

**Opening Address by Mr. Tatsuo Sato,  
Special Adviser to the Prime Minister & Senior Vice-Minister  
Cabinet Office, Japan  
To the 3<sup>rd</sup> ISDR Asian Meeting**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It is a great honor for me to extend to you, on behalf of the Government of Japan, my sincere and heartfelt congratulations on the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ISDR Asian Meeting.

All over the world, many people are suffering from disasters. The number of disasters and their impact in terms of people affected and economic losses are increasing. This is due to population growth, urbanization and other factors, but above all to the increase in vulnerability in modern societies.

Here in Cambodia, almost every year, human losses and economic damages by the flood in the Mekong River Basin are reported. I hear the flooding in 2000 killed 347 people and affected as many as 3.45 million residents.

As you know, more than 30,000 people were killed in Iran, under the rubble of collapsed buildings. Like me, you must have seen these scenes of the affected areas in Iran on TV.

In order to contribute to disaster reduction in the world, Japan proposed to the United Nations to host the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005. The proposal was unanimously adopted at the UN General Assembly last December.

The venue of conference is Hyogo Prefecture in Japan; the date is January 2005, exactly ten years after the Kobe Earthquake. This conference will be the second UN World Conference in the field of Disaster Reduction, following the first one held in Yokohama in 1994.

Our main goal in the upcoming World Conference is to update the Yokohama Strategy and to identify specific policy measures to fill existing gaps. In the conference, “numerical targets” should be considered. – for example “Decreasing the number of the victims of floods by 30% in the next 10 years.” The next stage would be to discuss and devise ways and means to attain these targets. I strongly hope that all of you will participate in the upcoming World Conference

to contribute to make the outcome of the conference sound, concrete and helpful for future generations.

We, citizens of Asia, who continue to suffer from the effects of numerous disasters, cannot avoid addressing the important issues of risk and vulnerability reduction. At today's ISDR Asian Meeting, I hope that all of you will have an opportunity to discuss goals and which kind of policy measures are necessary to deal with the problem. In this connection, Japan is ready to support and facilitate the development of fruitful international cooperation in the field of disaster reduction through activities such as receiving trainees, dispatching experts, assisting disaster reduction programmes.

In concluding my speech, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to the Cambodian government for hosting this valuable event, and the ISDR Secretariat as co-organizer.

With these words, I declare the 3<sup>rd</sup> ISDR Asian Meeting open.