



Council of Local Authorities for International Relations

On behalf of CLAIR, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the outpouring of support we have received from local governments overseas, government organisations and JETAA chapters the world over since the Great East Japan Earthquake. We have been truly touched by the warm letters of condolence for the victims and the generous offers of tangible support directed to both our Tokyo Headquarters and Overseas Offices.

In addition to efforts started through channels such as the Japan-China-Republic of Korea Local Government Exchange Conference, the Japan-France Local Government Exchange Conference and various JETAA chapters, the circle of support from sister cities in countries like United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand has continued to grow. Many sister cities have sent support, both physical and emotional, to their counterpart cities and citizens. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for this support.

As an organisation dedicated to promoting and supporting sister city exchanges, we were strongly reminded of the extremely important role played by grassroots level international exchange in all circumstances, even in trying times such as during the recent disaster.

Among the JET participants affected by this disaster, some remained in the devastated areas to volunteer their time towards restoration and rebuilding, alongside local residents. AJET, an organisation of which most current JET participants are members, has volunteered much of its time in working hard to provide multilingual disaster-related information and to raise funds.

JET Alumni Association chapters all over the world promptly called for support to help Japan. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to those affiliated with the JET Programme who have offered their courageous and heart-warming support to those affected by this disaster. The strong ties built between JET participants and Japan through the JET Programme's long history is tremendously encouraging.

It is extremely painful to have to report the tragic loss of two American youth, participants on the JET Programme, who were working at schools in the disaster-hit areas. These participants loved their students dearly and dedicated their daily efforts to serving as a bridge between Japan and their home country, and both enjoyed deep and profound love and respect from members of their local host communities. The more I learn about their achievements, the more I am impressed by the pivotal role that the JET Programme plays in local communities, and I feel an acute sense of honor and responsibility that comes with being involved with the programme. While expressing deep sorrow at their loss, I also feel a strong sense of gratitude for their contributions and I commit to working, in their memory, towards the improvement of the JET Programme.

Japanese local governments highly appreciate of JET Programme participants and their role in promoting foreign language education and international exchange at the local level. CLAIR will continue to cooperate with the central government and local governments to provide them with accurate information regarding the situation in affected areas, especially in light of the nuclear accident. We also ask that local governments bear in mind the needs of those JET Programme participants living and working in the affected areas. Along with local governments, CLAIR also looks forward to welcoming new JET Programme participants to Japan.

Since the earthquake, CLAIR has also published multilingual disaster-related materials so that affected foreign residents affected would have access to accurate information and support. CLAIR also provides assistance to local international exchange associations and will continue to cooperate with the relevant authorities in order to provide sustained assistance to affected foreign residents.

CLAIR is also eager to promote the return of foreign tourists to Japan as a means of revitalizing local economies. Our overseas offices are active in this respect, and we hope to provide ongoing assistance for the many initiatives undertaken by local governments.

Drawing on the powerful warmth in all the messages of encouragement coming from current and former JET participants and other people the world over, CLAIR will continue in its efforts to contribute to the revitalization of local communities. We will assist local governments in the promotion of exchange activities and, by so doing, build a country that is much stronger, even in the face of this devastating earthquake.

These efforts do not only stand to benefit Japan, but I think they will be of great benefit to all countries as we all inhabit a sometimes harsh natural environment. As one South East Asian visitor to CLAIR last year observed, "Japan has overcome major natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes and volcanoes to achieve a high level of economic development and build a comfortable society. Our country also experiences major disasters such as floods, earthquakes and volcanoes. Japan's ability to overcome these natural environmental challenges and build a future serves as a great source of inspiration for us".

Relying on this global support and solidarity, CLAIR, through our Tokyo Headquarters and Overseas Offices, remains committed in our contribution to the fulfillment of this mission.

Thank you.



Yoko Kimura
Chairperson of Board of Director, CLAIR