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Tohoku 3/11 – The call for Science from the Earth’s Interior

Very large geological disasters like last year’s East Japan earthquake and tsunami or the Sumatra event 2004 with extremely large numbers of victims, monstrous devastations and the extinction of human settlements reveal our persistent enormous vulnerability against the force of nature. Although substantial progress has been achieved in the fields of early warning of tsunami and earthquakes, many basic facts and processes in the relevant geodynamics remain poorly understood. The analysis of last year’s event has sparked intensive scientific debates and controversies in many different scientific communities, far beyond the borders of geosciences and geotechnology. When reaching the core of society, they encompass fields like the necessary shift in power generation, use of mineral and energy resources, and climate change aspects, finally touching almost all scientific disciplines. A lot of extremely successful work has been accomplished in the scope of collaborative research between Germany and Japan in the last 150 years. It is obvious that finding new ways of swift knowledge generation and implementation, as well as the development of improved structural and governance processes are posing a continuing joint big challenge.

CV

Andreas Küppers is a geologist (RWTH Aachen University) and currently head of the EU Project Office at GFZ, the German national research centre for geosciences in Potsdam. While on a DAAD grant in Japan he started learning Japanese and joined the Geological Survey of Japan in Tsukuba as a visiting scientist for field mapping and rock age determination, as well as studies in economic geology. After a short period back in Germany at Regierungspräsident Köln he returned to Japan in order to help setting up the DIJ German Institute of Japanese Studies in Tokyo as a scientist from 1989 to 1992. Attracted by the studies of geologic disasters in Japan and their economic aspects he began to study ways and procedures of improving site selection strategies using geoscientific methods. Since 1992 he has served as R & D Coordinator at GeoForschungsZentrum Potsdam and organized a large number of scientific projects and events, including the 1998 UN Conference on Early Warning in Potsdam. He is co-editor of the standard “Early Warning Systems for Natural Disaster reduction”. The year 2000 brought him back to Japan as a guest professor at Kyoto University. His scientific interests include German-Japanese relationships and the history of geosciences.