

Closing Speech

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Dear participants,

On behalf of OCHA Kobe I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each of you for your active participation in this workshop on Total Disaster Risk Management.

The ambassadors of the TDRM are still a rather small congregation, and we still have a long way to go to get the total disaster risk management accepted and integrated in all aspects and levels of the national planning structures. I believe we all understand that this must be a process where we lay one stone upon the other.

Disasters are on the increase, and we cannot estimate the full impact of climate change and climate variety. Water scarcity will be a major challenge for many countries in Asia in the next decades to come. Increasing urbanization and pressure on land use will continue to increase our vulnerability and more people will be at risk. We need to stop environmental degradation, enhance information exchange and cross boarder cooperation to ensure that activities in one country do not ruin the livelihood of people in countries downstream.

Governments will still be judged by how their response to a disaster. To create an atmosphere of "responsible" response, we need a strong alliance with the media to be able to focus more on disaster preparedness and the road from response to reconstruction and sustainable development. Disasters do give us a window of opportunity, and we need to use these windows to ensure that people are not put back into the same vulnerable position again and again.

The role of media is to be the critical voice, but the media need our support and help to understand the larger picture of disaster preparedness and mitigation. It is easy to criticize the media, but in my opinion we get the media we deserve. Disaster managers and media have traditionally gone hand in hand, and we still need to do so, but we need to change the traditional one-dimensional focus on response and to build a stronger understanding of the need to build stronger disaster resilient societies. My advice to you is to start train the media. The media can be our strongest partner in creating a new culture of disaster preparedness and reduction.

To this workshop we invited people with previous knowledge of TDRM, but also people coming from sectors outside the traditional disaster management circles. This is something we still need to do, and we need to bring everybody together in discussion on how we can jointly develop the multi-sectoral, multi-level and multi-agency cooperation.

The best practices of TDRM can be seen when all stakeholders are moving in the same directions. Japans history of flood control is one good example we all can learn from. The strong role of the corporate sector as explained to us in the Philippines is a good example on how untraditional partners can play an increasingly important role in the wider safety network on local, district and national level and in all parts of the disaster cycle.

In this workshop we have with us representatives from NGOs from a number of Asian countries. They represent an important link with local communities and can be an important voicing the concern of people living in disaster prone areas. They all started their work focusing on disaster response, however, it is encouraging to learn how they all have shifted towards a stronger emphasize on TDRM. The fact that they during this workshop have strengthen their network and commitment to take an active role working together promoting the need for stronger disaster reduction culture is very encouraging and both ADRC and OCHA Kobe are happy supporting this effort.

I need to thanks the staff of ADRC for their hard work bringing this workshop into a reality. I know that there are many hours of hard work behind this workshop and I highly appreciate the dedication you have put into preparing for this event. My gratitude also goes to my colleagues in OCHA Kobe who

has put a lot of efforts in preparing for this conference. A special thank to Mr. Thomas Brennan, Mr. Aril Shina and Manny de Guzman for their participation in the planning process for this conference and their strong participation during the workshop.

Some of you I will for sure meet again in my capacity as the Regional Disaster Response Adviser of OCHA. On behalf of OCHA Kobe office I wish you all a safe trip back home

Thank you