

Host Country's Remarks

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The Government of Japan**

The Fifth ADRC International Meeting

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning.

The Asian region is subject to natural disasters, including typhoon, earthquake, volcanic eruption and flood. Statistics indicate that about 40% of the world's disasters occur in Asia and that they account for about half of the total damage in money terms. Of course, national governments around the region are making enormous efforts to prevent disaster and to mitigate the damage. And yet 2002 was another disaster-prone year. We have seen large-scale floods and landslides due to torrential rain that hit Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam as well as many countries not only in Asia but Europe and other region in the world.

Major disasters such as these are serious impediments to economic and social development. Grief and sorrow for the death by the disaster are unmeasurable. Indeed, strengthening of disaster countermeasures is one of the most important policy challenges for us all.

As one of such concrete initiatives we have established the Asian Disaster Reduction Center in Kobe Japan in 1998 with the cooperation of many countries in Asia including Japan. The main purpose of the center is to build "face to face relationships" among countries in the Asian region and to promote mutual technology transfers and information sharing. Now the ADRC comprises 24 member countries and cooperates with various international organizations such as UN ISDR and OCHA, and acting as central institution to promote strengthening of disaster reduction in Asia.

The Fifth ADRC International Meeting focuses on the Implementation of the TDRM Approach. I strongly hope and believe that the participants will have active exchange of views based on their experiences and expertise. The meeting will create additional momentum for the Center as we move to the next stage.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my best wishes for those assembled here today.