

Speech by Ambassador of Japan
HE Mr Toshihisa Takata for the Opening of the Slow Slip
Workshop
School of Geography, Environment and Earth Science, Victoria
University of Wellington

Professor Grant Guilford, Vice Chancellor,
Professor Martha Savage,
Scholars,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
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Kia Ora.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to speak at this workshop, and would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Martha Savage for her invitation. It fills me with pride to see scholars from Japan and New Zealand gathered here today, to discuss something which influences the lives of Japanese and New Zealanders alike: earthquakes. In particular, slow slip earthquakes, which are being studied and monitored in both countries, as I'm sure will soon be explained in more depth by people with far more expertise than myself!

New Zealand and Japan are very similar geographically, despite being on opposite hemispheres. We both are located over multiple fault lines, with similar movements by the tectonic plates upon which our countries lie. Of course, due to this, we have beautiful mountain ranges in our countries; however it is usually the less enjoyable results that stay so vividly in our minds.

Particularly in 2011, both of our countries were shaken by disastrous earthquakes, one after the other: first in Christchurch, then in the Tohoku region. This affected the lives of so many people from around the world, but mostly those of Japanese and New Zealanders. More recently in 2016, Japan and New Zealand once again were affected by large earthquakes, in Kumamoto, followed later around Kaikoura. Earthquakes are a part of our lives, and we must always look to improve our strategies in preparing for and recovering from these natural disasters. What better way to do this, than to have experts from each country come together and share their knowledge and ideas?

As two countries so similar not only in geographic, but also in diplomatic and political structure, Japan and New Zealand, with our strong, friendly relationship, are very well placed to work together in identifying and learning more about the structure and make up of our seismic events, and also how to then approach reconstruction in the aftermath. I am sure that workshops such as this one will be very fruitful for everyone involved, and hope to see this cooperation continued in the future. I truly believe that by working together we can significantly decrease the damage that earthquakes cause to our countries, and those around the world.

I hope that the presentations and discussions today and tomorrow provide everyone with greater understanding and motivation to better equip Japan and New Zealand against the damage that earthquakes can cause. Along with this, I hope that through workshops such as this one, we are able to deepen further the bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two countries. Finally, as a resident of this beautiful city of Wellington and of New Zealand, I wish all the participants from Japan to enjoy staying here at its best season. Happy summer. Thank you.