

Opening Address by Ambassador Shiojiri
At the Friends of Europe event on Resilience
Monday March 11th, 2013

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Nearly 20,000 people lost their lives due to the earthquake and tsunami on this day, two years ago.

All of a sudden, families lost children, parents, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers.

Their sorrow will never be healed. Time will never be a good healer.

As Japanese Ambassador to the EU, I am always thankful for the support and encouragement you have given us, during these most challenging years.

For those who lost loved ones, life goes on and they have had to adapt to a totally changed and harsher reality.

And even if their sorrow will not disappear, many of them have chosen to live with their heads up and shoulders back.

The other day, I read a story in a Japanese newspaper about a teacher who was evacuated from one of the most affected areas.

The teacher lost his five-year-old son in the Tsunami.

He said he has an unbearable grief, but, as a teacher, he has devoted himself to teaching children who also escaped from the areas where every resident had to evacuate due to the nuclear power plant accident.

He now dedicates himself to helping the displaced children get back on their feet, and towards a brighter future for the next generation.

There are so many people like him, going through a heartbreaking experience, but still showing resilience.

Those people who suffered tremendously, yet endured hardship with amazing calmness, have quietly, but steadily, begun their own journeys forward.

Looking at their example, we must ask questions, such as:

- How should we act to reduce people's burden and pain?
- How can we establish resilient societies and prevent casualties?
- How can we restore hopes and dreams after a disaster?

We must find answers to these questions and take concrete steps to build resilience.

Today's seminar is the curtain raiser of the Japanese week in Brussels 2013.

Japanese week will feature a range of cultural events and seminars related to Japan, until the 18th of March.

This week aims to give encouragement to those who still suffer the aftermath of the disaster, and show the gratitude of the Japanese people to their European friends.

May I please thank you all for joining us today; and once again thank you for the solidarity you have extended to us.

Thank you.