

21 March 2017

Dear friend,

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> of March marked the sixth anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, which caused unprecedented damage centred on north-east Japan and claimed as many as 18,500 lives, including those who are still missing. The people of Japan gathered on this day to express their condolences and extend their sympathies to all of those who have been affected by the disaster.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe attended a memorial ceremony marking the anniversary in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino. Following a moment of silence, the Prime Minister offered his heartfelt prayers for the eternal repose of the souls of those who lost their lives and prayed for the peace and tranquillity of their bereaved family members on behalf of the government of Japan.

Prime Minister Abe stated that the government will ceaselessly review disaster prevention measures and integrate the latest wisdom and knowledge in our defences with the determination to always take into consideration the valuable lessons learned from the enormous damage caused by the disaster. Moreover, he pledged that the government will exert its united efforts to build a strong and resilient nation that is resistant to disasters. The Prime Minister expressed Japan's responsibility to share with the rest of the world the lessons of the Great East Japan Earthquake, as well as our disaster prevention knowledge and technology that can be instrumental in minimizing future disasters. The government of Japan will further strengthen its international contributions in this field of disaster prevention.

A number of memorial services were also held around Australia. I attended the memorial service for the victims of this tragedy held in the Canberra Nara Peace Park, which was co-organised by the Australia-Japan Society (ACT) Inc., Canberra Japan Club, and the JET Alumni Association of Canberra. Japan will



be forever grateful for the support and assistance it received from all over the world following the earthquake and tsunami.

Australians and Australia were particularly kind and generous with their support, donations and warm expressions of sympathy. Highly skilled Australian rescue teams were deployed to the disaster-stricken areas and the Australian Defence Force sent RAAF transport planes to deliver essential and much-needed supplies. Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard travelled to Japan shortly after the earthquake and was the first foreign leader to actually visit the disaster-stricken areas. Much progress has been achieved since this tragedy, however over 130,000 people were displaced and we are making every effort to find homes for them.

I would like to reassure all Australians that your expressions of solidarity, warm sympathy, kind generosity and offers of assistance extended to those affected by the disaster and their families will forever remain in the hearts of the Japanese people.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to Australia and its people for its tremendous support, which have greatly encouraged us. I would also like to express my utmost appreciation for a number of organisations in Australia, which have provided continued support for Japanese people such as the Australia-Japan Society (ACT) Inc., Canberra Japan Club, and JET Alumni Association of Canberra.



Yours Sincerely,

/S/

Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia