

## **Act with Japan – March 7, 2015**

Ms. Xiaojin Wu, Seattle Asian Art Museum, Ms. Lori Matsukawa, King 5 News, Ms. Karin Zaugg Black, Seattle-Kobe Sister City Association, ladies and gentlemen.

For the past four years, the Japanese government has been prioritizing restoration after the earthquake. Major progress has been achieved in public infrastructure, such as schools, national roads, and railways. Right now, reconstruction of housing is very urgent, and building work is beginning.

Remaining challenges are still enormous. Displaced persons have reduced by half, but still number two hundred and forty thousand, and so many of them are in need of health and living support. Right now in Tohoku, a number of people are engaged in music activities as a means to help those suffering from the aftermath of the earthquake. In the city of Soma, a youth orchestra has been formed. In the town of Otsuchi, violin classes are being held for children. These are only a few examples. So I think having two choirs perform today is very fortunate and meaningful.

The Great Earthquake was a major tragedy, but new bonds have been created because of it. In particular, large scale support from the US has come from the military, grassroots volunteers, and many others. Japanese people wish to nurture these bonds and strengthen the ties between Japan and the United States.

With that in mind, a panel discussion has been organized, focusing on person-to-person bonds in younger generations. It is a great pleasure for us to give an opportunity for the audience to think about these new relationships and how to cultivate them further in the future.

Thank you very much.