



A member of the Japanese Red Cross feeds a baby at the Ishinomaki Red Cross Hospital in Miyagi Prefecture, March 12.

Pulling Together

Thank you for being at our side

REUTERS/AFLO

The Great East Japan Earthquake occurred at 2:46 p.m. Japan time on March 11, centered in the Pacific Ocean off the Sanriku coast in northern Honshu. The magnitude 9.0 quake was the largest in Japan's history and the world's fourth largest on record after the 1960 Great Chilean Earthquake (magnitude: 9.5), the 1964 Great Alaskan Earthquake (magnitude: 9.2), and the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake (magnitude: 9.1).

After the earthquake, massive tsunamis pounded the Pacific coast of northern Honshu, with waves estimated as at least 20 meters high at their peak. Coastal areas in northern Honshu had used data from past temblors to prepare for tsunamis and had constructed breakwaters and conducted emergency drills in advance, but the size and the force of the waves far surpassed expectations. The tsunamis swept away houses, cars and boats with an unstoppable force, leaving massive ruins along the northern Honshu coast. As of April 11, the severity of the dev-

astation was clear: the death toll had risen to 13,100 and another 14,300 people were still missing; some 48,700 buildings had been destroyed.

Thankfully, immediately following the earthquake, a chain of support arose not just around Japan, but also worldwide. To date, 134 countries and regions and 39 international organizations have generously pledged assistance to Japan. In addition, huge numbers of people worldwide have pitched in to hold various fundraising activities and charity events.

One month after the earthquake, Prime Minister Naoto Kan contributed the following message to foreign newspapers:

"I take very seriously, and deeply regret, the nuclear accidents we have had at the Fukushima Daiichi plant. Bringing the situation at the plant under control at the earliest possible date is my top priority. Leading a unified effort by the government, I have mobilized all available resources to combat the risks posed by the plant, based on three principles: first, give the

highest priority to the safety and health of all citizens, in particular those residents living close to the plant; second, conduct thorough risk management; and, third, plan for all possible scenarios so that we are fully prepared to respond to any future situations. For example, we continue to make the utmost efforts to address the issue of outflow of radioactive water from the plant into the ocean. In addition, the government has taken every possible measure to ensure the safety of all food and other products, based on strict scientific criteria. We have taken great precautions to ensure the safety of all Japanese food and products that reach the market and will continue to do so. To assure domestic and foreign consumer confidence in the safety of Japanese food and products, my administration will redouble its efforts to maintain transparency and keep everyone informed of our progress in the complex and evolving circumstances at the Fukushima Daiichi plant.



shima Daiichi plant.

"I pledge that the Japanese government will promptly and thoroughly verify the cause of this incident, as well as share information and the lessons learned with the rest of the world to help prevent such accidents in the future.[...]

"The Japanese people rose from the ashes of the Second World War using our fundamental strength to secure a remarkable recovery and the country's present prosperity. I have not a single doubt that Japan will overcome this crisis, recover from the aftermath of the disaster, emerge stronger than ever, and establish a more vibrant and better Japan for future generations.

"I believe that the best way for Japan to reciprocate the strong *kizuna* (bonds of friendship) and cordial friendship extended to us is to continue our contribution to the development of the international community. To that end, I will work to the best of my ability to realize a forward-looking reconstruction that gives people bright hopes for the future. I would wholeheartedly appreciate your continued support and cooperation."



Prime Minister Naoto Kan surveys the destruction caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake in Rikuzentakata, Iwate Prefecture, April 2.