Address by H.E. Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan, at the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security September 22, 2011 New York

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Mr. President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. The accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Stations of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) has raised a profound issue of how humankind should deal with nuclear energy. I commend the insight of the Secretary-General for his leadership in convening this meeting, taking the opportunity of the United Nations General Assembly, for which representatives of states around the world assemble.

2. Since struck by a massive earthquake and tsunamis, the people of Japan have been receiving very heart-warming encouragement and support from all over the world. On behalf of all the Japanese people, I should like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to you all.

3. Science and technology have aided the progress of the human race and brought prosperity to every corner of the world. For over half a century, since it made use of most advanced high-technology to take its first stride towards the civil uses of nuclear energy in 1957, Japan has researched and applied means to use nuclear power safely, and fostered and developed its nuclear industry so diligently that the whole nation suffered a serious blow by the recent accident.

4. For the last half a year, since the accident occurred, Japan has been struggling, with all its strength by concerted efforts throughout the nation, to bring the accident under stable control at an earliest possible timing. As the person in overall charge of those efforts, I visited the site of the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Stations of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) immediately upon taking office as Prime Minister this month, and observed the reactor buildings from up close.
This very fact demonstrates the steady progress in our efforts to bring the accident under stable control.

5. Through the dedicated efforts of our people involved, we are steadily moving closer to stable control of the accident. The most recent estimates indicate that the amount of radioactive materials being discharged is now being held down to a level one-four millionth of the level at the early stage of the accident. We are now making every effort to achieve the state of cold shutdown of the reactors roughly within 2011, ahead of schedule. Improvements to the situation are being sustained by the dedicated efforts of over 2,000 workers who continue their work in steadfast perseverance even as they expose themselves to the dangers of radiation and heat stroke. We would be remiss to forget that fact.

6. The unimaginable destructive force of the enormous tsunami, which reached a height of 15 meters, has left traces that can still be found even now in the tsunami-stricken areas. At a minimum, there is little doubt that we had overestimated our preparations for tsunamis. It is clear that electrical power supplies for emergency use and pumps should not have been situated in locations that could be submerged by tsunamis. Insufficient were preparations for a severe accident that would result in damage to the reactor core. Making a vent took more time than expected, causing loss of precious time. While a full-scaled process to discover the cause of the accident will continue for some time, we have identified "faults", as well as "lessons learned" from them. Full-fledged inspections to be conducted based upon these on the safety of nuclear power station both within Japan and abroad should be a most urgent task ahead of us.

7. Japan will disclose to the international community all the information related to this accident, in both swift and accurate manner. We have already presented two reports to the IAEA on the course of events. The Investigation Committee on the Accident at Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations of Tokyo Electric Power Company is conducting a comprehensive investigation of the accident from a neutral and objective standpoint and will release its final report next year. Japan will hold an international conference to be co-hosted by the IAEA next year, through
which we will share with the international community the results of our comprehensive inspections and our charted courses of actions towards the safe use of nuclear energy.

8. Japan will send out to the whole world lessons learned through this accident. It has already made proposals to the international community, such as the strengthening of co-operation and co-ordination among regulatory authorities of nations, the reinforcement of the international assistance mechanism in the case of nuclear accidents, and a review of the IAEA Safety Standards. The international community has responded to it. The leaders of the Group of Eight in Deauville, and the ministers of a larger number of states in Paris, declared their determination to raise the safety of nuclear power to the highest level in the world, and today an Action Plan on Nuclear Safety was endorsed by the IAEA General Conference. These are all very welcome developments.

9. Japan is determined to raise the safety of nuclear power generation to the highest level in the world. In addition to the emergency measures already taken, we plan to establish "The Nuclear Safety and Security Agency" around April of next year, by separating off the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, to accomplish the independence of nuclear regulation from promotion, for the purpose of centralising the regulatory system and ensuring a thorough safety culture. We will also fundamentally reinforce nuclear safety regulations themselves.

10. Japan stands ready to respond to the interest of countries seeking to use nuclear power generation. For several years, emerging nations and many other countries around the world have earnestly explored ways of using nuclear energy amid the needs for energy security and for responses to global warming. Japan has been supporting their efforts, including their improvements of nuclear safety. Japan remains steadfast in responding positively to their interest in our undertakings.

11. In parallel, Japan will also take lead to increase development and use of renewable energies. Japan will redouble efforts to increase development and use of renewable energies by mobilising the advanced technologies in the possession of both the public and private sectors.
Japan will also present practical strategies and plans around the summer of 2012 concerning the composition of energy sources over the medium and long terms.

12. Japan will also participate actively in efforts to ensure nuclear security. The preparedness for terrorist attacks on nuclear power facilities and exchanging security information among relevant authorities of countries should be important tasks. I will take part in the Nuclear Security Summit next year, and will join actively in international undertakings in this field. Japan will for its part reinforce its measures to protect its nuclear materials and facilities.

13. Energy is the 'lifeblood' of the economy and serves as a foundation for the daily human lives. In a broader context, it impacts the peace and prosperity of the entire human race. It is the cornerstone of the well-being of not just our own generation but of our future generations as well. We can ill afford to continue wavering for a long time concerning our next actions. We must mobilize science and technology to the maximum extent possible to decide urgently on our next actions, rationally grounded.

14. I am confident that the human race will be able to utilise its wisdom to overcome without fail the challenge thrust before us by this nuclear accident. I am confident that, for Fukushima, the day will come when it is remembered as "the place where, through people's strong will and courage, a new era was opened for the future of humankind." And indeed, I am confident that today's meeting will serve as a signpost for the next actions we should take together in order to raise the safety of nuclear power to the highest level. I should like to close my remarks by pledging that Japan, as the country in which this accident occurred, will dedicate itself to shouldering its responsibilities and taking action.

Thank you very much.