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Notice from Kazuyuki Yano,
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Damages of National Properties Caused by Earthquake
(The 1st Immediate Report)

A huge earthquake with magnitude of 9.0 hit North Eastern side of Japan at 2 : 46pm on March eleventh, 2011. Caused by this disaster, a lot of people and properties were lost or damaged, as well as many cultural properties.

I appreciate all the care and words of encouragement by colleagues from ICOMOS.

I would like to announce we did not have any colleagues of JAPAN ICOMOS found lost or missing fortunately. However, more than 20,000 people could be lost or missing in total caused by earthquake and Tsunami this time. This is considered to be one of the largest natural disasters in Japan.

Most of victims are from Tsunami, not by an earthquake. We had Tsunami so many times in the past, as “Tsunami” came from Japanese word, some people might have wondered why the damage was so devastating this time. The earthquake was the biggest one in history after we had measuring system for earthquake, and Tsunami was much bigger than people’s prediction; some of Tsunami was over 10~15 meter, or even 20 meter.

Agency for Cultural Affairs is now working for collecting all the information regarding the damages of cultural properties, but it is still unclear. So far we found that almost 240 properties were damaged, that are limited to designed or registered property by nation. The number could increase from twice to three times if including designed properties by local government and unregistered properties. Severely damaged properties, as in collapsing ones, are just a few in all the damaged properties we found so far. Most of damages are miner as in cracks on walls or damaged roofing tiles.

On the other part, famous “Matsushima”, one of the three representative sceneries in Japan, were severely damaged by Tsunami, and there were a few collapsed properties (though repairable).

We do not have major damages as many as when Han-shin Awaji Earthquake hit Japan 16 years ago. The reason could be because of difference in

earthquake frequency. However, damaged properties are spread in a wide range(700km in north and south×100-200km in east and west). Although most of the damages are minor, number are so many.

“Shrines and Temples of Nikko”, one of the world heritages, are found not much damaged, and “Hiraizumi,-Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites representing the Buddhist Pure Land” currently on a tentative list, did not get major damages either.

We can easily imagine that we are going to encounter a lot of problems for recovery process. For now, we would like to make all the effort to collect information and to analyze them. Based on the Agency of Cultural Affairs’ information, we would like to report it once it’s organized.

Lastly, crisis of a nuclear plant caused by Tsunami are being broadcasting all over the world, and people should be very worried about it. However, Tokyo has not been affected by radiation. We would like to continue normal activity.