

Announcement: “World Conference on Disaster Reduction”

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We are now close to the 9th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake here in Kobe. Thank you very much for inviting us and on behalf of the Director of UN/ISDR, Salvano Briceno, I would like to extend my gratitude to ADRC, UN OCHA Kobe and all related to this conference and to the audience at large.

World Conference on Disaster Reduction is expected to be held in 2005. I would like to explain the outline of the Conference, but the specific contents of the conference are being discussed at the UN General Assembly and it will take some time until the resolution is finalized. The current title of the Conference is “World Conference on Disaster Reduction.” It will be held from January 18th to 22nd in 2005. January 17th, 2005 is the 10th memorial day of the Great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake. The conference will take place for the following days of the anniversary.

Indeed, in Hyogo Prefecture and Kobe City, we have made a spectacular reconstruction and the whole world is paying attention to the development. In the Conference, the whole communities are to learn from the lessons of the earthquake.

Today, I would like to talk about the following six points. They are the outline of ISDR, reasons for having the Conference, objectives, expected outcome, format, and preparatory process of the Conference.

ISDR was established in 2000 as a successor of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). It aims at building disaster resilient communities by promoting increased awareness of the importance of disaster reduction as an integral component of sustainable development. ISDR also deals with man-made disasters. There are two components, which are the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Disaster Reduction and the Inter-Agency Secretariat. The role of ISDR is the coordination in the IATF on Disaster Reduction. The Task Force members consist of UN organizations, regional organizations, and community organizations. The headquarters of ISDR is located in Geneva, and there are two regional offices in Costa Rica and Kenya.

ISDR is organizing another world conference on disaster reduction. Why? This is because there has been little improvement of disaster reduction being introduced as actual policies. It has been challenging for each country. In fact, the importance of disaster risk reduction for sustainable development has been repeatedly emphasized in the agreements and declarations as a result of recent Conferences and Summits. The 3rd World Water Forum’s Ministerial Declaration in 2003 stressed the importance of disaster mitigation and risk management on water related disasters, including floods and droughts. As for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in 2002 recognized that disaster reduction is an integral part of sustainable development policies and Plan of Action. In the UN Millennium Development Goals in 2000, all 191 United Nations Member States have pledged to meet the MDG (2000) objective which is to cut poverty by half by 2015. The perspective of disaster reduction is considered indispensable. Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action in 1994 stressed the importance of preparedness as well as integration of disaster reduction into public policy. It also ensured to build a safer world for all at all levels (global, regional, national, community, and individual levels).

The objectives of the Conference are to conclude the Yokohama Review process with a view to updating the guiding framework on disaster reduction for the 21st century, implement the recent commitments by identifying practical and concrete ways to incorporate disaster risk reduction into poverty reduction, development strategies, and sustainable development, increase awareness of importance of disaster reduction policies, and share information, including best practices and lessons learned in the context of sustainable development. Expected outcome of the Conference is that each country increases political commitment and investment for all who deal with reducing risk and vulnerability. Also, it is expected to design targets,

indicators, and framework for guiding disaster risk reduction. Further, it is expected to update Yokohama Strategy.

Regarding the format of the Conference, it will be divided into three categories. The first one is the intergovernmental process, which is important to ensure the adoption of outcomes. Expected participants to this process are senior governmental officials in the area of disaster reduction. Secondly, disaster reduction experts exchange knowledge and wisdom through technical discussions on thematic issues and good practices supported by institutions, including the IATF members, civil society, NGOs, universities, etc. Thirdly, there would be various kinds of events, poster sessions, exhibitions, etc. to raise awareness to a wider public.

The preparatory process has been planned as follows. The intergovernmental preparatory committee will be established to review the organizational and substantive preparations for the Conference. The committee will hold meetings in spring and autumn of 2004 in Geneva, along with the IATF meetings. The final preparatory meeting will be held in Kobe during the Conference.

The intergovernmental preparatory committee will have a bureau, consisting of five representatives of Member States elected on the basis of equitable geographical representation (regional groups to nominate their candidates for the bureau of the preparatory committee by the end of January 2004). The ISDR Secretariat is requested to coordinate preparatory activities in close cooperation with the host country and the preparatory committee for the Conference, with the full support of the relevant departments of the Secretariat. It is invited that Member States, all United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and other relevant intergovernmental agencies and organizations, in particular the IATF members, to participate actively in the Conference, as well as its preparatory process.

The Conference will be organized in the reflection of fruits and outcomes of the past and upcoming conferences and meetings. From this point of view, the process has already started. These conferences and meetings are listed on the map and are going to be held all over the world. Several have already taken place and among them, 14 are regional and 30 are thematic meetings. The TDRM conference is regarded as one of the thematic meetings.

Lastly, I would like to convey special thanks to host country Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet Office of Japan, other ministries involved and local host of Hyogo Prefectural Government and support of preparatory process of ADRC. Let us see you again here in Kobe January 2005. Thank you very much for your attention.