

## **Ms. Altanchimeg Shaazan from Mongolia**

Global climatic changes, global warming, and human activities are resulting in increased pollution, environmental degradation, and increases in the number and frequency of natural hazards in Mongolia. Studies show that approximately 70% of the territory of Mongolia is affected by desertification, that the water level in settled areas has dropped by about 4 meters over the last 60 years, and that about 200 springs and 120 lakes have dried up within the last 10 years. Forests cover only 8.1% of the total territory of Mongolia, but over the last 25 years, more than 1.6 million hectares of forest have been lost due to forest fires, the timber industry, and destruction by parasite infestations.



Every year Mongolia experiences 20-30 climatic and water-related hazardous natural phenomena in Mongolia, one-third of which turn into disasters. Annually these disasters cause an estimated 5-7 billion tugrig (USD 4.3–6 million) in damages in the agricultural sector. At the same time, the number of events is increasing. These include fires, earthquakes, human, animal, and plant contagious diseases, the spread of destructive rodents, and industrial accidents.

Given this, the Government of Mongolia has established a fundamental goal of strengthening the country's disaster management capacity. The Law on Disaster Protection was approved by the Parliament on 20 June 2003, and the National Emergency Management Agency of Mongolia (NEMA) was subsequently established on 7 January 2004. NEMA is the result of a merger of the State Board for Civil Defense, the Fire Fighting Department, and the State Reserve Agency.

According to the Law on Disaster Protection, NEMA is a specialized organization responsible for implementing the state disaster protection policy and enforcing laws, as well as for conducting activities nationwide. More than 3,000 full-time staff work in the emergency management department and divisions, the specialized rescue unit, sub-units, reserve branches, and fire units in the 21 aimags (administrative units) and the capital city.

In accordance with the Government Action Plan, NEMA will work to strengthen the national capacity to cope with disasters by expanding international cooperation and relationships in the field of emergency management. Mongolia has been working as a member of the ADRC since 1999 and is an active participant in organized activities.

I am the second official from Mongolia to take part in the Visiting Researcher Program. This is a great opportunity for me, and by extension NEMA, to learn the international best practices in disaster management and to acquire the advanced theoretical and practical knowledge that Japan has developed in this field. My research focuses on risk and vulnerability assessments.

Since arriving in Japan, I have participated in the International Forum on Tsunamis and Earthquakes and have learned a great deal. I am confident that my stay with the ADRC will be very fruitful and will provide many opportunities for me to gain invaluable information on disaster management.