

Speech
by
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Thank you Madam President,
Under-Secretary General and Executive Director Dr. Joan Clos,
Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentleman,

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the 24th Governing Council of UN-Habitat.

Today, I would like to comment on Japan's cooperation toward the activities of UN-Habitat, and Japan's efforts for building national resilience based on the lessons learnt from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

Japan has been in close cooperation with UN-Habitat. Particularly addressing human settlements issues in Asia and the Pacific region, we have worked in close collaboration with the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, located in Fukuoka, Japan, to address various challenges.

In the past 2 years, Japan has provided assistance of over 53 million USD to UN-Habitat, including reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan.

Not only the Government of Japan, but its local authorities of Fukuoka Prefecture and Fukuoka City, the private sector and citizens are supporting the activities of UN-Habitat.

Madam President,

2 years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, which had occurred before the previous Governing Council. While the damage and suffering still remain, strong national commitment is placed on the restoration of living conditions of people, and the reconstruction in the disaster-affected areas.

Once large-scale disasters occur, the long-term achievement of development can be wiped out in a moment. One of the important lessons from the devastating disaster is that, when we consider the unprecedented scale of damage and cost needed for recovery and reconstruction, building every possible measure for disaster prevention and reduction will lead to sustainable development and growth.

There is a need to make nations resilient to possible disasters. Going forward, Japan will therefore be committed to risk assessments, risk communication and risk management comprehensively.

In order to strengthen national resilience, self-help, mutual-support, and public-support should be effectively coordinated.

Roles of governments at both national and local levels in disaster risk reduction are of course important.

At the same time, self-help efforts to protect your own life, and mutual support to help each other through various networks in the communities are essential.

I would like to introduce one such example.

In Kamaishi, the tremendous tsunami reached only 30 minutes after the earthquake occurred, and swept away one third of the houses in the city. However, 3,000 children at primary and junior high schools could escape from the tsunami successfully.

People called this 'The Miracle of Kamaishi.' In this region there is an old teaching known as 'Tsunami Tendenko,' which tells people to escape first to higher and safer place one by one as early as possible when big earthquake occurs rather than to seek rendezvous with their families, believing that their families also escape in the same way by themselves, before tsunami comes undoubtedly after big earthquake. This code of behavior reduces risks to waste time. 'The Miracle of Kamaishi' was an achievement of their daily efforts of disaster drills and education based on this teaching.

Communities are the basis for social resilience. Disaster reduction is achieved not only by building strong infrastructure, but also by strong disaster awareness and mutual support among people.

Madam President,

I would like to further mention two points relative to what I have just said.

Firstly, we understand that UN-Habitat has launched the City Resilience Profiling Programme.

Japan intends to support this programme by sharing its rich experience, knowledge and technologies in disaster risk reduction field.

Secondly, it is very important, through the activities of UN-Habitat, to establish the foundations for self-support and sustainable development, by approaching directly to the communities and the people.

Japan is working closely with UN-Habitat to assist the reconstruction of Afghanistan. In these projects, emphasis is placed on women's access to education and increasing opportunities for the youth.

Such community-based, people-centered approach practiced by UN-Habitat reinforces the concept of 'human security' which Japan advocates. Japan will again strongly support UN-Habitat in this regard.

In closing, Japan appreciates the strong leadership of Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director and Ms. Aisa Kacyira, Deputy Executive Director in pursuing these activities, and look forward to further development of the activities of UN-Habitat under their guidance.