

Basic Policy for Building National Resilience (Disaster Reduction and Mitigation)

April 10, 2013

Liaison Conference of Relevant Ministries and Agencies
for Building National Resilience

1. Basic Principles

Japan is characteristically vulnerable to natural disasters, but damage due to disasters varies significantly depending on the preparedness of society. In order to avoid repeating the same cycle, i.e., “occurrence of a big earthquake or other disaster → tremendous damage → efforts for recovery and reconstruction over years,” it is important to learn lessons from past experiences, including the Great East Japan Earthquake, and to make preparations in advance, as well.

The most significant lesson we learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake is the necessity of preparing comprehensive measures against low-frequency large-scale disasters, which incorporate national land policy and industry policy and are not limited within the scope of narrowly-defined disaster reduction, as a far-sighted national policy with an eye on the distant future.

For that purpose, we are committed to creating a strong and flexible (resilient) country against any large disasters under the following basic principles:

- Prevent human loss by any means.
- Avoid fatal damage to important functions for maintaining administration as well as social and economic systems.
- Mitigate damage to property and facilities and prevent expansion of damage.
- Achieve swift recovery and reconstruction.

Such concept is referred to as “resilience” in other countries, aiming not only to protect the country from external forces causing disasters but also to secure the resistance and resilience of the overall social and economic systems, broadly covering fields relating to national and local economic societies. Some countries have already been developing plans and systems for building national resilience and such plans and systems serve as the basis of their risk management, under which they promote strengthening of the resilience of the structure of the country as a whole through repeating a cycle of (i) identifying risks, (ii) assessing vulnerability, (iii) establishing plans and taking actions, and (iv) evaluating the results.

Our efforts for building national resilience will not only result in protecting human life but in securing social and economic systems that will never become dysfunctional in any event, and will enable us to enhance our national competitiveness and win the trust of the international community.

Therefore, the government of Japan will promote actions for building national resilience (disaster reduction and mitigation) comprehensively, across ministries and agencies, in collaboration with local governments and the private sector.

2. Future Directions

National risks to be envisaged in building national resilience are diversified, including large-scale accidents and terror attacks, in addition to natural disasters. Government-wide efforts to prepare for such national risks are required, but the government of Japan will first discuss how to build resilience against large-scale natural disasters under the Minister in charge of Building National Resilience.

Based on the basic principles, the following points shall be noted in the discussions:

- 1) Envisaging risks to be caused by low-frequency large-scale disasters, for which sufficient response is considered to be difficult under the framework of conventional programs and measures, the current initiatives by the national government and the vulnerability of local communities should be evaluated and assessed, focusing on sectors to which damage would significantly affect people's lives and national economy.
- 2) When conducting evaluation and assessment as mentioned above, cross-sectoral goals for resilience should be clearly set up.
- 3) Additionally, problems in related organizations should also be examined in terms of their structure, human resources and operation, which is significant from the perspective of maintaining indispensable functions pertaining to people's lives and national economy even in the event of a low-frequency large-scale disaster.
- 4) Based on the results of the abovementioned evaluation and assessment, the government will compile a document, "Immediate Measures for Building National Resilience (Disaster Reduction and Mitigation)" by the end of May 2013. In said document, measures to be taken from a long-term perspective should be clarified in addition to measures required in the short term.

- 5) The abovementioned document “Immediate Measures” will serve as the basis for each of the ministries and agencies when they discuss national resilience-related measures and programs. Measures and programs requiring immediate response are to be selected and prioritized and are to be embodied in making budgets for FY2014. In that process, consideration should also be given to reduction of the total cost through effective use and efficient management of the existing social capital and the active use of private sector funding.
- 6) Proactive PR activities should be carried out to deepen people’s proper understanding of national resilience (disaster reduction and mitigation).