

Letter from Mrs Ruiko Muto, a resident of Fukushima, to the World Health Organization

Greetings to all those who work at the WHO.

My name is Ruiko Muto and I live in the province of Fukushima, Japan.

Five years after the nuclear accident waves continue to roll over our province – Fukushima - but these waves consist of incitements to residents to return to their homes and to start reconstruction. At local as well as national level, all sorts of measures are being implemented in preparation for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. Day after day, the nuclear accident is being erased from our consciousness as if it were all over.

But this is very far from the truth

At the reactor site, the problem of contaminated water continues to worsen. And every day 7000 people work there in very difficult conditions and are exposed to significant levels of radioactivity.

The state and the Fukushima authorities have cancelled evacuation orders from danger zones, one after the other, while the level of radiation has not sufficiently decreased.

Radioactive waste generated by decontamination activities are put into bags and piled up just about anywhere and everywhere in the province, sometimes buried in the school playground or in people's gardens. Many residents live in close proximity to these bags of waste.

Normally, radioactive waste has to be placed in special yellow drums under strict supervision and control. However, due to the huge quantities involved, the authorities are resorting to a rough approximation of waste management.

The number of deaths following the catastrophe exceeds 1900 people in the province. And many cases of depression and suicide have been reported in the temporary housing where some of the evacuees are still being accommodated.

The number of thyroid cancers in children and adolescents in Fukushima has reached 115 (confirmed cases of cancer following surgery, out of 153 cases presenting malignant or suspected malignant cells, according to figures published on 30 November 2015). The provincial authorities that undertook these health examinations acknowledge that the incidence is very high but still deny that the phenomenon is related to the nuclear accident. Furthermore, no investigation is being conducted to determine the cause of these cancers and more detailed medical examinations are not being undertaken.

Similarly, concrete measure to reduce exposure to radiation are not being applied. Residential visits to non contaminated regions for the children of Fukushima (to permit decontamination of their bodies) are not being organized

by the authorities.

On the other hand, residents are being offered a variety of « courses in radioactivity». These courses advance the theory that «the province of Fukushima now offers safe conditions in terms of radioactivity».

We are experiencing the creation of a new security myth in relation to radioactivity and we fear that residents are being prevented from expressing their concerns or doubts.

It has to be repeated, loud and clear.

Yes, the accident at Fukushima is ongoing. Its damaging effects continue and they continue to spread while changing their form.

Ladies and Gentlemen of WHO,

What we need at Fukushima at this moment is systematic epidemiological studies. We have to be able to undertake serious studies of the consequences of radiation on residents, in particular the children. And it is urgent to implement measures to limit the effects of radioactivity.

We ask the WHO to assume leadership and take measures to protect the health of Japanese children. We make this request solemnly and we are counting on your response.

Thank you

Fukushima, 11 March 2016

Ruiko MUTO