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April 16, 2012

His Excellency Ichiro Fujisaki
Ambassador of Japan
2520 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

Having just visited the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station with your government's gracious assistance, I am writing to convey my deep sympathies to the people of Japan for the enormous tragedy that occurred as a result of the March 11th earthquake and tsunami as well as my concerns about the risks that continue. The scope of damage to the plants and to the surrounding area was far beyond what I expected and the scope of the challenges to the utility owner, the government of Japan, and to the people of the region are daunting. The precarious status of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear units and the risk presented by the enormous inventory of radioactive materials and spent fuel in the event of further earthquake threats should be of concern to all and a focus of greater international support and assistance. I will be asking the appropriate agencies in the United States Government to assure me that they are making all appropriate resources available to assist the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and the Japanese government in these efforts.

As a senior member of the United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and as a Senator representing a region also vulnerable to tsunamis, I appreciate your help in allowing me to visit the plant in person. As we observed in our travel through the evacuation zone to the nuclear plant, the impact on the region extends far beyond the plant itself and it is important to learn whatever lessons that can be learned from this event for the future use and development of this energy technology.

The damage to the six units at the site as a result of a combination of earthquake, tsunami, and resulting hydrogen explosions from the damaged plants have clearly resulted in a very difficult remediation effort. After stabilization of the reactors themselves and control of contaminated water used to cool the reactors and spent fuel pools, efforts to address safe storage of radioactive materials and spent fuel seems paramount. The buildings that house four of the plant's reactors are only a short distance from the ocean, and only about thirty feet above sea level. These buildings – all of which appeared to be badly damaged – still contain many spent fuel rods. While it will likely take a number of years to fully retrieve damaged fuel from the reactors themselves, retrieval of spent fuel stored in the existing on-site spent fuel pools to safer storage either in dry casks or at the new centralized storage facility at Mutsu or a combination of these should be a priority given the possibility of further earthquakes over the several decades of response activities now proposed by TEPCO. Loss of containment in any of these pools, especially the pool at Unit 4 which has the highest inventory of the hottest fuel, could result in an even greater release of radiation than the initial accident.

TEPCO's December 21, 2011 remediation roadmap proposes to take up to ten years to complete spent fuel removal from all of the pools on the site. Given the compromised nature of these structures due to the events of March 11th, this schedule carries extraordinary and continuing risk if further severe seismic events were to occur. The true earthquake risk for the site was seriously underestimated and remains unresolved. I look forward to hearing from you on what efforts can be made to accelerate this schedule and how the United States can be of assistance to the Japanese

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regulatory agencies to help oversee TEPCO's response activities. I am also interested in what is being done to improve estimates of the risk of future tsunamis at the site.

In times of great tragedy, it is important for members of the international community to help one another and the March 11 earthquake and tsunami caused a level of damage and devastation that was of extraordinary proportions. Many nations possess expertise in nuclear energy technology, including the United States, and the full breadth of that international expertise should be made available to Japan in dealing with this crisis.

In this regard, I will also be asking U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and Gregory Jaczko, the Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to detail the level of additional assistance their agencies can provide to TEPCO and to your government to address this and other technical and humanitarian challenges at the site and in the region.

Seeing the extent of the disaster first hand during my visit conveyed the magnitude of this tragedy and the continuing risks and challenges in a way that news accounts cannot. I extend to you my personal offer to assist in any way that I can to secure and remediate the Fukushima Daiichi plant and the surrounding region – a region and population that has suffered a terrible and continuing ordeal from three separate, but related catastrophes; an earthquake, a tsunami, and multiple nuclear power plant failures.

Finally, I wish to thank you, the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and TEPCO for helping to facilitate my visit to the plant. Many people are working very hard to bring the plant to a safe, long-term condition under difficult conditions and I truly appreciate their efforts to accommodate my visit.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Gregory Jaczko
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission