

Today marks 10 years since the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Once again I would like to express our condolences to the families of those who lost their lives. The Great East Japan Earthquake was a complex disaster of unprecedented scale, but thanks to the efforts of people in the affected areas and the efforts of various people, in Japan and from abroad, the reconstruction of the affected areas is making steady progress.

Immediately after the earthquake, a rescue team from South Africa, the first emergency rescue team ever dispatched to Japan from Africa, arrived at Iwanuma City, Miyagi Prefecture.

The rescue team from South Africa risked their own lives to lend a hand of support to save the lives of people and give them hope.

Today, Iwanuma City is the Host Town for Team SA for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, and continues to engage in grassroots exchanges with South Africa.

I would like on this commemorative day to say once again how grateful Japan is for all the assistance we have received from South Africa. We will never forget your friendship and goodwill extended to Japan at the moment of such an unprecedented challenge for our country.