

**Remarks by H.E. Hiroyuki Kishino,  
Ambassador of Japan to Ethiopia  
on the Occasion of the First Anniversary of the 3.11 Great East  
Japan Earthquake and Tsunami at the Hilton Hotel  
on 5 March, 2012**



Your Excellency Ato Hailemariam Dessalegn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Your Holiness Abune Paulos,  
Aba Hailegebriel Meleko,  
Reverend Dr. Wakseyoum,  
and Haji Azam, representatives of the religious circle,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

*Endemen Walachehu.*

I am most grateful to all of you for joining us on this commemorative occasion of the first anniversary of the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. I also most appreciate the religious leaders for offering their solemn prayers for the victims of the disaster. May their souls rest in peace.

Time flies like an arrow. It is almost a year since that awful earthquake and tsunami hit the Tohoku region off the Pacific. I still remember clearly what happened on that day as I was at home in Tokyo at that very moment. I felt very strong trembling which I had never experienced before. Photo frames, vases and ornaments on the top of a cabinet slid and crashed to the floor. A heavy stone lantern in my garden also toppled to the ground. Then we experienced unprecedented chaos in public transportation and disruption in power supply. Tokyo was in confusion despite being 370 km away from the epicenter of the earthquake. It was only later on that I saw the awful scenes on CNN in which houses and cars were drifting like toys, swept away by monstrous tsunami waves. I was shocked, and every time I recall those scenes my heart aches.

The latest statistics show that close to 16,000 (15,845) precious lives were lost in that disaster and more than 3,000 (3,339) people are still missing with very little hope of survival. Along the coastline, several cities were demolished by the tsunami with most of the houses and buildings there being swept away and more than half of their citizens killed or missing.

Furthermore, what made the situation even more complicated was the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, which was hit by

the tsunami and lost power supply with the result of loss of control of the nuclear reactors. We faced so many difficult challenges resulting from this accident, such as the evacuation of residents, decontamination, measures to ensure human and food safety and, of course, enormous efforts to cool down the reactors and spent fuel storage pools. Untiring efforts are still continuing.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the midst of this crisis, we found a light of hope in the strong solidarity shown by the rest of the world, based upon the '*kizuna*' or bond of friendship. To date, 124 countries/regions and nine international organizations have extended various kinds of assistance to Japan. Ethiopia provided us with a generous donation of 5.4 million ETB that the Ethiopian Government raised from various quarters of society. Many NGOs, schools and individuals sent us heartwarming cards, letters and drawings to encourage those who suffered, as well as donations and flowers. On behalf of the people and Government of Japan I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all of you who supported Japan at the most difficult of times. We will never forget the kind and warm assistance you extended us in our time of need.

I am often asked how Japan is today. I thank you for your concern and interest. With your support and Japanese hard work and conscientiousness, Japan has been moving forward steadily in rehabilitation and reconstruction. We could achieve a relatively quick recovery of key infrastructure such as main expressways, major railroads including *shinkansen*, an airport and principal ports. Removal of huge amounts of debris in commercial and residential areas was also relatively quick. The disruption to the supply chain in the automobile, electronics and other key sectors is now restored. Many Japanese companies are picking up their production at an astonishing speed. Now the huge task of reconstruction is being led by the Reconstruction Agency, which was established last month.

In most parts of Japan, life is back to normal. There is no more difficulty for foreign companies to resume their business operations, for foreign students to return to Japan for their studies or for foreign tourists to enjoy visiting Japan.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the serious disaster, Japan remains committed to the peace and development of Africa as our Foreign Minister clearly stated at the TICAD IV Follow-up Ministerial Meeting held in Dakar last May. We will fulfill our commitment made at TICAD IV in 2008. The next Follow-up Ministerial Meeting will be held in Morocco in early May this year. Then, our Prime Minister will host the TICAD V meeting in Yokohama from 1-3 June, 2013. We have already started the preparation process with our co-organizers including the African Union.

Regarding peace and security, Japan has been engaged with counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden for the past three years with two destroyers and two P3C reconnaissance planes based in Djibouti. We are also deploying an engineering unit of the Self-Defense Forces in South Sudan under the U.N. Mission there, UNMISS. About 200 members will start infrastructure improvement work in Juba this month.

In coping with the 3.11 disaster, Japan has learned many lessons. We are prepared to share our knowledge and experiences with other interested countries. We want to transform the immediate challenges we face into opportunities by building a disaster-resilient society that is full of economic vitality and environmentally friendly. For knowledge-sharing, Japan will host an international conference on disaster risk management in one of the Tohoku cities this summer.

The same can be said of the nuclear disaster. Transparency is important. From the outset of the accident, we have made maximum efforts to disseminate relevant information to the rest of the world, with particular emphasis on safety issues. This was essential to avoid mistrust. In co-sponsorship with IAEA, Japan will organize a ministerial meeting on nuclear safety in Fukushima from 15-17 December this year. The aim of this meeting is to share our experiences of the Fukushima nuclear accident and contribute to improved nuclear safety in the world.

Needless to say, Japan has strengthened its regulations to ensure food safety, in relation to the nuclear accident. We regularly check radioactivity levels of crops, vegetables, fish, meat and the like and prevent the distribution of specific food items to the market if the levels go beyond the safety standards. The radioactivity checks are also conducted for the air, water, soil and sea.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For our reception today, we have prepared some Japanese *sake* or rice wine as well as *sushi*, using rice produced in the Tohoku region hit by the earthquake and tsunami. This is part of our gesture of encouragement for people in the disaster-hit areas. It is also an expression of our appreciation of your support.

Last year, immediately after the 3.11 Earthquake and Tsunami, many of us thought that reconstruction would take at least ten years. Indeed, it does take time. But, one year later, here we are with an impressive recovery thanks to your support. I would like to conclude my remarks by reiterating my appreciation to each and every one of you.

*Amesegenalehu. Galatoomaa. Yemesgin. Toshimo.* Thank you very much.