

Remarks by the Prime Minister Naoto Kan at the First Meeting of the Investigation Committee on the Accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations of Tokyo Electric Power Company on June 7, 2011

It is my pleasure to see all of you this morning. First of all, with many of you first to meet, let me extend my heartfelt gratitude to you for undertaking such an important task. Thank you very much.

I assume that every one of you may be feeling the significance of the Investigation Committee more strongly than I do. When I faced problems of HIV infection through blood products as the Minister of Health and Welfare several years ago, Mr. Yanagida provided me with advice and guidance in many ways and investigated the case to determine why the problem had not been prevented beforehand.

On that occasion, Mr. Yanagida pointed out and revealed various problems, indicating that the way of administrative practice was considerably responsible for the occurrence of the incident. In retrospect, I feel sorry and ashamed that I had not been able to thoroughly change the way of administrative conduct in compliance with his indications.

I think all of you are well aware that, although technical aspects have much to do with the Fukushima nuclear accident, it cannot be attributed only to them. In requesting all of you to participate in this committee, I explained three principles as the government's or my own position.

First of all, needless to say, I would like the committee and its members to conduct an investigation in a manner completely independent of the existing nuclear energy administration. The first principle is that, although there have naturally been many positive and negative aspects in the existing nuclear energy administration, I'd like you to make credible and sound judgments independently, not bound by the framework of the existing nuclear energy administration.

Regarding the second principle, the investigation needs to be totally open, which means openness not only to the Japanese public but also to the international community. I request you to firmly maintain this openness.

For the third principle, I would like the Investigation Committee to conduct a comprehensive investigation targeting not only technical but also other issues including the structure of the existing nuclear energy administration. For instance: a closed group, which is often referred as the "nuclear power village," has made decisions on nuclear energy administration with a narrow perspective; in the course of changing regulations, the responsibilities of the nuclear administration became divided among various ministries (for example, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology conducting the monitoring of radiation levels, while other ministries covering different areas); the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, which has

been responsible for regulating nuclear energy policy, has been placed under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which has promoted Japan's nuclear policy.

Having mentioned these three principles, I hope that the committee members have understanding of them, while the government regards them as its own principles.

I sincerely ask Professor Yotaro Hatamura to assume the chairperson of this committee. The other day, I saw what he had said and done on his blog and found his posted lectures interesting. He says, for example, that the combat power of a military force is proportional to the square of manpower and so on. While I nodded uttering "hum, hum," really I could not understand much of it. I know that Professor Hatamura has been making remarks on why a failure occurs, in other words, focusing on the mechanism of failure. I would be grateful if Professor Hatamura chairs the committee, conducts a thorough investigation, and comes up with credible and substantial results.

Please be assured that the government will refrain from making any kind of request seeking to influence the course of the investigation despite the fact that the committee was created as a consultative body at my request. Although it may sound too strong to say that government officials including me are defendants, whenever the committee members want me in person or the government to explain the course of the accident, I myself and other ministers will be ready to attend the committee meeting. In addition, if the committee wants the Cabinet or the government to submit certain materials that they think we have, we are willing to submit them to the committee. So please do not hesitate to request necessary materials.

In other words, although the government formally commissions the committee, I would like the committee to act independently of the government, while keeping the government available for providing full cooperation in all investigation matters.

Lastly, I will touch upon the issue of openness. This is the point the entire world is paying extreme attention to. We are now preparing a report on what we have learned to date about the accident to send to the IAEA shortly for its coming ministerial conference on nuclear safety scheduled this month.

At the recent G8 summit meeting, I expressed our intention to hold an international conference in Tokyo or another place in Japan next year, together with the IAEA in light of the Fukushima nuclear accident. While the occurrence of a nuclear accident is naturally a serious incident, the credibility of Japan as a sovereign state precisely depends upon whether we will be able to win international trust and confidence through our efforts to determine the causes of the accident and disclose all related data and information. In this sense, the world's attention is focused on the committee's investigation. It is not my intention to exert pressure on your efforts, but I would much appreciate if you come up with a final report that satisfies the expectation of the international community.

I may have spoken a bit too long. Please let me close my remarks by expressing again my heartfelt thanks to the members of the committee for accepting the highly important task.