

## **Opening Speech**

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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Welcome to Kobe. I would like to extend a sincere welcome to all of you.

As introduced, I am Katsuhiko Hara, Director of Disaster Preparedness of the Japanese Cabinet Office. Upon the opening of the public forum of the International Conference on Total Disaster Risk Management 2003, I am honored to give the opening remarks today.

As all of you are aware, Hyogo prefecture including Kobe City was seriously struck by the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in 1995 with over 6,000 casualties. After the earthquake, we had received very warm encouragement and support from around the world. Then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama saw the importance of disaster risk management during and after facing the negative impact of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and took the initiatives to establish the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) here in Kobe that facilitates disaster information sharing, especially among the countries of Asia. Since its establishment in 1998, ADRC is making very remarkable and constructive contributions to the disaster risk management and prevention in Asian. Moreover, UN OCHA that is in charge of disaster response in the world has now located its regional office in Kobe in collaboration with ADRC to proceed towards disaster risk management in Asia. Thus, this is one of the combinations of collaboration between the ADRC and UN OCHA Kobe Office to open today's public forum.

Currently, there are a series of international conferences, symposia and fora on disaster risk management and disaster prevention which introduce and share the cases of success and best practices. And it is certain that the consensus among the experts is to enhance public awareness of disaster occurrences. Furthermore, in times of disaster, there are a few concerns to deliberate such as what the international society should do and what type of contributions and support should be rendered. However, it is not easy to lead such consensus to actual implementation. Hence, seeking the strategies of actual implementation phase should be the key theme to be discussed over this conference.

A year after this International Conference on TDRM, we will have the 10<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Taking the opportunity of such an anniversary, we are to host the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture. I have gone to New York last week to proceed with the necessary final negotiation to entertain the final resolution of the General Assembly. And an informal consensus has been already achieved. So, it is my pleasure to inform you of the official announcement to host the World Conference on Disaster Reduction here in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture for five days from the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, one day after the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, through the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January. And to welcome the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, Hyogo Prefecture, including Kobe City has already established the host committee. Therefore, on behalf of the host country of the conference, please let me take this opportunity to ask all of you here for your participation and cooperation for the World Conference in January, 2005. Throughout the World Conference, we would like to transmit the disaster management and disaster risk management paradigms which really lead to actual implementation, from Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture, to the world, especially, the disaster hard-hit, damaged and rehabilitating countries. How to cope with such a global agenda is indeed a very significant challenge to all of us as a matter of course from now on.

The World Conference on Disaster Reduction organized by the United Nations would be an arena to talk about a specific discussion of the aforementioned theme, i.e. seeking the strategies of actual implementation. And I sincerely hope that this forum would also be a great opportunity for all of you to talk about the same key theme as a prelude to the Conference in 2005.

Lastly, I would like to wish for the great success of the International Conference on Total Disaster Risk Management (TDRM).

I thank you very much for your attention.