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China is one of the countries in the world that suffers from the most serious natural disasters due to its vast territory, complicated climatic, geographical and geological conditions and fragile ecological conditions. Over 70% of China's cities and 50% of the population are located in the regions frequently hit by major meteorological, seismological, geological and maritime disasters. In the past 15 years or so, natural disasters have annually affected about 300 million people, knocked down 3 million houses and forced the evacuation of 8 million people each year, leading to nearly 200 billion Yuan. Natural disasters have become an important factor that restricts the harmonious and sustainable socio-economic development of China.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to disaster relief, making an important effort to guarantee smooth social and economic development. After years of persistent efforts, the rising tendency of the losses caused by disasters has been curbed to a certain extent, and the number of disaster-induced deaths has been drastically reduced. In recent years, the government has stepped up effort in building a disaster reduction system.

First, the organization and legislation have been improved. In January 2005, China Commission for International Disaster Reduction was renamed National Commission for Disaster Reduction, and an expert committee has also been set up. Some local governments have also established disaster reduction committees or similar coordination organs as well as effective working mechanisms. The disaster reduction management, experts' consulting and decision-making support and comprehensive coordination mechanism has been more and more perfect. More than 30 laws and regulations have been promulgated on earthquake preparation, fire prevention, flood preparation, weather forecast and sandstorm prevention and management.

Second, the disaster reduction has been included in the state's development plan. The Chinese government has placed disaster risk reduction as a top priority on the agenda of the state and local socio-economic development plan. A state emergency response system has been gradually built and improved. The "State 11th Five-year Plan for Disaster Reduction" has been formulated.

Third, a disaster monitoring and warning system is being perfected. We have set up a 24-hour disaster monitoring and analysis mechanism to improve disaster information management. At the same time, inter-departmental communication and consultation have been more effective, and the public release of early warning information has been strengthened. Such information collection and exchange has provided an accurate basis for the government departments to make decisions on risk prevention for the public.

Fourth, the emergency disaster relief system has been further strengthened. The State Council issued the "State Overall Contingency Plan for Emergent Public Events". The Ministry of Civil Affairs made the "Contingency Plan for Disaster Relief", the "Operation Procedures for Abrupt Natural Disasters" and the "Operation Procedures for Emergent Disaster Relief". A national contingency plan system has been basically established. In the disaster relief work in recent years,

many local governments executed the contingency plan timely and orderly and achieved good results. China has also set up a disaster relief material reserve system. Central-level stockpiles of disaster relief material have been built in 10 cities including Shenyang, Tianjin, Wuhan, Nanning, Chengdu and Xi'an. Local stockpiles in some disaster-prone areas have also been set up. The central and local governments have stepped up effort in disaster relief as emergency fund allocation system has been improved. Within three days after a major disaster occurs, disaster fund and materials from the central government would be allocated to the disaster-hit areas.

It is well known that Japan has advanced theoretical and practical knowledge in disaster management. Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake hit Japan in 1995, which caused great loss. After unremitting efforts, the stricken areas are rebuilt in a short time. Japanese government and people work a miracle. I am the second official from China to take part in the Visiting Researcher Program. This is a great opportunity for me. During my six months at ADRC, I want to focus on damage assessment and vulnerability assessment. I hope my research and work at ADRC will contribute to my future work. Moreover, I hope to introduce the disaster management experiences of China to other Asian countries.