

Ready for the next wave!
5 November 2020
Remarks by Ambassador YAMAZAKI Kazuyuki

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about how Japan is making progress on the implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans and strategies and Target E of the Sendai Framework. I will share some of our domestic initiatives as well as an existential case of Japan's international assistance.

Now on Japan's domestic initiatives, we hope our initiatives will be of reference to other states, as according to the Sendai Framework online monitoring tool, Japan scores 100% both on national and local DRR strategies.

Firstly, I would touch upon Japan's legal and management-related infrastructure. The Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act, which is Japan's basic legislation for DRR, provides for formulation of national and local DRR plans and strategies with clearly defined roles and responsibilities between national and local governments. Based on this law, we have established the Basic Disaster Management Plan, which stipulates concrete DRR plans and therein includes a chapter on preparedness, emergency response, and disaster recovery to cope with tsunami disasters. The plan has been continuously updated based on the latest experiences and lessons learned from disasters, including tsunami.

Secondly, I would like to underline the importance of reducing tsunami risk through developing accurate and timely tsunami warning systems and share with you an example of how we have been doing this in Japan.

The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), which is responsible for issuing tsunami warnings, sends out initial tsunami warnings immediately, even one minute after the earthquake occurs and reaches out people nationwide on TV and mobile phone real time communication. In this operation, underestimation of the impacts of tsunami could lead to disastrous consequence. The initial warning is released, based on the largest seismic fault scientifically expected in the area or on the predefined maximum magnitude.

Thirdly, I would refer to disaster risk governance in the period of COVID-infection.

Disasters, including tsunami, may hit even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to prevent COVID-19 from spreading in shelters, it is important to increase shelter locations and capacities to lower population density at individual shelters. This means that we need more locations than pre-COVID times. Authorities need to make further efforts to secure more locations for shelters, perhaps beyond schools and community centers which have been traditionally used for that purpose, to put in perspective those private residential facilities of relatives and friends of evacuees. In case that evacuees are infected by COVID-19, it is further important to secure dedicated spaces for those infected at shelters so as to prevent others from being infected.

It is always critical to ensure the entire nation is resilient to various disasters, including tsunami, by establishing resilient public administration and local communities and economies. We need a holistic approach that incorporates community-building and industrial policy and tsunami preparedness is an important component of that. This is what Japan has learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Finally, let me touch on Japan's international assistance.

The "Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction" is a Japanese initiative running from 2019 to 2022 that is working to provide training on DRR to some 85,000 people globally, including government officials, local leaders, and students. Japan also provides 80 countries with assistance for developing and revising DRR plans.

In order to give you an image of Japan's international assistance related to tsunami, I will share a case of Japan's assistance to Ecuador. In 1979, a huge earthquake with a moment magnitude of 8.2 hit Ecuador. The earthquake and ensuing tsunami left 30 people dead and 1,500 people wounded in the country. Having analyzed what happened in Ecuador, Japan provided Ecuador with Tsunamigenic Earthquake Monitoring Equipment and training from 2013 to 2017 so as to enhance the capability of monitoring and warning. This is one example, but we hope this type of our approach for international assistance will help to save lives in the world.

Japan will continue to implement DRR plans and strategies while working to achieve Target E of the Sendai Framework.

Thank you.

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