

Remarks for H.E. Kaoru Ishikawa

Address to the Canadian Red Cross

Albany Club of Toronto

October 24, 2011

I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Sauvé and the Canadian Red Cross for inviting me to be with you today. Over the past several months, I have had the chance to meet Dr. Sauvé on numerous occasions and I would like to commend the passion, dedication, and strong leadership that he brings to this venerable organization.

More than seven months ago, my country was struck by a powerful earthquake and tsunami. Entire communities were washed away. Tens of thousands were killed. And countless more were left without homes. While this was a crisis that was unprecedented on many levels, so too was the overwhelming support and solidarity offered by our friends and allies around the world.

Almost immediately following the disaster, Canada was ready to lend a helping hand. The federal Government of Canada dispatched 25,000 thermal blankets to keep the residents warm through the harsh winter weather, and also supplied equipment to assist with the nuclear plant situation.

Volunteers working for Canadian NGOs such as the Red Cross and GlobalMedic went to Japan to offer their expertise to the region and its residents.

At home, Canadians of all ages donated generously and organized countless fundraiser events from coast to coast to coast.

And members of the corporate and business communities in Canada – despite the challenges of global economic unrest – contributed immensely to the relief efforts. You have made a real difference in the lives of those affected by the disaster, and you have given Japan the strength and courage to move forward. For this, I wish to say “thank you.”

I would like to speak briefly on the recovery and reconstruction efforts currently taking place in the affected region. The progress made over the past seven months has been slow, but steady. Key transportation arteries have been restored. The *Shinkansen* or bullet train resumed operations within a few weeks, and quays of all major ports in the Pacific Coast re-opened within a few months.

The nuclear power plant that was affected by the disaster is also on track to achieving a stable cold shutdown by the end of this year. Thanks to the brave engineers and volunteers, aided by nuclear safety experts from within and outside of Japan, the government is making steady progress towards securing stable control of this situation.

The disaster also affected the manufacturing sector in Japan, with disruptions to the supply chain and production levels. Nevertheless, within months, production has resumed to normal levels and supply

chain links have been restored. Recently, in the *Wall Street Journal*, a headline read – “Toyota Gets Its Stride Back” – referring of course to Japan’s largest automaker.

All in all, with the warm support and solidarity offered by our friends throughout the world, Japan – like the headline – is getting its stride back and is experiencing a new sense of normal.

However, there is much work left to be done. In his address to the United Nations just a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister of Japan – His Excellency Mr. Yoshihiko Noda – reaffirmed the Japanese government’s commitment to strengthening industrial infrastructure, employment, and energy conservation and ensuring a full-fledged recovery from the earthquake disaster. And, in this increasingly globalized world, this recovery will rely on the domestic and foreign private sectors to continue the needed economic momentum.

I strongly believe that Canada will be a key partner in this new phase of Japan’s economic development. In their first face-to-face meeting at the United Nations’ General Assembly, both Prime Minister Noda and Prime Minister Harper stated their commitment to completing a joint study for a Japan-Canada Economic Partnership Agreement. Without a doubt, this potential Partnership Agreement will open many doors for Japan-Canada economic relations and provide invaluable opportunities to the many businesses and corporations that have a vested interest in both countries.

Indeed, with diplomatic relations that have spanned over 83 years, Canada and Japan have partnered on many fronts in the past. In fact, 2011 marks the 25th anniversary of science and technology cooperation between our two countries. Earlier this year, a Japanese-built unmanned spacecraft, launched by the Japanese H2B rocket, successfully docked with the International Space Station with the invaluable help of the CANADARM 2. This procedure – which was broadcast on CBC – was very symbolic of our deep friendship and future-oriented cooperation.

Throughout its history, Japan has faced many challenges. Some were called insurmountable. Others were destined to seal our fate as a nation. In the end, we rose to the challenge, and the Japanese spirit fought back.

As we move forward and rebuild, my country will always remember the friends who came to us during this time of need. As the famous proverb states, one who helps friend in need, is a friend indeed. And Canada is our friend.

As Ambassador, I wish to invite all of you to witness the resilience of Japan and take advantage of the many opportunities that my country has to offer as it writes a new chapter in its history.

I thank you once again for your generous support.