

Opening Speech

Mr. Satoru Nishikawa

Executive Director, Asian Disaster Reduction Center

It is my honor to welcome you to Kobe for the Regional Workshop on Networking and Collaboration among Non-Governmental Organizations of Asian Countries in Disaster Reduction and Response.

On this occasion of the Opening Ceremony, on behalf of the organizers of this workshop, I would like to thank the ASEAN Foundation, the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Memorial Research Institute and the Tsutomu Nakauchi Foundation for providing resources, and also the Cabinet Office and Ministry for Foreign Affairs for their support.

I would like also to thank all the participants who have joined us here today to develop further steps for disaster reduction in our region.

Allow me to share with you some background information on the Human Resource Development for the Coordination in the Field of Natural Disasters. Events of natural disasters are on the rise, and Asia is the most affected region. These disaster events do not only disrupt people's lives and directly affect the disaster-hit areas, but they also jeopardize the entire society and economy of the country. In fact, one single disaster can overwhelm the GNP of the country.

In view of this, it is clear that disaster reduction is a must for sustainable development. Many of us know that sharing experiences and knowledge of disaster cases and networking of various expertises is indispensable in effective disaster reduction.

The Asian Disaster Reduction Center or ADRC was established in July 1998 to promote multilateral cooperation for disaster reduction and to network the various players in the region. We have held our annual meetings to network the focal points in governments of our member countries. Our activities focus

on three pillars of activities, information sharing, capacity building and cooperation. We have developed several successful capacity building programs with our member countries mainly focused on local governments.

Today, we are launching our new programme – The Human Resource Development for Coordination in the Field of Natural Disasters. And we thank the ASEAN Foundation for their generous support. This programme enables us to expand our capacity-building efforts to address various players involved in disasters.

Furthermore, the ADRC has developed some model international cooperative projects. Let me introduce one successful experience we had with the Papua New Guinea Government. After the Aitape Tsunami disaster in 1998, we have developed public awareness materials that were disseminated throughout the country at the community levels with the help of the local governments, Red Cross and local NGOs. These materials had proved quite effective in mitigating the impact of the earthquake and tsunami in 2000, where no one was killed.

This is only one example of how community level efforts for disaster reduction can make a difference. We have to develop effective methods to be accepted at community levels. And I believe the participants who have volunteered to gather here today are the key partners and can play the crucial role to save people's lives in our region. Let us hope that this meeting can start another step forward. Thank you.

Opening Speech

Mr. Ed Tsui

Director, UN-OCHA New York

It is indeed an honor for me, on behalf of Mr. Kenzo Oshima, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, as well as on my behalf, to welcome you to this workshop. It is the first of a series of activities, which is jointly sponsored by UN-OCHA and ADRC to promote better coordination and response to disasters in the ASEAN region.

It is indeed fitting that the first activity of the ASEAN project begins with a meeting among NGOs from the region. NGOs not only play an active and increasingly important role in disaster reduction and response, they are uniquely positioned to contribute significantly to the three functions envisaged in the ASEAN project.

The first of these three functions is to enhance awareness of natural disaster among the peoples of the Asian countries. The second is to enhance the skills and competence of ASEAN government officials in disaster management. Thirdly, the project aims to strengthen cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders in disaster reduction and response in Asia.

As Mr. Nishikawa has pointed out earlier, in the last decade the international community has witnessed a steady increase in the number and magnitude of emergencies and disasters. Since 90 percent of the disaster-affected populations are in Asia, it is indeed important for the population to be informed of potential disaster threats. They should also be equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills to protect their lives and properties. At the same time, enhancing the competence and skills of local and national authorities in disaster reduction will no doubt help reduce the impact of potential disasters and result in a more timely response. In recent years, the increase in both the frequency and magnitude of natural disasters has challenged the adequacy and efficiency of existing management and response capacities, from United

Nations agencies to national authorities. Coordination among these stakeholders is a sure way to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the response.

The growing threat of disasters we face today underlines the necessity and importance of the ASEAN project. Therefore, it is my pleasure to express my appreciation to the ASEAN Foundation for its financial support, and I would like to wish the project every success.

An urgent emphasis must be placed on promoting disaster reduction with the ultimate objective of developing resilient societies and communities as well as alleviating the financial burden of humanitarian assistance. UN-OCHA is therefore working very closely with UNDP and the ISDR Secretariat in order to identify synergy and complementation between existing disaster reduction and disaster response mechanisms, in particular to jointly address issues such as preparedness and lessons learnt. We hope that we can also count on the NGO community to assist and support us in this particular regard.

Today, we have gathered NGOs from roughly 16 Asian countries both international NGOs as well as local NGOs. We are meeting here in Kobe, a city that was struck by an earthquake in 1995 where more than 6,000 people lost their lives. To complement the government relief efforts, NGOs, both national and international, played an unforgettable role in reducing the suffering of the earthquake-affected population. The government of Hyogo prefecture has not only been pro-active in promoting disaster reduction and preparedness in their own prefecture, but they have also been extremely supportive of international efforts, including this event. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the prefecture government for providing financial support to this workshop.

I would like to say a few words about the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA). Some of you may be very familiar with its work. Others may be hearing of UN-OCHA for the first time. UN-OCHA is responsible for the coordination of humanitarian assistance, both for natural disasters and complex emergencies. Currently, UN-OCHA has a

presence in 35 countries. In the area of natural disaster, for the year of 2001, UN-OCHA has responded to 64 natural disasters and has launched 30 international appeals for assistance.

UN-OCHA has three core functions: policy development, advocacy and coordination. In the area of natural disasters, UN-OCHA is responsible for ensuring that there is indeed a timely response and effective coordination. UN-OCHA has over the years developed a number of tools such as search and rescue teams and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC). UN-OCHA is responsible for promoting and advocating for better disaster response preparedness as well as disaster reduction. This is why I mentioned earlier the importance of UN-OCHA working closely with UNDP and the ISDR Secretariat. Equally, UN-OCHA is responsible for mobilizing donor support for natural disaster response through appeals, including the CAPs.

UN-OCHA attaches great importance to achieving synergies and maintaining a holistic approach to disaster management. We therefore welcome this workshop that aims to see how best to address both disaster reduction and response and see how best the two can work better together. To that end, UN-OCHA looks forward to closer cooperation, not only with organizations of the UN system, but also with NGOs and civil societies. UN-OCHA stands ready to support you in this meeting, as well as in your follow-up deliberations.

Participants in today's NGO workshop represent a rich body of invaluable knowledge and experience in both humanitarian and development assistance in the region. NGOs in Asia have played an increasingly noticeable role in assisting vulnerable populations affected by war and disaster. Some are actively providing assistance in countries affected by disaster and war in the region, while others are in their own countries that are prone to disasters.

To cite only a few, the Singaporean International Foundation is actively organizing humanitarian assistance provided by Singaporean volunteers to Vietnam, Cambodia and Afghanistan in order to help people affected by disaster as well as by war. The Peace Winds Japan delivered assistance in

remote areas affected by snow disaster in Mongolia. Likewise, the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia, based its experience in response to Kobe earthquake in 1995, has developed its network worldwide. The Alliance for Emergency Response and Training in the Philippines is active in raising public awareness and advocacy on effective community emergency preparedness and health emergency preparedness training. The National Society for Earthquake Technology Nepal has been working together with the United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) and national authorities on public awareness of earthquake risk management.

I am convinced that this workshop offers an opportunity for these NGOs to share their experience, to learn from each other, and to identify best practices. This should also help NGOs to support and complement each other's work in the future. I believe that multi-level and multi-dimensional cooperation and collaboration will make our work more efficient and effective, enabling more people to benefit from our assistance and to help us to bridge the gaps between disaster reduction, preparedness, response and reconstruction.

In conclusion, I wish you every success for this meeting as well as for the ASEAN project that is officially launched today. I wish every success also to the work of the Hyogo prefectural government.

Opening Speech

Mr. Kenichi Aoto

Chief of Emergency Management, Hyogo Prefecture Government, Japan

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for having this workshop in Kobe with the enormous support from ADRC and UN-OCHA Kobe office and the participation of NGOs working actively in Asian countries.

It has been seven years since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake occurred. It was said that this was the first earthquake in the world that hit directly a large city that has a significant population of the elderly people. The Hyogo prefecture has been trying to support the elderly people in rebuilding their lives and to encourage the cities and towns to accomplish a creative reconstruction towards the twenty-first century. In addition, we have endeavored to ensure the safety of communities with the participation and cooperation of the citizens of the Hyogo prefecture.

We received a lot of support from all over the world when the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake hit. I believe that the biggest support we received was the one provided by NGOs and volunteers who had a precious belief that there must be something we could do. I am confident to say that the support from them became the driving force in the implementation of immediate rehabilitation and reconstruction. Eventually, it led us to establish the "Disaster Prevention and Volunteer Week".

To reciprocate the support we received, the prefectural government has been trying to promote all kinds of activities to convey the lessons learned from the earthquake to the world and to the future generations. Especially, in the newly developed part of Eastern Kobe, where the ADRC has established itself in 1998, several international organizations involved in disaster reduction and response have gathered in this area after the earthquake. Following the establishment of the Asian Disaster Response Unit of UN-OCHA Kobe office in December 1999, UN-OCHA Reliefweb Kobe office was opened in August 2001. In this way, the

capacity for humanitarian assistance in Kobe has been enhanced. Additionally, the Center of Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution (the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Memorial) will open this April. In view of this, it is clear that the importance of this area as the center for international disaster prevention and humanitarian assistance has been established and recognized.

In this regard, it is of a great significance that this workshop is organized as one of the events of the ASEAN Project, "Human Resource Development for the Coordination in the Field of Natural Disasters", which will be managed by the ADRC and UN-OCHA Kobe office.

I hope that the network among NGOs in Asia will be formed and strengthened based on this workshop. I also expect that the network can take an important role in the activities for disaster reduction and will be extended from the Hyogo prefecture to the world.

Opening Speech

Dr. Ruben C. Umaly

Executive Director, ASEAN Foundation

I welcome with much honor and pleasure this opportunity to be with you this morning, in the opening ceremony of the Regional Workshop on Networking and Collaboration among Non-Governmental Organizations of Asian Countries in Disaster Reduction and Response.

I am fairly new in this post of executive director of the ASEAN Foundation. Although this is only my first month in office, I have already represented the ASEAN Foundation publicly three times. The first was on sustainable development for farming systems, and the second was also a similar NGO conference in Jakarta. This NGO networking was very much involved in the promotion of the welfare of deprived children. And this morning, I am very pleased to be associated with another NGO that is tackling the very important problem of natural disasters.

Like Mr. Nishikawa, I would also mention that Asia is the area that has the highest number of natural disasters, and therefore we need this networking and cooperation in facing the problems that would result from such natural disasters. These disasters have caused a lot of pain, loss of a lot of lives and also economic resources. And it cannot be solved by one organization or by one country. We need to work together, to cooperate, and to establish a network of international organizations like the United Nations, UN-OCHA, UNDP, local governments, different agencies involved in disaster alleviation, and also the NGOs. We have to work together. Therefore, I am very pleased that the ASEAN Foundation is affiliated with this kind of activity. I am inheriting this work from my predecessor, Ambassador Wisber Loeis, and I am very pleased to promise that I will continue the support to the NGOs, especially to the ADRC, in this promotion.

In my previous work, I was in Thailand for ten years, before this new work in

Jakarta. I have also been associated with another organization that is involved in disaster reduction. This is the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, which is based at the Asian Institute of Technology. My work there was more technological in the sense that our emphasis was more on the use of technologies, like remote sensing GIS, in the assessment of the extent of the damage. So, this one is very new to me --- working at the grass-roots level with the NGOs. And I welcome this new opportunity to be involved in this kind of activities.

The ASEAN Foundation is also a relatively young organization. It started functioning in 1998, and I am only the second executive director of the institution. Its major missions are two. One is the promotion of the ASEAN within the ASEAN member countries and also outside of the ASEAN. In another words, we have to work not only with the ten countries of the region, but also with our neighbors and partners like Japan, Korea and China, and, hopefully, even further with the European Union, Australia, Canada, United States and Latin America. But for the time being, we are focusing mostly on the ten ASEAN countries, East Asia and South Asia. The second mandate is human resource development. And I think this is where we can work together in the training of personnel – from the universities, from the community, from NGOs and other organizations – that will be necessary to undertake the tasks that are before us wherever there is a disaster. There are so many tasks to be done: management; mobilization of resources; actual grass-roots activities like provision of sanitation, especially after the disaster; control of diseases and epidemics; rehabilitation of the community in terms of food security, and even political and social security. So, one group cannot do it. We have to work together. Therefore, we completely support the ADRC principle of cooperation and networking. We are very happy to be associated with this group.

The ASEAN Foundation also would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge, with much appreciation and gratitude, the generous help that the government of Japan has extended to the ASEAN Foundation in the form of the ASEAN-Japan Solidarity Fund. This workshop has been made possible through funding support from the Solidarity Fund. This cooperation has been with us for the last

three years. And as you have seen this morning, the ASEAN Foundation is still committed from 2001 to 2004 in supporting the ADRC activities. So we look forward not only to the organization of meetings and networking as we have this morning, but also to really rolling up our sleeves, working at the grass-roots level, and training the necessary people that will be able to do the work that is necessary in alleviating the pain caused by natural disasters.

So, again, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to you, to UN-OCHA and to ADRC for giving the opportunity to the ASEAN Foundation to be of service to the community. And I look forward to working with you.

My last request is: we are very lucky to be here, but there are more NGOs and organizations that could not be invited. So please share whatever experience, whatever expertise, whatever new knowledge that you will get from this conference, with those who were not able to join us. So, when you go back home, please propagate and share whatever you have acquired in this conference. Thank you very much.

Opening Speech

Mr. Kiyoshi Natori

Senior Planner for Disaster Preparedness, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan

I would like to make a brief remark on this opportunity of opening "The Regional Workshop on Networking and Collaboration among NGOs of Asian Countries in Disaster Reduction and Response".

The Administration has a great duty to protect people and property from disasters. However, at the same time, it is more important for each of us to prepare and protect ourselves from disasters, and support each other based on the principle that ourselves should protect our own safety. The better combination of self-support, mutual-support and public-support is required.

Among those three, especially regarding mutual-support, the importance of emergency relief activities of volunteers is quite acknowledged in Japan through the volunteer activities in the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. However, it is a big challenge for us to sustain the volunteer activities and develop cooperation and collaboration among volunteer organizations. The government established "The Disaster Prevention and Volunteer Day" on the 17th of January when the Earthquake occurred and has been trying to provide a good environment in order to develop well-facilitated volunteer activities through the holding of various symposia. The cabinet office organized "The Trade Fair for Disaster Prevention Volunteer" in Tokyo in cooperation with volunteer organizations involved in disaster prevention. Through their participation in this fair, I was very impressed with their wide range of activities.

I believe that this workshop that will promote collaboration among NGOs in Asia in disaster reduction and response can obtain excellent results. In conclusion, I hope that this workshop will be useful for all the participants gathered here.