

March 1, 2012

## Independent Panel Issues Report on the Fukushima Nuclear Accident



The Independent Investigation Commission on the Fukushima Nuclear Accident, established in September 2011 by the Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation, has since been delving into the causes of the nuclear accident at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and the failure to contain its damage from an independent, private-sector perspective. The Commission announces its 420-page *Report* after six months of thoroughgoing research and analysis. Unlike the reports issued by the governmental and Diet panels, the Commission's findings are truly independent, unfettered by concerns for existing organizations and frameworks. The Commission summarized its findings and recommendations in the *Report* with the hope that the lessons of Fukushima accident would be shared broadly throughout Japanese public, including those directly affected by the disaster, as well as people around the world. The English edition is scheduled to be published in summer 2012.

### ORGANIZATION

The Commission consists of six highly knowledgeable **Commissioners** with technological, legal, and energy expertise as well as active concern about the accident (see list below). It is chaired by University of Tokyo Professor Emeritus Koichi Kitazawa, an eminent scientist who until September 2011 was president of the Japan Science and Technology Agency.

#### Commissioners

Koichi Kitazawa (chair), Former President, Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST)

Tetsuya Endo, Former Chairman of the Board of Governors, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Keiichi Tadaki, Special Counsel, Mori, Hamada, & Matsumoto; former Prosecutor-General

Ikujiro Nonaka, Professor Emeritus, Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy, Hitotsubashi University

Mariko Fujii, Professor of Economics and Finance, Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, University of Tokyo

Kenji Yamaji, Director-General, Research Institute of Innovative Technology for the Earth (RITE)

The six Commissioners provided guidance and supervision to the **Working Group** comprising approximately 30 university and think-tank researchers, lawyers, and freelance journalists who carried out the necessary research and verification activities for the drafting of the *Report*. Areas of expertise of the Working Group members range broadly from nuclear engineering and political science to international relations and crisis management. Please refer to the last page of the *Report* for member profiles.

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## METHODOLOGY

Hearings were conducted of officials involved in the accident in an attempt to create an oral history. Their testimonies were analyzed through a framework of proximate, intermediary, and remote causes. Government leaders at the time of the accident were invited as guests to Working Group meetings for interviews lasting two to three hours. Roundtable interviews on specific topics were also held with government officials and experts.

A short list of major interviewees (excluding those asking for anonymity) is as follows. In addition to those on the list, many others offered background explanations through unofficial hearings. In all, interviews were conducted with approximately 300 people. The Commission on multiple occasions contacted TEPCO seeking hearings from managers and disclosures of information, but the requests were turned down. For this reason, information about TEPCO is based on hearings conducted with retired TEPCO officials and through unofficial meetings.

## MAJOR INTERVIEWEES (and date conducted)

Working Group	Roundtable
Tomihiko Taniguchi, Former IAEA Deputy Director General (August 27, 2011)	Toshiso Kosako, Special Advisor, Cabinet Secretariat; Professor, University of Tokyo (December 20, 2011)
Banri Kaieda, Former Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry (October 1, 2011)	Ken'ichi Shimomura, Cabinet Councillor (December 20, 2011)
Hiroyuki Fukano, Director General, Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) (October 15, 2011)	Yasutaka Moriguchi, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (December 22, 2011)
Tetsuro Fukuyama, Former Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary (October 29, 2011)	Shunsuke Kondo, Chairman, Japan Atomic Energy Commission (December 26, 2011)
Goshi Hosono, Minister of the Environment and Nuclear Disaster Minister (Former Special Advisor to the Prime Minister) (November 19, 2011)	Kohei Otsuka, Former Senior Vice Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare (December 27, 2011)
Kenkichi Hirose, Special Advisor, Cabinet Secretariat; Former NISA Director General (November 26, 2011)	Nobuyuki Fukushima, Member, House of Representatives (January 10, 2012)
Yukio Edano, Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry; Former Chief Cabinet Secretary (December 10, 2011)	Kazuo Sakai, Director, Research Center for Radiation Protection, National Institute of Radiological Sciences (NIRS) (January 13, 2012)
Haruki Madarame, Chairman, Nuclear Safety Commission (December 17, 2011)	Yutaka Kukita, Deputy Chair, Nuclear Safety Commission (January 20, 2012)
Naoto Kan, Former Prime Minister (January 14, 2012)	Hiroshi Tasaka, Former Special Advisor, Cabinet Secretariat; Professor, Tama University (February 2, 2012)
Hitoshi Yoshioka, Vice-President, Kyushu University (member of the government panel on the Fukushima accident) (January 21, 2012)	



## CONTENTS

A detailed testimony by one of the workers at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant is the prologue of the *Report*. It describes what the worker saw and experienced during the first hours after the plant had been stricken by the earthquakes and tsunami. The main text consists of four parts:

- Part 1:** The damage and accident responses at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plants
- Part 2:** The emergency responses taken by the government ministries, local governments and first responders; crisis management by Prime Minister's Office; and the reality of chaotic evacuation
- Part 3:** The historical context and structural factors that led to the negligence of safety improvement
- Part 4:** Global contexts: International nuclear safety regime, nuclear security and US-Japan relations

The major issues discussed at length in the *Report* are as follows:

- **Parallel chain reactions:** The placement of numerous reactor units and spent fuel pools in close proximity to one another heightened dangers.
- The **worst case scenario** was just narrowly averted. Our investigations led to the disclosure of the scenario's existence by the government last December. (**scenario's full text in the Report**).
- **Crisis management in the inner circle of the Prime Minister's Office:** The decision-making structure in the face of an unprecedented compound disaster.
- Caught in one's own trap of the "**absolute safety myth**" that weakened safety mechanisms.
- **Information management:** During a crisis, how much information should be publicly disclosed and what should be communicated to the public; the growing role of social media.
- **SPEEDI:** Reasons for the delay in publicizing SPEEDI data and its impact on evacuation decisions.
- **Warnings from the international community:** Failure in sharing concerns and threat perceptions
- **Lapses in safety regulation governance:** Problems in overlapping jurisdiction over nuclear power that came to light in the wake of the disaster.
- Fukushima Daiichi **Director Masao Yoshida:** Disruptions in command from the Prime Minister's Office to TEPCO and Fukushima Daiichi; problems in violating instructions from the top.
- **Leadership:** Political versus bureaucratic leadership in times of crisis.
- **Vulnerability to disasters:** Evacuation centers, local governments, and medical facilities.
- **Off-site centers:** Why these crisis management facilities remained idle.
- **Japan-US relations:** Information gap and "whole of government" approach during the contingency.

## THE REBUILD JAPAN INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

The Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation (RJIF) was launched in September 2011 with funding from private-sector companies that endorsed our aim of establishing a politically neutral, not-for-profit public interest organization. RJIF's mission is to conduct high-quality, independent research and to provide innovative and practical recommendations toward the reconstruction of the Japanese socio-economic system. In and beyond this, RJIF was conceived as a worldwide networking hub and incubator of ideas among opinion leaders, relevant organizations, and media outlets.

**Yoichi Funabashi**

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Chairman, Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation

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