

March 11, 2015

**Statement by Dr. Kazuyuki Katayama, Consul-General of Japan in Detroit,
On the Occasion of the Fourth Anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake**

Four years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011, an unprecedented disaster which resulted in a tremendous loss of precious life and property, mainly in Japan's Tohoku region. On this most somber occasion, I wish to offer my heartfelt sympathy to all of those affected.

In the aftermath of the earthquake and resultant tsunami, we were overwhelmed by the outpouring of compassion and support from the international community, particularly from the U.S., including both Michigan and Ohio. Taking this opportunity, may I once again express my profound gratitude, on behalf of the Government and people of Japan. I assure you that the Japanese people will never forget this kind outreach.

Tragically, two American JET (Japan Exchange & Teaching Program) participants, Ms. Taylor Anderson and Mr. Monty Dickson, dispatched respectively to Ishinomaki City and Rikuzentakata City, perished in the tsunami. To honor their legacies, we held the film event: "Live Your Dream", on March 10, 2015, at the Novi Public Library. The film portrayed the lives and dreams of these two JET participants; it is the third time I have seen it. Viewing together with American and Japanese residents in Novi, along with many JET alums, I was extremely moved and thankful to see so many American friends express their enduring support and compassion for Japan.

As just one example of the heartwarming response from within the consulate's jurisdiction, then-8-year-old Lebanon, Ohio resident, Ms. Mia Moor, held a wristband fundraiser called 'Gaman' (*translation: Fortitude*), and established "Playground Project in Ishinomaki", which provided for the construction of new playground facilities in a destroyed park of Ishinomaki City, her great grandmother's home. With the generous assistance of the University of Cincinnati's architectural department, the playground equipment was constructed in May of 2014, in commemoration of the third anniversary of the earthquake. Mia, her parents, as well as volunteers from Cincinnati, visited Ishinomaki City to celebrate the project's completion, joined by many local residents. This event has become a symbol of our peoples' enduring friendship and Japan-U.S. grassroots exchange.

Last December, Japan launched the asteroid explorer "Hayabusa 2", continuing its pursuit of space exploration. The core technology which made this mission possible was conceived in Fukushima. The government of Japan is encouraging Fukushima's rebirth as a region for world-leading research and new industries. The government stands at the fore and is undertaking maximum efforts to decommission the Tokyo Electric Power Company's Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, and to implement measures to address the issue of contaminated water. In March, the Joban Expressway, which runs through the affected areas of Tohoku, has finally been connected and open. Work has begun on 90% of the projects to transfer housing to high-elevation areas, and on 80% of the public housing projects for disaster victims.

After gathering asteroid samples, Hayabusa 2 will return to Japan in 2020. That same year, Japan will host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We seek further development and growth in the future, hand in hand with citizens of the international community, so to witness the complete transformation of the Tohoku region.