

# Opening Speech

**Shigeru Itoh**

**Chairman of the Asian Disaster Reduction Center**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants and guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning.

First of all, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Government of Republic of Kazakhstan for its generous hosting of the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2007 in Astana and its warm welcome to all participants. I would like also to convey my sincere appreciation to the participants for attending this important regional conference.

The Asian Disaster Reduction Center, since its establishment in 1998, has been pursuing its mission of promoting regional cooperation in Asia. It has been fully committed to enhancing the disaster risk reduction capacity of its member countries. Its activities include providing disaster reduction information through the internet, welcoming visiting researchers from member countries, conducting disaster management education and training, and promoting cooperative disaster reduction projects with member countries.

In promoting and strengthening cooperation and partnership in disaster risk reduction, the ADRC has been working closely with the UN/ISDR, UNDP, WMO, and the International Recovery Platform as major partners in promoting better disaster recovery. These organizations had agreed at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction 2005 in Kobe, Hyogo to establish the International Recovery Platform which endeavors to fulfill the strategic goal of the Hyogo Framework for Action as an international repository of knowledge and as a networking mechanism for recovery.

In promoting the principle of "Building Back Better", the ADRC, IRP, Government of Japan and Hyogo Prefectural Government jointly hosted the International Forum on Tsunami and Earthquake on 15-16 January this year in Kobe. About 300 participants from 34 countries and 20 international organizations attended the Forum.

As we commit ourselves to the effective implementation of the HFA, the ADRC shall launch this year a set of disaster mitigation projects as an important disaster risk reduction initiative for the ASEAN region. The projects include disaster education, training, database development and

satellite technique application to disaster reduction.

The ADRC will also serve South Asia with the sub-regional initiative on enhancing disaster risk reduction capacity in the SAARC region, in collaboration with the SAARC Disaster Management Center. Moreover, we intend to develop further collaborative sub-regional projects in disaster risk reduction that will substantially benefit the rest of the region.

Other cooperative activities with member countries undertaken include educational training in Armenia in 2006 and capacity building of key stakeholders in Kyrgyz Republic in 2005. Similarly for this year relevant initiatives will be launched in Tajikistan and Mongolia.

Indeed, disaster risk reduction has to be addressed with a broader perspective. In this way, we are able to appreciate the critical linkages of disaster risk reduction with poverty reduction, development policy, urban planning, environment, education and health. We have much to do, yet we have limited resources allocated. Our mission is daunting that our combined strength is needed to succeed. We draw inspiration in knowing that we have many colleagues in every corner of the globe who share with us the same mission of "Working Together for a Safer World". In Disaster Risk Reduction, we can truly talk with each other in the same language.

I thank you for your kind attention.