

The 5th meeting of the Investigation Committee on the Accidents at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)

Press Conference by the Chairperson of the Committee Dr. Hatamura

Date/time: November 29, 2011, Tue., from 17:30

Venue: Meeting room 401, JA Building, Otemachi Conference Center

Today, we held the fifth meeting of the Investigation Committee on the Accidents at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO).

In today's meeting, we discussed the draft of an interim report that we are going to finalize by the next meeting on December 26.

The Secretariat prepared the part of the draft that is dedicated to a description of events as a compilation of the investigation results available so far and the opinions of committee members and technical advisers. The part of the draft dedicated to a description of the assessments made by the Committee was prepared by the working group consisting of committee members and technical advisers.

We are going to continue working on the draft based on discussions put forth in today's meeting with further exchange of opinions among committee members and technical advisers.

As to how deep we may go into various subjects in the description of events and the description of the assessments made by the Committee in the interim report, various opinions were expressed at today's meeting.

We are only halfway through the investigation and have not completed hearings from the cabinet members who were involved in decision-making concerning the actions that were taken in response to the accident. Therefore, the scope of the interim report needs to be determined by us carefully through future discussions.

Nevertheless, a predominant opinion in the Committee is to "write as much as possible in the interim report."

The interim report, therefore, is expected to be quite substantial.

Next, I would like to talk about the interviews we had with the mayors of Okuma-machi and Futaba-machi.

Some time has passed since we met on November 9 and heard opinions from the mayors of Okuma-machi and Futaba-machi, the municipalities hosting the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station. I, Chairperson of the Investigation Committee, was accompanied by Mr. Yanagida, Acting Chairperson, and three other committee members: Mr. Takano, Mr. Furukawa and Mr. Yoshioka.

I would like to share with you some of our impressions from these interviews.

The whole communities of both cities have been temporarily relocated to somewhere else: the people of Futaba-machi have moved to Kazo, Saitama Prefecture, while the people of Okuma-machi have moved to Aizuwakamatsu. We visited both of the places to meet and hear from the two mayors. As I heard many stories from them, what struck me most strongly was the anguish of people whose life, their normal daily activities at home and in their communities, was suddenly disrupted as if by an unjustifiable cause which forced them to evacuate their homes.

In addition, I would like to remark that the stories told by both mayors reminded me of the importance of communication following the occurrence of a severe accident such as this one. *What is happening now? In which direction must we move and what is the best course of action to take? How shall we plan our actions from here on out?* Both mayors told us that they hardly received any information pertaining to these questions.

Indeed, it is a shame that such a situation was allowed. They were suddenly driven away from their homes without really knowing why. Moreover, they were not even clearly told about the direction toward which they should evacuate. After they had made a move toward a certain direction, they were told to move toward another direction because it was dangerous to go in the direction they had been traveling. These stories gave me an impression that they were greatly confused by the unreliability of information.

Another question relates to how prepared we had been. In fact, I feel that we were hardly prepared at all.

Neither the government of Japan nor TEPCO had been prepared. Also it appeared that local governments had not been prepared at all to be able to efficiently take measures and coordinate their actions. These are the impressions that both mayors conveyed to us when we met.

As another example of similar impressions concerning the question of preparedness that is of particular significance to us, they said that they had a strong impression that the emergency drills that had been conducted earlier were found to be of little help in spite of the great importance that people had placed on such drills. This, they believe, is because such drills had become a mere formality that usually ended with a casual remark of "Thank you, everyone, for your participation."

They also told us of a strong feeling of how unreasonable the so-called 'Safety Myth' is, that everything is done based on plain acceptance that "nuclear power is safe."

In addition to these comments, they also told us of their doubt about whether they would really be able to go back to their homes again. They have not heard anything that relates to the question of when and how they would be able to go back to their homes. The two mayors are in a difficult situation because they are unable to answer this question as the heads of local communities. However, the greater concern for them is that the members of their communities are at a complete loss as to what to do.

They told us of the great anguish of being placed in a limbo, where nothing is visible, as if by an unjustifiable cause, with no idea about the future and being overwhelmed by the feeling of helplessness.

We went to see the two mayors in order to hear from them about the consequences of the nuclear accident. However, I must acknowledge that our initial focus at the Investigation Committee had been to find out how the accident had happened, how radioactive materials were released and carried by the wind, and how the tsunami struck, for example. The interviews with the two mayors reminded us that the most essential aspect of the accident, even more important than the question of why and how it happened, was the fact that the accident affected the life of a great number of people by forcing them, as if by an unjustifiable cause, to suddenly quit what they had been doing and evacuate, and that they are still unable to go back to their homes. I have come to realize the need to place a much greater weight on this aspect of the accident.

Even though things go on changing in time, I have strongly felt, as I have said, that, apart from questions concerning radioactive materials and other similar questions, the most important aspect of this accident is that the accident caused great disruption to the lives of a great number of people, and that we must give more attention to these people.

This is the summary of what I felt during the interviews with the two mayors.

Now that I have completed my remarks about our meetings with the two mayors, I would like to say something about the international experts.

Concerning our investigation on the Fukushima accident, we are planning to hear opinions from international experts.

During the previous press conference, we announced the names of three appointed experts from the United States, France and Sweden. Today I would like to announce the name of a Korean expert who has agreed to help us.

As printed on a distributed document, his name is Prof. Chang Soon Heung. He is a professor at Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) and the President of the Korean Nuclear Society. He was requested by us to kindly provide us with his opinions.

Presently we are in the process of selecting several more experts from nearby countries.