Statement of the Executive Committee of Science Council of Japan

Disaster in Northeast Japan and Nuclear Emergency

18 March 2011

An incredibly powerful earthquake of magnitude 9.0 occurred on 11 March 2011 off the Pacific coast of Sanriku, Northeast Japan, and generated huge tsunami, killing a large number of people in and near the coastal areas of Tohoku and north Kanto District. We dedicate our heartfelt condolences to the victims of this unprecedented earthquake and subsequent big attacks of tsunami. Food, drinking water, bedding, medicine, and other emergency relief supplies fail to reach the stricken areas promptly, and the sufferers are afflicted with coldness, hunger, and illness. We wish from the bottom of our heart that warmth of relief reaches them without delay, and that a large number of people still missing are found and immediately brought to their families. We would like to express our sincere thanks to those who are working assiduously for rescue operations with indomitable spirit. In addition, we would like to express our special thanks for the warm words of solidarity and encouragement as well as for prompt rescue operations extended from abroad. Science Council of Japan is prepared for cooperating with every effort aiming at overcoming this tragic situation keeping all those kindness and good will in mind.

In order to overcome and regenerate from consequences of this disaster, it is essential to re-inspect and re-evaluate the relevance of the socio-economic systems of Japan in countering the shock of hazards, and to re-think calmly how far science can actually contribute to prediction and prevention of disasters. Works of re-inspection and re-consideration may be medium/long term issues which require full-scale challenges, but there are also urgently needed emergency missions as follows in order to address the ongoing crisis effectively.

Firstly, the biggest problem we are facing is the emergency of leakage of radioactive materials from the reactors at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant of Tokyo Electric Company. Apart from the issues of investigating into the causes and counter measures of the nuclear power plant accident, preventive measures to minimize the effect of radioactive leakages on the people's lives and health are of paramount importance. We sincerely hope that nuclear scientists get over their institutional or other barriers, cooperate with each other using their knowledge, and find the best solutions from a narrow range of choice.

Secondly, the sense of insecurity people feel in the face of unprecedented disaster is often attributed to a lack of accurate information about the risks and to irrelevance of the ways it is conveyed. Even if the information is serious, or even more so if it is serious, it should be informed accurately to the public. We believe that only with such honesty, based on the cool recognition of the extreme danger of the situation, a call for appropriate action can move the people. The ongoing incidence of leakages of radioactive materials is the case in point.

Thirdly, we have been struck by the fact that Japan failed to design new socio-economic systems based on the bitter lessons of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of sixteen years ago, and to apply them in the face of the present natural disaster, as the fact that emergency relief supplies, which are sufficient in total quantity, fail to make their ways to the stricken areas painfully indicates. Malfunction of transportation network can be explained only marginally by physical damages to transportation network caused by the earthquake and tsunami, and the procedural

aspects of the systems are found no less of the problem.

Science Council of Japan, which represents every aspect of science including humanities and social sciences, has strong intention and ability to give necessary advice for these urgent operations.

Science Council of Japan as the unifying body of academies in Japan humbly admits fragility of the current socio-economic systems of Japan, which became obvious by the present disaster, looks for measures of improvement seriously, and acts with sense of responsibility to explain how to use science and technology in building a new society in Japan that can be handed over with confidence to the future generation.