

1. Asian Disaster Reduction Center

1-1. History of the Establishment of the ADRC

The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) opened its office in Kobe, Japan, on July 30, 1998. The major steps leading up to formation of the ADRC are described below.

(1) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR)

At its 42nd General Assembly in December 1987, the United Nations designated the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, and adopted a resolution aiming to sharply reduce the damage caused by natural disasters around the world, particularly in developing countries, through joint international action.

(2) World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction

In May 1994, the UN held the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama, Japan, to conduct an interim review of the decade-long IDNDR initiative and to propose an action plan for the future. At the meeting, the “Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World” was adopted, highlighting the importance of international cooperation in regions that share common types of disasters and disaster reduction measures. Disaster reduction activities have since been promoted throughout the world based on this strategy.

(3) Ministerial-level Asian Natural Disaster Reduction Conference

As a first step toward regional cooperation under the Yokohama Strategy, the IDNDR Secretariat organized a meeting in Kobe in December 1995 to formulate a policy on disaster reduction cooperation in Asia. Cabinet members in charge of disaster reduction from 28 countries attended the meeting, which concluded with the adoption of the Kobe Disaster Reduction Declaration. This declaration consists of ideas for promoting international cooperation in disaster reduction, including a Japanese proposal to launch a feasibility study on a system for coordinating disaster reduction efforts in the Asian region.

(4) Asian Natural Disaster Reduction Experts Meeting

The government of Japan and the IDNDR Secretariat jointly organized an experts meeting in October 1996 to hash out how a central disaster reduction system, as stated in the Kobe Disaster Reduction Declaration, might be created for the Asian region. The meeting was attended by key personnel in the disaster reduction bureaus of 30 countries, and they agreed to study the creation of the tentatively named “Asian Disaster Reduction Center” to serve as a secretariat for promoting activities under the proposed system.

(5) Asian Disaster Reduction Cooperation Promotion Meeting

The government of Japan and the IDNDR Secretariat jointly organized a meeting in Tokyo in June 1997 to discuss the specific activities of the proposed central disaster reduction system. Once again, key personnel from the disaster reduction bureaus of 23 countries attended the meeting, whose overall goal was to promote cooperation in disaster reduction efforts through specific actions. A proposal was made at the meeting to establish an office in Japan to serve as the secretariat for the proposed system.

(6) Establishment of the ADRC

With momentum gathering from this series of meetings, the Japanese government discussed the organization, budget, and other aspects of the proposed office with the other countries involved. With the cooperation of Hyogo Prefecture, the Asian Disaster Reduction Center was officially established in Kobe on July 30, 1998.