

Appreciation for the Work of Albanian Authorities

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BY MAKOTO ITO*



Ambassador Makoto Ito

I want to express my sincere condolences and sympathy to the families of those deceased in these tragic circumstances, as well as my wishes for the swift recovery of those who are currently infected and undergoing treatment or self-quarantined in their homes.

My appreciation goes to the doctors, nurses, police officers, soldiers and everyone who in these moments of fear and sorrow, are risking their health and wellbeing in order to perform their duties, going at work and doing their best to protect and cure everyone else.

I also appreciate the work of the Government of Albania and the Albanian authorities in charge of the emergency response. So far, they have promptly taken the necessary measures to ensure everyone's safety and preventing further spread of the infection. Their work over the last couple of weeks in order to assess and address all the needs of the people affected by the coronavirus has been commendable. I also commend people who join the fight against COVID-19 and respect the orders or instructions of the Albanian authorities.

My country also has applied many measures similar to those taken by the Albanian government. Japanese citizens have been advised to avoid traveling abroad when unnecessary. We have imposed entry restrictions on travelers from infected countries, including on Japanese citizens. Travelers coming from certain affected countries are being asked to stay at home or in hotels for 14 days after arriving in Japan and not to use public transportation. Also there are many flight restrictions at some major Airports in Japan.

The government has recommended to close schools until a further

announcement and to cancel sports events and concerts. Massive gatherings are cancelled, and citizens need to respect some hygienic measures at the office, home or public spaces. Subsidies are being provided for those who work without regular work contracts and those forced to take time off from their jobs to care for school-age children who can no longer attend school. Many Japanese researchers, experts and authorities are cooperating with world experts and World Health Organization (WHO) to find a vaccine or a cure for the eradication of the coronavirus.

In addition, our government has pledged to contribute more than 136 million USD to several international organizations, among which the WHO, as part of its international contribution in the fight against the COVID-19. Of this amount, 28.8 million USD will go to UNICEF, 23.8 million USD to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and 24.6 million USD to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation (IFRC).

On a final note, I want to add that just two days ago, Prime Minister Abe had a phone meeting with the International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and agreed to postpone for 1 year the Summer Olympics and Paralympics, in the wake of the growing coronavirus pandemic. We hope to be able to organize the Summer Olympics and Paralympics by summer 2021 at the latest. We hope that this 1 year postponement will serve to ensure that athletes coming from all over the world will be able to perform at their best conditions, while at the same time ensure the security and safety of all visitors and spectators, as this is Japan's responsibility as the host country.

**Ambassador of Japan to Albania*