

Opening Speech

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Minister for Emergency Situations Khrapunov,
Honored International Delegates, and Distinguished Guests:

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you here today to the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2007. I am delighted that so many delegates from the member countries of the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) and from various international institutions have come to participate in this important conference. Let me start by expressing my sincerest gratitude to our kind host, the government of Kazakhstan, and to all of those who put so much effort into organizing this conference, including the ADRC and the United Nations ISDR Secretariat.

It has been two and a half years since the January 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction was held in Kobe, Japan and during this time numerous natural disasters have occurred in locations all over the world. Hurricane Katrina in the US, the massive earthquake in South Asia, mudslides in the Philippines, the earthquake in central Java, Indonesia and others have claimed precious lives and property. Although we cannot escape the threat of natural disasters, we can take action to reduce the damage by reducing our social vulnerabilities. To protect people's lives and property and to build sustainable and safe societies, nations must work together with other nations and international institutions to implement disaster reduction measures.

In Japan, disaster reduction is one of the most important policies of the Cabinet. Senior Deputy-Minister for Disaster Management which I hold, is one of the positions assigned to key cabinet policies for specific fields. I am responsible for the promotion of comprehensive disaster reduction efforts in the government. In my capacity of assisting the Prime Minister, I am striving to make my country disaster-resilient, not only in times of emergency but in ordinary times as well.

Applying the knowledge and expertise acquired from numerous bitter disaster experiences, Japan has been an active facilitator of international cooperation for disaster reduction. Based on the discussions at this Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2007, Japan would like to further promote effective cooperation in the area

of disaster reduction.

This Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2007 will follow up on the Hyogo Framework for Action which was adopted at the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction, and will give participants an opportunity to hear about the progress being made in various countries and to share ideas and methods that can be helpful in promoting further progress. I hope that everyone here will take advantage of this conference to actively and openly share information and ideas.

Since the policy area of disaster reduction is consistent with the universal goal of protecting human life, it is one that is especially conducive to international cooperation. When a country makes preparations to prevent disasters and mitigate damage before a disaster strikes, it can effectively improve its disaster reduction capabilities by applying the information and know-how developed in other countries and by adhering to the frameworks developed by international institutions. I hope that the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2007, and the efforts by various international institutions including the ADRC, will help contribute to disaster reduction efforts in all countries.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to those who work day in and day out to address and respond to the challenges posed by natural disasters. I sincerely hope that the discussions in this conference and the information shared can be applied effectively in your countries, that your hard work will continue to bear fruit and lead to further reduction of damage caused by disasters in the Asia.

Thank you for your attention.