The Challenge of Japan Tourism in Response to the Earthquake

I am Mitomo MATANO, from Japan Tourism Agency. First of all, I would like to express my deep appreciation for having been given the opportunity to speak at this press conference.

Today, I'll talk about 2 explanations. One is about the state of recovery from March 11th earthquake, and the other one is about the recent situation and our policy of Japan’s tourism.

First, I talk about the state of recovery from March 11 Earthquake. One year has already passed since the Great Earthquake occurred. In the afflicted areas, there still are people who are fighting against adversity, and making efforts to settle down after the accidents at the nuclear power plants. However, the Japanese people have resumed their daily lives in almost every area, and are working for Japan’s future step by step.

On behalf of the Japanese government and people, I again express my heartfelt gratitude to nations, regions and people around the world for their various forms of assistance, including their warmhearted words, volunteer activities and donations.

The earthquake left more than 15 thousand people dead and more than 3 thousand people are still missing. The earthquake itself was a great disaster, and we were terribly suffered from the Tsunami and Nuclear Power Plant crush in addition. But, with regards to railways and roads, except for some coastal areas affected directly by the tsunami, most railways and roads can be utilized. Both domestic and international lines at Sendai airport have been carrying passengers.

AS for Nuclear Power Plant accident, the radiation levels in the air have substantially decreased. Not only Tokyo but also other cities in Japan, normal levels have been consistent since last March except for a few days after the Earthquake. As shown in this table, the different numbers of airborne radiation have been observed throughout the world according to the different natural features.
We have been striving for tourism revitalization with a three-step procedure, after the Earthquake.
To begin with, in the first step immediately after the earthquake, we undertook efforts to confirm the safety of overseas visitors. The Tourist Information Center of Japan National Tourism Organization offered overseas visitors information on transportation and so on, in multiple languages around the clock.
In addition, Japan Tourism Agency and Japan National Tourism Organization launched a website and provided overseas visitors with consolidated real-time information on transportation, radioactive substances and so forth in four languages.

The second step is an approach through professionals.
Through Japan National Tourism Organization foreign offices, diplomatic missions abroad and the like, we have explained Japan’s actual status to the media and others in more than 100 venues up.

We also invited personnel from the media and travel agents, and provided 1000 personnel from 800 companies the opportunity to see the actual conditions in Japan.

And now the third step is on-going.
We approach to general consumers by active promotion through Visit Japan Programs from last October. As example of Visit Japan Programs, Advertisements and other promotions based on each market’s characteristics and Utilization of interpersonal communication such as SNS.

The number of inbound tourists, which decreased by 60% right after the earthquake, has recently improved somewhat to only a 4% decrease.
However, we know that while these are steps toward recovery, we still have a long way to go.
As to domestic tourism, total demand for domestic tourism has exceeded the previous year level. On the other hand, the total number of hotel nights for leisure tourism to Tohoku district has not yet fully recovered.
From this point on, we must continue efforts to restore tourist numbers in the afflicted areas.
From last February, we started new campaign. This new special logo, a rearrangement of the conventional logo used in Japan’s inbound tourism promotion, “Japan. Endless Discovery”, is to express our appreciation once again for warm support we have received since immediately after the disaster in the occasion of the passage of one year.

Having been reminded that Japan exists together with the world by the disastrous effect of the Great Earthquake, we would like to let the world know of our feeling of appreciation and we hope that this bond will continue between us, only in a stronger way than ever before.

There is an old saying of “Toryumon” in Japan. It means the gate one must pass through in order to reach the aimed success. “Toryumon” is also referred to as “a carp ascending a waterfall” and provided an old custom of flying a streamer in the form of a carp.

The carp that successfully ascended the rapid stream is the symbol of our recovery. The poster right side depicts our resolution to ascend our way to recovery, while thanking all of you in the world who have given us support.

Next, I’d like to talk about recent situation and our policy of Japan’s tourism.

According to UNWTO long-term forecast, international tourists arrivals are forecast to reach 1.8 billion by 2030. By 2030, North East Asia will be the most visited subregion in the world, representing 16% of total arrivals and taking over from Southern and Mediterranean Europe, with a 15% share in 2030.

It is true that North East Asia including JAPAN is international tourism markets where the world’s highest growth is expected.

In Japan, tourism plays an important role in the government’s growth strategy. I would like to explain the current status of tourism in Japan. With respect to the inbound tourism situation for Japan, the number of overseas visitors was increased to 8.61 million in 2010. The major factor in that are, for example, an economic recovery, an actively advertisement or attraction activities in important markets, a relief of issuance conditions of visa for Chinese. Moreover an international airline landing slot was increased at Narita airport and Haneda airport.

Meanwhile in outbound tourism, the number of Japanese tourists
overseas in 2010 is increased to 16.63 million (7.5% up from a year earlier).
The reasons are that by a strong yen, a feeling of a comparatively low price worked to traveling abroad. In addition, as well as inbound tourism, expansion of the international airline landing slot contributed to the outbound increase.

However, the number of overseas visitors in 2011 was decreased to 6.22 million. Republic of Korea, China, Chinese Taipei, the U.S. and Hong Kong china are five countries and regions standing in the upper ranking.

In Japan, the direct consumption from domestic travel, including Non- Japanese tourists consumption in Japan, totals 25.5 trillion yen in fiscal 2009, and it generates a ripple effect on production of 53.1 trillion yen. Tourism also creates 4.62 million employments. Tourism is a sector with ample economic spillover effect for plenty of businesses, able to lead to economic activation without depending on national finance administration.
And Japan is blessed with abundant tourism resources.

In this regard, Japan, with the abundant tourism resources, emphasizes tourism. Japanese Government has positioned the promotion of a Tourism Nation as one of the important pillars in its New Growth Strategy formulated in June, 2010. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism is striving to implement this through three specific political pillars of developing ‘the program to attract 30 million overseas visitors to Japan’, enhancing regional tourism attractions by creating original and innovative tourism sites, and staggering taking vacations.

This graph shows a plan of the number of overseas visitors. We have set the target to invite 30 million overseas visitors to Japan. We will continue our best efforts to achieve this ambitious target after overcoming this crisis. We aim to 9 million overseas visitors in this year 2012.
Of those, in ‘the program to attract 30 million overseas visitors to Japan, we have set targets for the number of visitors to Japan to expand to 25 million by the beginning of 2020, and to further increase to 30 million in the future.
Next I would like to introduce you the tourism resources of Japan briefly, on this occasion. Japan is a long narrow country with a national land area of 370,000 square kilometers stretching from north to south, and its climates vary from subarctic to subtropical. So tourists can ski in the northern prefecture of Yamagata even in summer, and enjoy swimming in the ocean in the southern prefecture of Okinawa even in winter. In spring cherry blossoms in Osaka and in Autumn red leaves in Kyoto are attractive tourism resources. Moreover, there are four seasons throughout the land. Japan is blessed with precious natural beauty, such as Meoto-iwa rock in Mie Prefecture. Japan has a unique cultural heritage, which was influenced by a distinctive way of life developed over thousands of years. The capital of Japan was located in Kyoto about 1,200 years ago. I trust you can all feel the ancient air if you are there. But if you travel to Akihabara Electric Town in Tokyo, I think you will sense a buzz among the youth that my generation cannot even understand. In Japan there is always a splendid, brilliant place to visit. I want to emphasize that Japan has the tourism resources to fulfill the diverse expectations of both global tourists and our own people.

We have placed a weight on quantitative expansion as we have explained up until now, in the existing Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan.

We also have acknowledged the concept of the nation toward domestic tourism has become to put an emphasis on qualitative enhancement since the great earthquake occurred.

Specifically, it was not re-realized until an ordinary life of the Japanese people, tradition of its culture, and a linkage with communal society (“gemeinschaftlich” social solidarity) were noticed to have been harmed or lost, and in fact, these were really crucial for the Japanese. And we re-realized that we can be proud of them to the people of all over the world.

In respect to inbound tourism to Japan, Japan’s heritages such as shrines and temples, and nature with distinctive transitions by seasons, it goes without saying that they all have momentous attractions.
However, on top of those, with respect to the attractions inherent to Japanese ordinary life and community, it is reevaluated to be able to sufficiently appeal to tourism from overseas.

In regard to the Tourism nation Promotion Basic Plan for future, while we intend to enhance qualitative level-up of tourism, as its backdrop, there is an enormous change in the Japanese public toward the tourism after the earthquake.

The Japan Tourism Agency is convinced to increasingly expand and deepen the tourism attractions of Japan in the future.

The last page shows the present direct flight network between our two countries. This time I visit here by All Nippon Airways flight via to/from Frankfurt, and the ship is newly launched Boeing 787 that is expected to open new era of international air network. All Nippon Airways introduced this aircraft to Frankfurt first of the world.

We are looking forward to the expansion of flight network for therefore, and a multitude of people visiting to Japan from Germany.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.