

My name is Hiroyuki Kada. I am a member of the House of Councillors of Japan and deputy leader of our delegation.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for this opportunity to address the 152nd IPU Assembly, which brings together parliamentarians from over 120 countries.

On January 17, 1995, my home prefecture of Hyogo was struck by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, which claimed more than 6,400 lives. At that time, I was a journalist, reporting on the efforts of those working toward recovery and reconstruction. It was through that experience that I felt with piercing clarity the sanctity of life as well as the true significance of politics. And that experience became the very foundation of my commitment to public service.

The concept of Build Back Better, as advocated by Hyogo Prefecture during our recovery from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, has since become a global standard for disaster recovery. Throughout numerous reconstruction efforts, the principle of creative reconstruction—which aims not merely to restore the pre-disaster state but to build back stronger—has been steadfastly carried forward.

Turkey, like Japan, is a nation prone to earthquakes. In 2023, the Turkey–Syria region suffered devastating damage from earthquakes. In the aftermath of such disasters, Japan and Turkey have always extended mutual support at both the national and local levels. Guided by the principle of creative reconstruction, Hyogo Prefecture has utilized donations from the public to support children orphaned by disasters as well as to provide training and assistance in disaster prevention and mitigation.

In recent times, it has been deeply distressing to witness the destruction of lands across the globe, caused not only by natural disasters but also by wars and conflicts. First and foremost, it is imperative that we, as parliamentarians gathered here at this IPU Assembly, ensure that our diplomatic efforts are robustly directed toward the earliest possible end to these conflicts.

Furthermore, I firmly believe that the principle of creative reconstruction—which we have cultivated through our history—can contribute significantly to achieving peace. In fact, Hyogo Prefecture has been exploring ways to apply the principle of creative reconstruction to the recovery of Ukraine, even amidst the ongoing war. We have compiled a set of recommendations centered on three key concepts: securing funding for reconstruction, fostering active citizen participation, and ensuring the transmission of experiences and lessons learned.

Japanese culture includes a tradition known as *kataribe*—storytellers who have survived a disaster and who pass down their lived experiences to future generations. This practice is essential to ensure that these memories do not fade away and that the lessons learned are translated into concrete disaster prevention and mitigation efforts.

I am committed to sharing this tradition of the *kataribe* with the world as a new form of public diplomacy. I firmly believe that this tradition, which transforms personal experience into collective wisdom, holds the power to foster empathy and understanding, thereby contributing to the prevention of future disasters as well as conflicts and wars

History is shaped through the sharing of accumulated memories and lessons learned. Let us once again fully recognize the power of discourse—the power of our voices—and together, let us commit to firmly transforming anxiety into hope.

With that, I conclude my remarks. Thank you.