

*Second Expert Group Meeting on the Great East Japan Earthquake  
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Coordination of International Disaster Relief  
during the Great East Japan Earthquake  
– A Perspective from the Government Headquarters –

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# 1. Institutional Arrangements

## Basic Disaster Management Plan

The plan was revised in July 1995 after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake to define procedures to accept and facilitate international disaster relief.

### Basic Disaster Management Plan (excerpts)

#### Chapter 1 Disaster Prevention

The government should prepare procedures necessary to accept and facilitate international relief.

#### Chapter 2 Emergency Response

- When an offer for relief is reached from abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should notify the Government Disaster Management Headquarters of its type, size, expected arrival date and destination.
- The Government Headquarters should determine whether to accept the offer.
- When the Government Headquarters accepts the offer, a plan for facilitating the relief should be prepared according to the pre-defined policy, and be notified to the offering country as well as related ministries and local governments.

## Inter-Ministerial Agreement

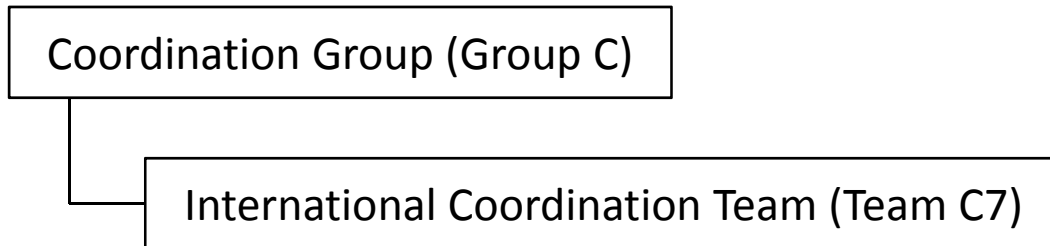
An inter-ministerial agreement was drafted in 1998 to assess concrete areas of relief and determine responsible ministries.

### Potential Areas of International Relief and Responsible Ministries (partial list)

Potential Areas	Responsible Ministries
Search and rescue (including handling of rescue dogs)	National Police Agency, Fire and Disaster Management Agency, Ministry of Agriculture (for quarantine), Ministry of Justice (for immigration)
Medical staff	Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Ministry of Justice (for immigration)
Food	Ministry of Agriculture
Water	Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
Daily essentials	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry
Monetary aid	Cabinet Office

## 2. Government Disaster Management Headquarters

### (1) Structure of the Headquarters



Functions:

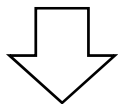
- 1) Review offers of international relief
- 2) Coordination with related Ministries for facilitating the relief work, once the offer is accepted

### (2) International Coordination Team

#### Initial Capacity

(located at Emergency Operations Centre in the Prime Minister's Office and No. 5 Government Building)

Started activities with 4 members, consisting of MoFA, MoJ, FDMA under supervision of a CAO deputy-director



Gradually expanded

A director-class staff from MoFA was later added under which officers from CAO, MoFA, MoJ, FDMA and MLIT were staffed (8 members at maximum)

After 20 March  
when Headquarters for Supporting the  
Lives of Disaster Victims launched

#### After the launch of the Headquarters for Supporting the Lives of Disaster Victims

(located at the auditorium of the Cabinet Office)

Supervision: Director (MoFA)  
Senior Coordinator (MoFA)  
Staff: CAO, MoFA, MoJ, MoF, MLIT, MHLW, NPA, MEXT, JTFC  
No. of staff: 16 members at maximum

Note: In the Headquarters for Supporting the Lives of Disaster Victims, the team became also responsible for coordination of domestic and international aid from private companies. The above list includes members for this function.

### (3) Key Activities and Dates

Evening, 11 Mar.	Notification from MoFA of first international offers (8 offers as at 6pm)
Night, 11 Mar.	Establishment of the team in Emergency Operations Centre (ca. 10pm)
12 March	Korea (1 <sup>st</sup> ) and Singapore SAR teams arrived, requested NPA to cooperate
13 March	Germany, Switzerland, US, China, UK and NZ teams arrived, requested FDMA to cooperate (SAR teams continued to arrive during March)
14 March	Relief goods from China (900 tents, 2,000 blankets and 200 flashlights) arrived (goods continued to arrive during March and April)
17 March	Issued an advisory to relevant ministries on facilitation of international relief goods
20 March	Launch of the Headquarters for Supporting the Lives of Disaster Victims
23 March	MoFA issued an advisory to its diplomatic missions on needed goods
27 March	Medial team from Israel arrived (the only full-fledged medical team)
30 March	An offer list of relief goods provided to affected municipalities
20 April	Free domestic transport services provided by DHL
9 May	The team downsized and merged with other teams

## (4) Key Results

### Human Aid

The Government Headquarters provided the following services in order to facilitate SAR teams: 1) review of team capacities before arrival; 2) designation of cooperating agencies; 3) facilitation of immigration procedures; 4) transport to the designated site (as appropriate) in cooperation with relevant ministries. The following SAR teams were facilitated by the headquarters:

Republic of Korea, Singapore, Germany, Switzerland, United States, China, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Mexico, Australia, France, Taiwan, Russia, Mongolia, South Africa, Turkey, India

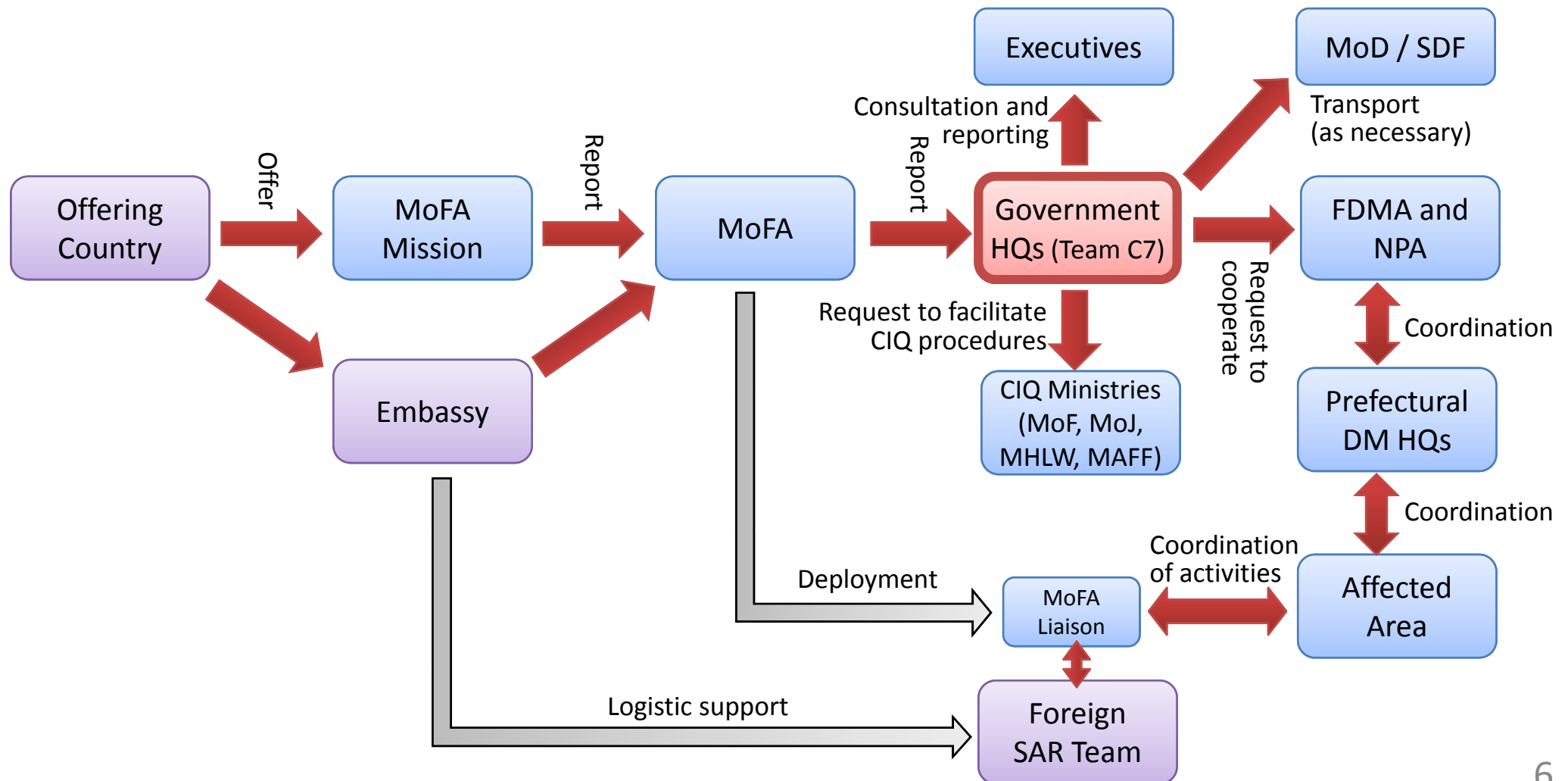
### Goods Aid

The Government Headquarters facilitated distribution of relief goods offered by foreign governments by studying and developing local needs from affected municipalities and matching them with the offers. The headquarters also supported domestic transport and interim storage as necessary. The following list shows examples of relief goods that the Government Headquarters matched with needs. Offered country names are indicated in parenthesis.

Coats (Israel), socks (ROK), underwear and socks (Viet Nam), water (ROK, Thailand), retort food packages (Singapore), corn flakes (Thailand), canned foods (Kazakhstan and Indonesia), tea bags (Sri Lanka), coffee beans (Tanzania), masks (Thailand), towels (Viet Nam), blankets (Mongolia, France, Turkey, ROK and Thailand)

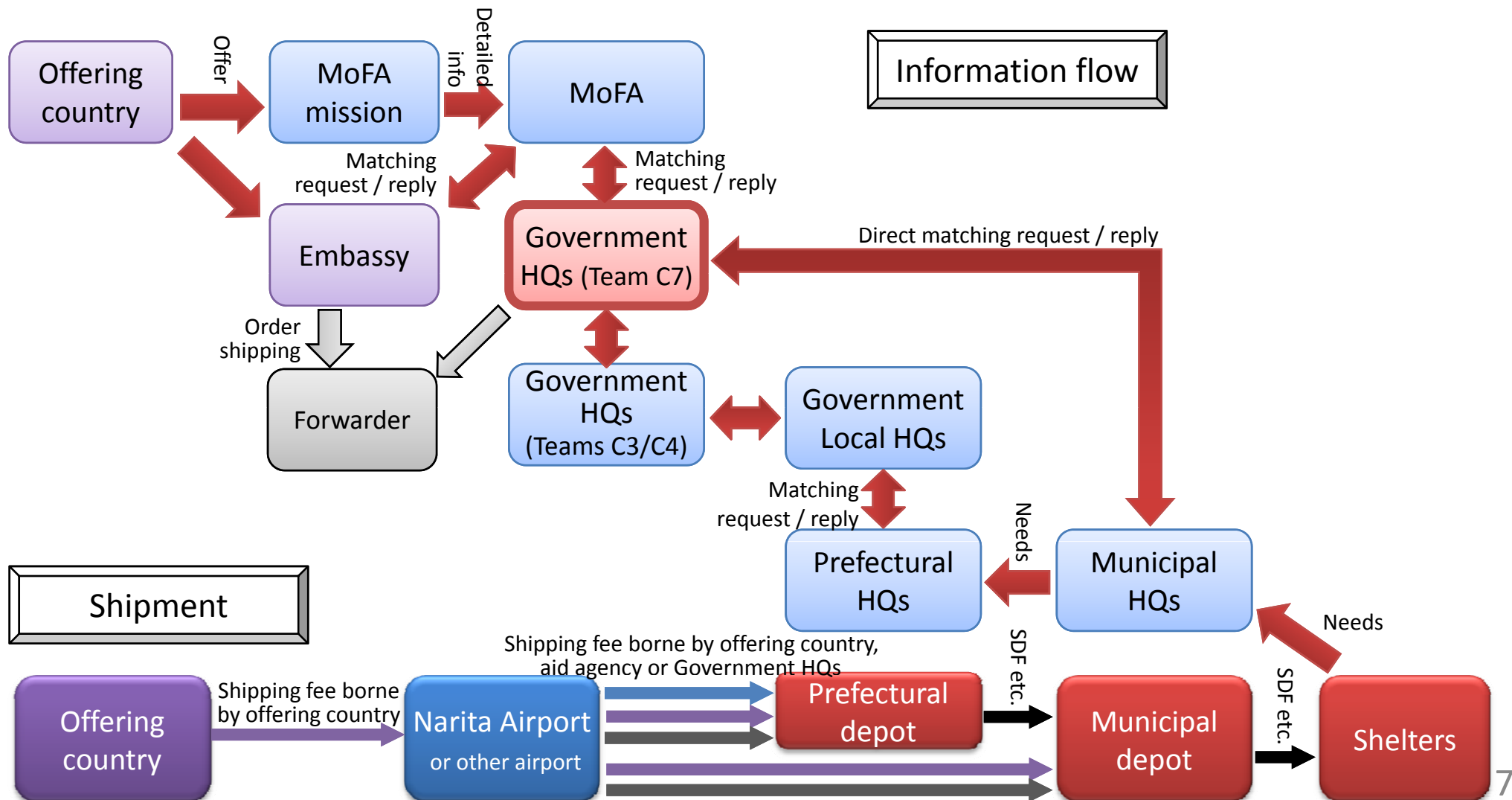
## (5) Roles of Government Headquarters in Facilitating SAR Teams

The Government Headquarters requested Fire and Disaster Management Agency (FDMA) and National Policy Agency (NPA) to cooperate with SAR teams. It also supported immigration and domestic transport. At the local level, liaison officers from MoFA coordinated with SAR teams.



## (6) Roles of Government Headquarters in Facilitating Relief Goods

Since it was difficult to utilise the mass-procurement and mass-shipping channels within the Headquarters, the Headquarters' team directly contacted municipalities and matched their needs with offered goods. The majority of goods were transported by the offering countries.



## 3. Lessons Learned

### About Human Aid

#### (1) Facilitation of SAR Teams From Early Stage

- Because of the magnitude of the disaster and the disruption of communication tools, it was practically impossible at earlier stage to match the offered supports with actual needs of the disaster-affected area – which was against the procedures prescribed in the operations manual.
- In anticipation of future disasters where the grasp of local needs might be difficult during the initial 2-3 days, rules and procedures for rapidly determining the acceptance of foreign SAR teams at the national level and sending them to the affected area should be developed.
- On the other hand, the entry of the SAR teams to the country was facilitated with the full support from the ministries responsible for customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ).

#### (2) Domestic Transport of SAR Teams

- Self Defense Forces (SDF) provided transport services to a number of SAR teams that did not have their own means of transport. However, as the amount of SDF's own operations grew, it became difficult to rely only on SDF in providing transport services.
- On the other hand, many SAR teams moved by their own, by hiring trucks and buses, bringing them from their own countries or requesting support from US Forces Japan.



## (2) Domestic Transport of SAR Teams (continued)

- At times of large disasters, as the operating agencies will be occupied with their own operations and may lack the capacity to provide transport services, it might be realistic to request the offering countries to support their own SAR teams through their embassies in Tokyo. A close collaboration with the embassies should be promoted in this regard.
- On the other hand, the Government Headquarters should facilitate the activities of international SAR teams by designating their vehicles as emergency vehicles and/or rationing gasoline along with domestic rescue agencies.

## (3) Coordination with Local Forces

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatched its staff as liaison officers that accompanied to SAR teams and supported their activities in the affected area. This had facilitated local coordination. However, there was confusion about the equipment and the roles of the liaison officers.
- It is necessary to formalise the work of liaison officers by prescribing them in a manual.

## (4) Support from US Forces Japan

- Initially there were some cases where the Government Headquarters coordinated offers of support from USFJ. Majority of cases were handled directly by SDF or relevant ministries.
- Ministry of Defense later declared to serve as the focal point for any kind of request to USFJ. Similar arrangement should be established in advance in preparation for future disasters.

## (5) Medical Teams

- Along with SAR teams, offers of support to dispatch medical teams were made from various countries. Their acceptance was quite limited, however, because of the lack of local needs.
- It is understandable that the affected communities feel reluctant to accept medical teams because of linguistic and cultural barriers.
- Moreover, measures to deal with potential claims against injuries and damages by SAR or medical teams should be prepared.

## About Goods Aid

## (6) Matching the offers with needs

- Initially, efforts were made in the Government Headquarters to use Team C4 (goods coordination team) as the focal point and find out the needs from affected areas that can be met or complimented by foreign relief goods. It turned out difficult, however, to combine the foreign relief goods whose specifications, amounts and arrival dates were unclear as part of the supply stock, while it was the urgent requirement for Team C4 to transport domestically-procured goods in a large volume and at once.
- On the other hand, local needs at municipal level became gradually clear and Team C7 in the Government Headquarters decided to conduct matching based on local information it collected with the support from prefectural international offices or through direct phone calls to municipal offices.

## (6) Matching the offers with needs (continued)

- Specifications of goods, such as quality, taste and shape, often differ from those of goods found in Japan. Matching was therefore made with due care, with such efforts as checking the taste beforehand by Japanese mission and then sharing the details with municipal officials.
- In this way, matching of foreign goods takes time. Moreover, it takes longer time to ship goods to Japan. It sometimes happened that the needs vanished before the goods arrived.
- For future, it might be considered to accept foreign relief goods without completing matching. In order to do this, the issue of domestic transport, as described below, should be cleared.

## (7) Domestic transport and interim storage of goods

- The issue of who will bear the burden of expenses was raised.
- Disaster Relief Act and related national subsidy were not utilised for transporting foreign relief goods because the law considered prefectures as primary relief bodies while the matching of foreign goods was made primarily with municipalities. Another reason was that the application of Disaster Relief Act seemed inappropriate for goods that were offered by foreign countries.
- The use of Cabinet Office's reserved fund for fiscal year 2010 was also considered but only applied to one case. It was difficult to complete matching and confirm origins and destinations of transport by end of the fiscal year (March). Another obstacle was the fact that the fund was applicable only to the three most severely damaged prefectures (Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima).

## (7) Domestic transport and interim storage of goods (continued)

- Consequently, majority of foreign relief goods were transported domestically by the offering countries. Nonetheless, considering the fact that when Japan provides relief goods to disaster-affected countries it only transports goods to national hub airports, the assisting countries might have been overburdened.
- Even if Disaster Relief Act or the reserve fund was used, it might have been difficult to use them to such activities as storing and sorting goods at the arriving airport and packing several goods for the same destination. Therefore, it is necessary to consider in advance the ways in which expenses for domestic transport of relief goods from abroad, especially from foreign countries.

## (8) Partnership with international organisations and private companies

- In addition to the above cases, some international organisations and private companies offered domestic transport for some of the foreign relief goods for free of charge. Other companies also provided a warehouse at Narita Airport and the management of the warehouse for free. Moreover, although with limited results, partnership with NGOs was also sought. In order to facilitate goods transport and matching for future disasters, utilisation of those external resources should be studied.

### (9) Strengthening of the Government Headquarters

- As clearly shown this time, coordination of human aid will be needed and should start immediately after a disaster strikes. It is therefore necessary to conduct certain preparatory works such as securing staff and conducting drills. The utilisation of staff in Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) who have expertise in emergency relief should also be considered.
- Matching of relief goods requires certain amount of staff. Because the coordination with municipalities may not finish in one day, it is advisable to assign staff for the same task for a certain duration of time instead of rotating them day by day.
- As the nature of human and goods aid from abroad changes as the emergency response phase progresses, it is necessary to flexibly secure needed staff for each phase.
- Even though international assistance has already been included in the government's table top drills, the scenario should be improved reflecting the experience for this time.

### (10) Clarifying conditions for accepting international relief

- In order to avoid rejection, inconsistency or confusion when accepting international relief, it is necessary to clarify in advance the conditions as much as possible and show them to offering countries when a disaster strikes. It should also be promoted to share information about Japan's system for accepting international relief with other countries.