

**For Immediate Press Release**

**STATEMENT OF PROTEST AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF JOINING THE TPP NEGOTIATIONS**

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe officially announced his decision to join the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) talks on March 15, by saying that the Japanese government will engage in the talks with strong negotiating power. Prime Minister Abe also stressed at the press conference that he will keep the election pledge and commitment he made with the Japanese public and he will keep his promise to protect Japanese food and agriculture.

Prime Minister's preemptive decision to join the TPP talks in such a forceful way is not acceptable because there are widespread concerns among the Japanese public that TPP pact will completely change Japan's economic structure. I, together with farmers around the nation, strongly protest and denounce the Prime Minister's decision.

Although the Prime Minister has made it clear that entering the TPP negotiations is not based on the premise that total tariff elimination without sanctuary is required as is stated in the Japan-US Joint Statement, it is extremely regrettable that the government has rushed into announcing participation to the negotiations while the official estimate by the government has not been disclosed prior to the announcement.

If the government goes into the negotiations with understanding that "Entry into the TPP negotiations is not based on the premise that total tariff elimination without sanctuary is required.", sensitive products in agriculture, forestry and fisheries such as rice, wheat and barley, beef and pork, dairy products and sweetener crops, etc., have to be exempted from tariff elimination or to be separately renegotiated. Otherwise, our national interest will not be protected.

Furthermore, the TPP is not only dealing with the issues of the agriculture. It is directly linked to the everyday life of the Japanese people and the country's sovereignty because TPP talks cover the critical issues such as an investor-state dispute settlement, food safety standards, public health insurance policy and insurance services. While many Japanese citizens are concerned about these issues, there is no guarantee that the six commitments in the government pledge will be kept. Such concerns may not remain until the end of the negotiations. Thus this is an extremely uncertain and unacceptable approach

The Japanese government must formulate a firm negotiating position, which is accepted and backed by the Japanese people. The Government must make a clear commitment to the Japanese people to immediately leave the negotiation's table when it decides in the course of the negotiations, that the Japan's national interest is at stake. Otherwise, the government will find itself not keeping its campaign promise and losing the confidence of its constituencies.

It is unpredictable how other negotiating countries such as the United States, Australia and New Zealand will react at the negotiating table. As far as the TPP negotiations are conducted under the current framework, the Japan's national interest will not be secured. It may take a long struggle to achieve what we have advocated. However, I am firmly determined to take strong leadership in order to achieve a successful result in our movement to protect food, living conditions and life of the Japanese people from the TPP.

March 15, 2013

Akira Banzai, President