Many precious lives and property were taken by the magnitude 9.0 earthquake that shook eastern Japan on March 11, 2011 and the giant tsunami that followed, as well as the subsequent intermittent aftershocks.

In the wake of past disasters, such as the 1896 Meiji-Sanriku earthquake and tsunami, the 1933 Sanriku earthquake and tsunami, and the 1960 Valdivia earthquake and tsunami, Iwate Prefecture has implemented tsunami countermeasures, including coastal levees and other disaster-prevention facilities, as well as regional disaster prevention efforts. However, this tsunami was much larger than previous ones, and the damage it caused was on a scale that not even Iwate, a prefecture that has experienced a great number of disasters in the past, had witnessed before.

Now, with this indescribable situation before our very eyes, the residents of Iwate are all determined to make this tsunami the last one to cause loss of human life, and overcome the pain and sadness of the destruction to return to a society in which people can safely live and work.

This Iwate Prefecture Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Reconstruction Plan (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”), developed by Iwate Prefecture based on recommendations from specialists and academic experts, starting with the Iwate Prefecture Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Reconstruction Committee (Chairman: Katsumi FUJII, President of Iwate University), while taking the opinions of affected residents, cities, towns, and villages into sufficient consideration, aims to realize such goals. The approach of the Plan is to provide long-term support for the reconstruction of affected cities, towns, and villages based on scientific and technical expertise, upon which the entire prefecture, starting with coastal areas, will overcome the earthquake disaster by establishing plans that will act as the area’s future blueprint for dynamic reconstruction.

Set out to protect lives, live harmoniously with the sea and land, and create a homeland Iwate and Sanriku, the Plan consists of three basic principles: ensuring safety, rebuilding lives, and regenerating industries. The Plan also includes basic approaches and steps towards reconstruction, from immediate issues to aspects of community reconstruction, such as building safe and secure disaster-resistant cities and regions, ensuring employment and the maintenance of residential environments so that affected residents can quickly return to their daily lives, and regenerating the fishing industry, a key industry in Iwate.

The goal of this Plan is to act as the catalyst for affected regions, starting with coastal areas, to take on a central role in Iwate’s future in order to achieve reconstruction together with independent organizations that form the framework of the community, thus establishing a Reconstruction Organization that uses available resources to achieve community-based reconstruction. The spread of support and participation from everyone throughout Japan and the world will create momentum, and it is through this collective strength that reconstruction will be achieved by remaining open to the help from within Japan and from around the world.

It is our firm belief that this community-based approach to reconstruction will also point to the direction that global tsunami prevention should take in the future.

Reconstruction from the widespread and extensive damage caused by this earthquake and tsunami is truly a national issue, and the road to recovery will not be an easy one. However, it is our sincere hope that this Plan will allow all residents to overcome the damage that was caused and steadily make progress on this road together, embracing their hopes of building an even stronger homeland Iwate and Sanriku.