

Remarks for H.E. Kaoru Ishikawa
Reception in Commemoration of the Great East Japan Earthquake
Fairmont Chateau Laurier, Adam Room
March 8, 2012, 12'00 p.m. – 2'00 p.m.

Honourable Ministers,

Members of Parliament,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests:

I would like to thank you all for joining me today at this Reception in Commemoration of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

With your permission, I would like to begin by asking everyone to observe a moment of silence to remember those who lost their lives on March 11th of last year and to honour the survivors who are working tirelessly to rebuild their lives.

(Moment of Silence)

Thank you.

Il y a presque un an que la nature et le destin ont conspiré à déclencher un violent séisme et un tsunami dévastateur qui ont ravagé en grande partie le littoral nord-est du Japon. Horrifié, le monde entier a vu chez soi la catastrophe telle quelle, à travers les images transmises en temps réel sur les ordinateurs, les téléviseurs et les autres modes de communication modernes. Ils l'ont regardée, stupéfait, lorsque des villes et des villages entiers ont été balayés de la côte : perte en vie et disparition d'une vingtaine de milliers de résidents, style de vie complètement changé de centaines de milliers de personnes.

I would like to pay tribute at this point to the brave men and women that acted as first responders in the aftermath of the tsunami. Local police, fire, and disaster relief officials, along with members of the Japan Self Defence Forces, made heroic efforts in the hours and days after the disaster to help the injured, to find and rescue survivors and to secure the safety of everyone. A special note of gratitude must be directed to the so-called "Fukushima 50",

the group of brave engineers and technicians that volunteered to remain at the Fukushima Dai-ichi power plant and attempt to stabilize the reactors after the majority of workers had been evacuated from the site. History is certain to remember these people as genuine heroes.

In the days, weeks, and months that followed Canada and Canadians were at the forefront of the overwhelming international response to the events of that day. Canadian thermal blankets provided warmth to those exposed to the cold and snowy winter days in northeastern Japan. Radiation survey meters and other equipment were provided to assist with the nuclear emergency response efforts in Fukushima.

Les Canadiennes et les Canadiens eux-mêmes continuent à faire généreusement un don destiné aux efforts de secours et de reconstruction. Les contributions à travers la Croix-Rouge canadienne ont dépassées \$49 millions. Ce montant n'inclut pas les

dons offerts à la Croix-Rouge japonaise et aux autres ONGs. En plus de la générosité financière du peuple canadien, j'ai été également touché par leur compassion et solidarité débordantes pour celles et ceux qui se battent pour surmonter des circonstances totalement impensables.

I would also like to mention the tremendous contributions made by a Canadian-Japanese hybrid band called MONKEY MAJIK. The group has become a symbolic bridge between the people of Japan and Canada. They are based in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, one of the areas hardest hit by the disaster. They established the 'Send Love' project, in Japanese 'Send -Ai' Project, and have participated in numerous relief activities. Holding the designation "Ambassadors of Resilience" bestowed upon them by the Japanese Government, the band held immensely successful live concerts at the end of last month in Toronto and Ottawa. Through their concerts and media interviews, they shared their own personal

experiences and delivered a message of hope and of thanks to their Canadian audiences.

The Canadian government proved to be a stalwart and reliable friend throughout these most difficult days. It remained calm and rational at all time. It made decisions related to the crisis on the basis of available scientific facts. Its steady and unwavering strength throughout the crisis was greatly appreciated.

One year has passed and the affected area is slowly rebuilding itself. Progress to date gives us reason for hope and for optimism. It is necessary, however, to recognize that some damage cannot be repaired and that some losses cannot be recovered. There are children who have lost their parents. There are elderly people that have been left alone and destitute. As we work to replace those things that can be replaced, we must make sure that we do not lose sight of the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

Having acknowledged this, I can report to you today that numerous reconstruction projects have been initiated. Going forward, the Reconstruction Agency, which was formally launched last month, will play an important role in coordinating future efforts. The public and private sectors are cooperating to maximize rebuilding efforts. Most importantly, residents have been tireless in their efforts to reclaim what was taken from them last March 11th – the sense that things are “normal”. Under the circumstances, this is no easy task. I believe that some of the greatest challenges to be found along the path leading back to “normal” are tasks related to finding balance in a complicated world.

Par exemple, il faut trouver l'équilibre entre l'esprit traditionnel et le besoin innovateur dans le cadre de notre réponse à ce désastre.

Le tsunami a ravagé de grands champs de riz situés en dehors de la ville de Sendai. Pendant plus de 2000 ans, ces champs de riz étaient une source de prospérité économique. Face à cette

destruction les secteurs public et privé se sont mis coude à coude pour lancer de nouvelles entreprises agricoles – un complexe de serres modernes, contrôlées par des ordinateurs, qui produira tout un éventail de légumes.

Dans la région côtière affectée, des villes et des villages entiers, nombreux d'entre eux âgés de siècles, sont en cours de reconstruction complète. En reconstruisant, l'accent est mis sur le développement des communautés autonomes et capables de se redresser après de tels défis. De grands efforts sont déployés pour faire en sorte que nous puissions faire face aux défis futurs, dont celui de la Dame Nature. Le bien-être de tous les membres des communautés est considéré comme essentiel dans une phase de la reconstruction continue.

This tragedy has forced us to reconsider the balance that exists between man and nature. I firmly believe, however, that we must not allow the magnitude of this disaster to unduly skew our

perspective. Japanese society has always placed tremendous emphasis on education and the development of technology. This was the thesis of the brilliant Museum of Civilization exhibition *Japan: Tradition. Innovation.* that was on display there last year. In the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami, however, there were concerns expressed by some that the impact of the disaster was exacerbated because we had come to rely too heavily on science and technology. This is a view that I do not share.

While we must never take nature for granted, nor should we tremble in fear before it. We must be resilient and move forward with hope and optimism. We must not be overwhelmed by the tragedy and misfortune of 2011. We must embrace the lessons learned and seek to make 2012 a year of renewed hope.

As we work to rebuild, Japan has not forgotten the millions of people in the developing world that suffer on a daily basis from poverty and internal conflict. Promoting human security is a pillar

of Japan's foreign policy and is predicated on the assumption that all individuals are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want. Preparations for the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, to be held in 2013, continue unabated. Other Japanese ODA efforts have not been curtailed in any fashion. We will continue to offer assistance based on the principle that people and communities must be at the nucleus of any development plan.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that this same principle will guide us as we rebuild our own country. People and community will be at the centre of our efforts. So, too, will be the core values we embrace. Core values that we share with the other great democracies of the world, including Canada. Values such as a strong work ethic, compassion, respect for the rule of law and respect for the rights of our fellow citizens.

Thank you for being with us today.