Japan has a lot of experiences of natural disasters such as earthquake, tsunami, typhoon and flood, thus disaster risk reduction is one of our high priority agenda. Japan also sees the right of persons with disabilities and other socially disadvantaged people equally important even in disaster risk reduction.

Even before the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Japanese legal system had taken into consideration of persons with disabilities.

Japan revised the Basic Act on Disaster Management in 2013. This Act is the most important and fundamental law about disaster risk reduction in Japan. The revised Act recognizes persons with disabilities as part of “persons requiring special care,” together with older persons, infants, and others.

This Act requests the local governments to make their best efforts to collect information about the persons who will have a difficulty and need supports in evacuation and to pay a special attention to them.

Cabinet Order for Enforcement of the Basic Act on Disaster Management, which was also revised in 2013 requires the evacuation facilities to be easy to be used without difficulties by persons with disabilities. It also requires that persons with disabilities can ask for advice or help to these facilities, when needed.

Japan also works hard for implementation of these legal frameworks. In 2013, the government of Japan established a guideline about the preparation for the disaster with taking into consideration of people with disabilities for the local governments. As a result of these efforts, many local governments in Japan have disaster preparedness plan with the consideration about persons with disabilities.

I would like to introduce an example of Japanese local governments. A year after of huge flood in 2003, Sanjo-city in Niigata Prefecture, has identified the person who will need special help at the time of disaster and made a list of
those people in 2004. The city asks its citizens with disabilities to let the city know only if they do not want the city to collect the information. The city updates the list four times a year and two among four updates are full-scale one. It also takes into consideration of persons with disabilities in preparing the evacuation facilities. For example, special attention is paid in one among ten facilities in the city.

In March 2018, the Government also provided another guideline on the visualization of evacuation guides for the smooth evacuation of persons with disabilities. In addition, the Government has provided and distributed leaflets about evacuation in order to raise awareness.

Having a partnership with private sector is also important. Japan conducted projects in 2019 and 2020 to train volunteer leaders who support rescue and relief efforts, and to train disaster response leaders who take leading role in responding to disasters with well-taking into account of various types of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the national Government also provided subsidies for projects to build welfare support networks by private businesses and organizations.

However, participation of persons with disabilities or organizations of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction policy and plan making and implementation of these policy and plan requires a large amount of scale up. We would like to work further for improving the preparedness status of persons with disabilities.