believe that showing the world a new, recovered Iwate is a way to repay the generous support we have received.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much.