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Disaster Risk Mitigation Global Discussion & Developments

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Disaster Risk Mitigation is now one of the major issues being discussed at various international venues, including the United Nations and the OECD, against the background of increasing awareness of the need to be well prepared for large-scale natural disasters, such as Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

The UN Sendai Conference in March 2015 sent a message to the world that we should get together and collaborate with each other, not only at national government level but also among private businesses and individuals and NGOs, to be well prepared for disasters. Knowledge of how to minimize potential damage inflicted by a disaster is a starting point for Disaster Risk Mitigation, but it is a much broader concept involving national resilience against any disaster and requiring collaboration and coherent efforts among all the players in a globalized world to achieve it. This is mostly a matter of software and not hardware, and thus education and exchange of information among national governments, private sectors and NGOs would be instrumental in achieving it.

In this issue we introduce some discussions on this topic in the international arena. Two distinguished academics, Adjunct Professor Rajib Shaw of Kyoto University and Professor and Vice Dean Vesselin Popovski of the Law School at Jindal Global University in India, and two international organizations' chief executives, Dr. Neil McFarlane, chief of Regional Programmes and Disaster Risk Reduction Coordination for UNISDR, and Dr. Rolf Alter, director for Public Governance and Territorial Development at the OECD, discuss various aspects of the international agenda for disaster mitigation. It is noteworthy that international discussions have reached the stage of being disseminated worldwide, such as

the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction promoted by UNISDR and the OECD Guidelines for Disaster Risk Mitigation, which could have a significant impact upon a nation's disaster risk management from now on.

Regina Pritchett, a representative speaker at the Sendai Conference, talks about the promotion of disaster risk mitigation among young people, emphasizing the importance of the role of communities, and women in the community, in particular.

What are the Japanese thinking and doing about disaster risk mitigation in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami? We present the views of three Japanese government leaders on how building national resilience can be achieved. National resilience from a long-term perspective is the ultimate goal to be achieved by a wide range of measures for disaster risk mitigation, not only minimizing possible damage inflicted by a disaster. Prof. Satoshi Fujii of the Engineering Department at Kyoto University is the brains behind the blueprint for a national resilience project, and Masato Komura, councillor of the Cabinet Secretariat, and Taro Seto, director for Policy Planning at the National Resilience Promotion Office of the Cabinet Secretariat, are the policy practitioners implementing this project.

I hope you will find these discussions of the theoretical and practical aspects of the issue, as well as the international discussions, enlightening. Needless to say, disasters can strike us at any time, so we all need to learn many lessons to manage disaster risks.

Naoyuki Haraoka, executive managing director, editor-in-chief of Japan SPOTLIGHT