

Remarks by Prime Minister Noda at the Press Conference
on November 11, 2011

(provisional translation)

Today is November 11th. Exactly 8 months has passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake hit Japan. On this occasion, I wish to express my renewed commitment to deal with the recovery and reconstruction from the Great Earthquake and the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station accident as a top priority.

With regard to the issue of participation in the negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement, there has been a series of intensive discussions held by the members of the ruling party, the government and various segments of the public. Even after the launch of the Noda Administration, the Economic Partnership Project Team of the ruling party held more than 20 meetings and spent more than 50 hours on discussions. I myself have pondered on this over and over, listening humbly to the various views from different sectors. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who were involved in intensive discussions and offered their ideas and knowledge from broad perspectives.

I have decided to enter into consultations toward participating in the TPP negotiations with the countries concerned, on the occasion of the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting which I will be attending from tomorrow.

To be sure, I am fully aware that while the TPP has large benefits, numerous concerns have also been spelled out.

I love my country, Japan, from the bottom of my heart. My mother is from a farmers' family, and I remember that I spent my early childhood days in the farming village being carried in a basket on my mother's back. The sceneries of the calm farming village and

the smell of the earth from those old days remain as the starting point of my memories. Japan's medical system which we boast to the world, our traditional culture, and the beautiful farming villages... I am strongly determined to keep these virtues and realize the reconstruction of a stable society supported by a robust middle class.

At the same time, Japan, which established today's prosperity as a trading nation, must incorporate the economic growth of the Asia-Pacific region in order to pass our wealth on to the next generation and to further develop a vibrant and robust society.

From this point of view, we will start consultations with the countries concerned, make efforts to gather further information as to what each country would expect from Japan, and, through sufficient national debate, reach a conclusion on the TPP faithfully from the viewpoint of our national interests.

Questions & Answers

Question:

As Prime Minister clearly stated in the beginning that Japan will enter into consultations with the countries concerned with regard to the TPP, I take it as an announcement of the intention to participate in the negotiations.

I have two questions. First, yesterday at the Government-DPJ meeting, you said that you wanted one day to consider this fully, and postponed this announcement for one day until today. Meanwhile, there is still growing opposition among the "cautious" parliamentary members of the DPJ, and there are voices of concern about a break-up or confusion in the DPJ. How do you see the current situation?

Second, the Government this time merely confirmed this in the

Ministerial Committee, but this Ministerial Committee is consisted of all the Ministers. So the Government could have chosen the Cabinet Decision alternatively, as I think this is a suitable theme to demonstrate the position and determination of the Cabinet to the public. What is the reason then for the Government to not go through the process of Cabinet Decision?

Answer:

On the first question, the Economic Partnership Project Team had intensive discussions over a long period, and produced a proposal. I was briefed on this proposal from DPJ Policy Chief Maehara yesterday. The point was whether or not to announce participation in the negotiations at the APEC. Some said it was too early or we should not participate, while others said I should announce it. There were more members who took the former position. As a result, the suggestion was that I should take act cautiously. So there was such suggestion, and as such I pondered on this issue in light of this. But as a result of the intermittent Government-DPJ meetings as well as the consultations with the relevant Ministers, I came out with and put forward the direction I mentioned.

On the second question of why there was no Cabinet Decision, this is a matter of whether to enter into consultations on the TPP, and no diplomatic negotiation requires a Cabinet Decision before entering into consultations. This is true in every case, and a Cabinet Decision is required in cases of, for example, the Government signing or ratifying a treaty. So please do not have a misunderstanding on this. But again, I explained the direction and the policy I just mentioned at the Ministerial Committee, where all the Ministers are present, so it is my intention to act in accordance with this policy.

Question :

You said that the Government will be participating in the TPP negotiations, but there are voices in the US Congress about how

serious Japan really is with the rule of eliminating tariffs in principle. You said yourself that you want to reach a conclusion on the TPP from the viewpoint of our national interests, but difficult negotiations are expected in the road ahead. What are your concrete perspectives in securing the national interests under such circumstances? Would there be a possibility of a withdrawal from the negotiations if you judge that it is not in line with Japan's national interests? You also mentioned agriculture, but how and when are you going to take measures on agriculture, including in the Fourth Supplementary Budget?

Answer:

I understand that the TPP is basically aiming to eliminate tariffs within ten years in principle. I believe, however, that the specifics such as how many tariff lines would be eliminated immediately or how many tariff lines would be eliminated step by step within longer terms and or if exceptions from tariff elimination would be accepted, are yet to be decided. So as we enter into the consultations, I would like to have thorough consultations in order to realize our national interests.

As we enter into the consultations, our basic position is that we will protect what we should, and gain what we should, and make utmost efforts in order to maximize national interests.

With regard to your question of budgetary measures on agriculture, we drew up the Basic policy and Action Plan for the Revitalization of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Industries in October. There are items such as gathering and expanding farming units and the Sixth Industrialization included in it. The Basic Policy and Action Plan are to concentrate efforts to implement these within five years. We would like to take necessary budgetary measures based on that.

Question :

Prime Minister is leaving for the APEC in Honolulu and I believe

is going to convey the policy. Are you going to announce it in the meeting among the TPP participating countries or in the meeting with President Obama? On what occasions will you convey Japan's intention?

Answer:

I will depart for Honolulu tomorrow, but rather than the APEC itself, I believe that there will be a meeting by the TPP countries. Though I am not yet sure if we would be treated as an observer or not, but if possible, I would like to convey our intention on this occasion. Also at the same time, I would like to use the occasion of the Japan-US summit meeting to convey our intention to the US, who is the Chair, and as such, I wish to convey fully our intention to each of the countries concerned.

Question :

Why didn't you first make a definitive statement that the Government will participate in the TPP negotiations and then enter into discussions at the Diet?

What are the reasons why the fifty-hour discussions in the Project Team you mentioned were not open to the public and were maintained as closed-door sessions?

It seems that the proponents, who are apparent minority in the Project Team, argued that the TPP is important in terms of national security rather than economy. Their point is that it is necessary to deepen the relations with the United States in terms of security as often stated by Policy Chief Maehara. I think the TPP is seldom discussed in connection with security issues openly in the public. Please explain your view on this point.

Answer:

As a result of the decision making process in the Government and the party, I was unable to come to the conclusion before the Diet deliberations. I believe, however, that we could discuss the basic

issues such as merits or demerits of the TPP. I think I should continue to explain on various occasions for discussions in the Diet.

When it comes to the Project Team, I am not so sure about under what kinds of rules the meetings were held. We also had an open discussion on the internet for example with regard to the TPP issues. I think we, as the Government and also the ruling Party, have to make efforts to reach as many people as possible to contribute to the nationwide discussions.

When it comes to the discussion of the TPP from the viewpoint of security, I personally believe that the significance of the TPP lies in its economic value of incorporating the growth in the Asia-Pacific region. Particularly, as a trading nation and an investor nation, Japan, by participating in TPP, can expand its frontier in the Asian –Pacific region. So I thought first and foremost of economy when thinking about Japan’s presence in the future Asia-Pacific region, and as such figured out the direction.

Question :

You stated that the Government will enter into consultations toward participating in the TPP negotiations with the countries concerned. But you did not say that the Government will participate in the negotiations in a straight-forward manner. You said you wanted to ponder on this for one full day since yesterday. Please explain the reason why the expression came to be the one you used.

Answer:

What I said is that we will enter into consultations toward participating in the TPP. This I believe is the very first step of the process to maximize our national interests. Until today, concerning the TPP, we were to have consultations to gather information on it, based on the Basic Policy on Comprehensive Economic Partnerships drawn up last November. But by making

further steps forward, we are now to have consultations toward participating in the negotiations