

Young disaster survivors meet with Clinton

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U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton cheered up students from areas hit by last year's earthquake and tsunami as part of the Tomodachi Initiative youth exchange program between Japan and the U.S.

The public-private initiative was launched to support the nation's recovery from the disasters and deepen bilateral ties.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the way Japan has demonstrated resilience and determination after the terrible earthquake and tsunami is a great indicator of what the future for the Tomodachi generation can be," Clinton said after listening to speeches by students at the event Sunday in Tokyo.

"Experiences like what you went through with your losses" and "the tragedy that afflicted so many thousands and thousands of your fellow Japanese citizens" will give "you a perspective on what is important in life that can be extremely useful for yourselves personally, for your country and for the world," Clinton said.

Atsuko Arimoto, a 16-year-old student at the Fukushima National College of Technology in Fukushima Prefecture, one of the hardest-hit areas, said the disasters changed her life completely. But she also said they gave her an opportunity to meet people who have led her to a new path.

Arimoto, who is slated to study at a high school in Maryland this fall under a program in the Tomodachi Initiative, said it's her dream to become a diplomat.

Clinton was in Tokyo for the Afghanistan donor conference.

"It would have been very easy for Japan to say we can't continue helping anybody else because we have so many needs ourselves," she told the students.

"But as we heard today at the conference, Japan did not stop helping Afghanistan and other people, even while you had to do so much for your own citizens," she said. "I think that is the spirit of Tomodachi, and I think Japan has set a great example for the world."