

【Family Memorial Service: Address of Remembrance】

Fifteen years have passed since the Christchurch earthquake.

On this solemn milestone, as this Family Memorial Service is being held, I would like to extend my heartfelt words of remembrance to those who lost their lives and to their bereaved families.

First of all, I would like to express my deepest condolences to the bereaved families and all those concerned who are gathered here today.

I would also like to express my profound respect and gratitude to Mr Rod Thompson, chair of the Quake Families Trust, who has long led the organisation of this memorial service, and to all members of the Quake Families Trust for their dedicated and tireless efforts over many years.

Furthermore, as Ambassador of Japan to New Zealand, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mayor Phil Mauer for their continued support and compassion for the bereaved families over the years.

Today, bereaved family members from Japan are also present with us.

Some families are participating via live streaming from Japan.

With the kind understanding of the organisers, I will now continue my remarks in Japanese.

(Remarks delivered in Japanese)

With the kind understanding of the organisers, I will now continue my remarks in Japanese.

First, once again, I offer my heartfelt condolences to the souls of those who lost their lives in the great tragedy fifteen years ago, and to their bereaved families.

At 12:51 p.m. on 22 February 2011 – 8:51 a.m. Japan time – that devastating earthquake struck, and in a single moment took away precious lives, peaceful and hopeful daily lives, and bright futures. Fifteen years have passed since that day.

Yet the feelings of the bereaved families that could not be fulfilled – the hopes of parents, siblings, and loved ones who sent their children, mothers, and brothers and sisters to this distant land for English study, saying, “Take care and do your best” –

can never be healed, no matter how much time may pass. It is nothing short of heartbreaking.

Then what, indeed, can those of us who remain do?

We must never allow the historic tragedy of that day to fade from memory. We must continue to tell its story and build a resilient society that is strong in the face of disasters for the future. I believe this is the mission of those of us living today, and the greatest tribute we can offer to the departed souls.

For the threat of natural disasters is by no means a thing of the past.

Here in Christchurch, while reconstruction has steadily progressed, I understand that exchanges have continued, carried on by the students and colleagues of the victims, who have inherited their aspirations.

Just last week, a Japan–New Zealand joint workshop on earthquake and tsunami research was held, further strengthening cooperation between our two countries in the field of disaster prevention.

It is precisely because both Japan and New Zealand have repeatedly experienced major earthquakes that we must never forget the memory of this disaster. I am convinced that a strong bond — a bond of overcoming difficulties together — has been, and must continue to be, forged between us.

The Embassy of Japan will continue, without change, to stand close to the bereaved families, while also supporting cooperation between our two countries in the field of disaster prevention.

In closing, I once again pray for the eternal peace of the departed souls and for the well-being of all the bereaved families, and I conclude my words of remembrance.

22 February 2026

Makoto Osawa

Ambassador of Japan to New Zealand

Thank you very much.