

Keynote Speech on the “Status and Challenges of the ISDR” --Building on the findings of “Living with Risk--

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Dear Minister-san,
Governor-san,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased and honoured to be here today to address the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2003. I wish to express appreciation to the Government of Japan, the Cabinet Office, and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC) for providing, once again, a precious opportunity to bring together an important group of experts from various national, regional and international organizations in Asia and some from other regions. Meetings like these represent irreplaceable opportunities to meet the actors, exchange and share information and experiences, discuss common concerns and identify future steps to improve capacities of us all, to reduce the negative impact of disasters and engage in comprehensive risk management.

I also want to thank ADRC and the Cabinet Office of Japan for assisting the ISDR secretariat in its work. We firmly believe that the immense experience of Japan in this field can shed some valuable lessons for improving capacities elsewhere.

I reiterate what Mr. Oshima already conveyed in his message: that this meeting is an opportunity to discuss further and move ahead in reviewing what we have achieved thus far, and to plan for greater involvement and commitment on reducing risk and vulnerability in the future, with a view to ensure that natural hazards provide the occasion for enhancing development rather than continuing to be an obstacle and drawback to it. As already outlined by many of the speakers yesterday, the increasing risk and disaster occurrence makes disaster reduction a growing concern for the earth population's development, -and even survival-, and progressively appears as an inevitable imperative for all of us, individuals as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations working on development or related issues (environment, disaster relief, etc).

Japan has indeed always been sensitive and committed to the issue of disaster reduction, by its own painful experience and exposure to hazards, and has engaged very actively both nationally and internationally to develop, promote and implement solutions. Japan was one of the countries that strongly supported the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) in the nineties. By hosting the World Conference on Disaster Reduction “For a safer world in the 21st Century” in 1994 in Yokohama, Japan provided the venue for the first most important political event to raise the political commitment and profile of disaster reduction. The resulting Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action and its Guidelines for natural disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation, have constituted the guiding principles for many Governments, regional, national and local organizations and the UN system. It also served as basis for the adoption of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) by the end of the Decade in 2000.

Many more countries, in particular in Asia, have also developed valuable capacities and we need to learn from each other.

By getting closer to the ten years of the Yokohama Conference and by having experienced many more disasters, with growing impact on development, as well having developed many new and valuable capacities in this field, we are now faced with an excellent political opportunity to take

stock of developments, gains, shortcomings and gaps since the adoption of the Yokohama Strategy, as requested by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and to plan a new undertaking to carry us to a more solid and effective institutional and technical base for reducing risk and vulnerability.

(SLIDE 2) Mandate for the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action

- UN General Assembly Resolutions in Jan. 2001 (56/195) and Jan. 2003 (57/L.21)

“Requests the Secretary-General, with assistance of the inter-agency secretariat for ISDR to plan and coordinate, in consultation with governments and relevant organizations of the UN system, including international financing institutions, the 2004 review of the Yokohama Strategy”

(SLIDE 3) Why an International Strategy for Disaster Reduction?

For those of you that are not as yet familiar with ISDR, this is a global strategy that aims at building resilient societies to withstand disasters from natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters- or, in other words, how to “live with the risk and ensure development”. It was born and adopted as a result of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR, 1990-1999) declared by the United Nations.

It has two basic mechanisms at the global level, the **Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR)**, and the **inter-agency secretariat (UN/ISDR)** that serves as a global information clearinghouse for disaster reduction and focal point within the UN system for the coordination of these issues. The implementation of measures and capacity building at local and national level is carried out by UN agencies, in particular UNDP, regional organizations, civil society organizations and, above all, national and local governments and community organizations.

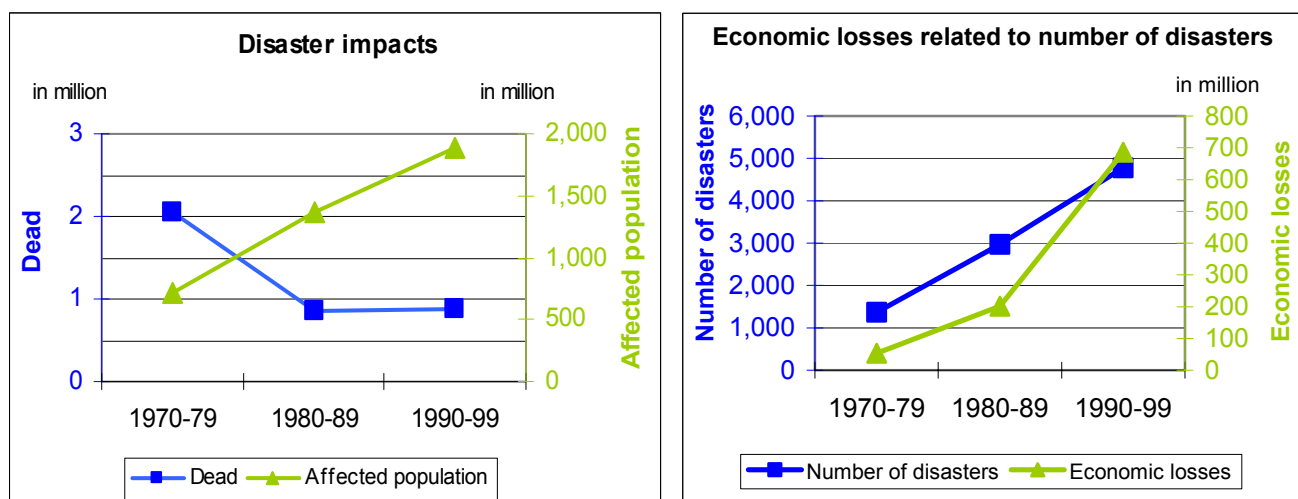
The four objectives of ISDR, as tools towards reaching disaster reduction for all, are focusing on:

1. Increasing public awareness to understand risk, vulnerability and disaster reduction,
2. Promoting the commitment of public authorities to disaster reduction,
3. Stimulating interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral partnerships, including the expansion of risk reduction networks, and
4. Improving scientific and technical knowledge about the causes of natural disasters, as well as the effects that natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters have on societies.

Among other activities, the ISDR Secretariat, with the guidance and support of the Inter-Agency Task Force and its members, and in close partnership with other relevant global actors (UNDP, ProVention Consortium...), is developing a global capacity for monitoring, review, assessment and policy guidance to measure progress in a systematic manner and to pursue disaster reduction efforts more effectively.

(SLIDES 4-5) Some current trends in disaster impact:

(a) Global data (with the shortcomings discussed yesterday) show us that less people have died from disasters the last decades, but the number of disasters, economic losses and affected population have increased significantly, thus threatening development even more.



(b) Trends in impact of disasters vs. conflict: 188 million people are affected by natural disasters vs. 33 millions by conflict (1991-2000). More than 90% of disaster related deaths in developing countries.

(SLIDE 6) Why A global review of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of action?

The Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action represents an initial step in a process that has developed greatly since then, both in understanding and in application. At the conclusion of IDNDR, at the Geneva Forum a great deal of institutions around the world were working more actively and with greater knowledge on these issues.

Much more work however, still remains to be done. Although many local experiences have provided most valuable insights and expertise in managing, recovering and preventing disasters, there are still many more communities that need to develop these capacities. Much of the knowledge and technical or technological capacity has been developed by developed countries or at the global level, and there is therefore, the need to move beyond global and regional strategies to ensure national and local application.

In the coming two years we need to ensure that governments, both at national and local levels, can develop in a participatory process the necessary mechanisms to identify needs and capabilities for disaster reduction, with a view to enhance their competence to manage their development in a sustainable and effective manner.

- To gain **political commitment** for IMPLEMENTATION and financial allocation for disaster reduction, which also links to the outcome of WSSD and the UN Millennium Development Goals
- To **develop a monitoring and review system** for assessing progress over time to support local, national, regional and global development of disaster reduction
- To foster knowledge and develop guidelines, methodologies and criteria to provide **guidance** to policy makers and practitioners in disaster risk reduction for sustainable development.

(SLIDE 7) Milestone events to build on:

- **First World Conference on Disaster Reduction**, Yokohama, 1994 (mid- term review of IDNDR). Adoption of Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action
- **IDNDR Programme Forum**- end of Decade (1999) opportunity to draw from the lessons learned of the IDNDR. the international community adopted the “Geneva Mandate” and a “Strategy for a Safer World in the 21st Century” (ISDR).
- **Regional meetings and forums** for exchange and capacity enhancement developing since (in Asia, mainly ADPC, ADRC, SOPAC, ASEAN, SAAREC, ICIMOD, UN/ESCAP and many others....)
- **Thematic meetings** (global and regional scope, urban disaster mitigation (AUDMP), climate and water related, early warning, space technology...)
- **Sustainable development and climate change** (Regional meetings leading to WSSD, Johannesburg 2002, Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC, 2002...)
- **ProVention Consortium**, initiated by the World Bank, currently managed by IFRC
- **ETC., ETC.**

A number of thematic and regional meetings ranging from the issue of early warning (Potsdam, Germany, 1998), El Niño (Guayaquil, Ecuador, 1998), land use planning and sustainable development (Paris, France, 1999), space applications and several regional meetings in Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa have taken place since 1994, at the initiative of selected national governments committed to advance further the goals of the IDNDR and of making disaster reduction a recognized pre-requisite to sustainable development. (For an overview of milestone events and main forums for exchange on disaster reduction in Asia, see our extract from “Living with Risk” provided in the Conference folder)

Wider emphasis has been placed, at the international level, on the relevance of disaster reduction for development, in particular poverty reduction, including in the Millennium Declaration and Road Map adopted by Heads of States in 2000.

The ISDR serves as a platform for cooperation with relevant partners towards a strong global coalition for disaster reduction involving scientific institutions, selected UN Agencies and partners, among others, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Federation of Red Cross societies (IFRC) and other partners closely linked to the private sector such as the ProVention Consortium and the World Bank.

Similarly, as already mentioned in Mr. Oshima’s message, the Political Declaration and Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, 26 August – 4 September 2002, Johannesburg) place disaster reduction as a central component of sustainable development and open a new door towards concrete partnership strategies to reduce the vulnerability of society and infrastructures to disasters. This is a political commitment we now need to develop further, to draw the attention -and resources- from institutions working in the development and environment fields.

This historical list of milestone events is certainly not exhaustive. It only highlights the progress in technical and political commitments since 1994 that have contributed to raising awareness on disaster prevention and risk and vulnerability reduction. The disaster reduction family has expanded significantly... but not enough as yet, disasters are on a rise, and so is the increasing vulnerability of our society. In the coming years, we will need to accelerate the speed in APPLICATION of the available knowledge and technology and IMPLEMENTATION of policies and measures to ensure disaster reduction.

Some of the **key questions to address** when we review the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action are:

Where have we been successful- how and why? Where are we failing? Where are the technical and institutional gaps? What needs to be modified in our current development patterns that increase vulnerability and risk instead of building safer communities? How to ensure the systematic integration and consideration of disaster reduction within national development planning? How can we live with the risk, without losing lives and assets and ensuring a sustainable development? Who still needs to be included in these endeavours (organizations, sectors, levels)?

(SLIDE 8) Living with Risk: A global review of disaster reduction initiatives:

A first collective attempt, coordinated by the ISDR Secretariat but carried out with many local, national, regional and international partners, was the global review of disaster reduction initiatives, including pending issues and challenges and reflected in the publication of “Living with Risk”. This first initiative allowed for an estimation of the progress made and promoting the sharing of experiences and of expertise across the globe. It is still a preliminary attempt which would benefit greatly from your feedback (SEE Framework for Disaster Reduction)

(SLIDE 9) In the regional context of Asia and the Pacific significant progress has been made in building a common understanding and frameworks:

In Asia the **Total Disaster Risk Management** concept and application for a holistic approach to disaster reduction in shaping.

In the Pacific the well developed and now tested **Comprehensive Hazard and Risk Management (CHARM)**.

The application and implementation of these frameworks need to be monitored from a regional cooperation perspective, and at national and local level.

(SLIDES 10-13): In the following slides there is a quick overview of the thematic divisions of the global review, building on the Yokohama Strategy, and which we suggest be used and further developed for the review of the strategy.

(13) Challenges for the future outlined in the last chapter include:

- Proposal for development of a monitoring framework to assess progress over time, to be further developed into a monitoring, review and assessment tool for all actors.

(SLIDE 14) The process 2003 – 2004 (2005)

**Regional reviews,
national input**

-Kobe (ADRC)
-Fiji (SOPAC, Pacific)
-ADPC, ADB,
ESCAP, UNDP and
other related fora
-Early warning
-others

**Monitoring and review
framework, indicators**

Second version of *Living
with Risk- global review*,
with UNDP, ProVention,
regional and national
organizations

**Final global event,
political commitments**

Pending definition of location
and time for final event
(end of 2004, beginning 2005)

To UN General Assembly
endorsement

As mentioned at the beginning, I see this Asian conference as one of the first meetings of a long series of events and consultations (in the Asian context with ADRC and other relevant institutions in the region such as SOPAC and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), to initiate the review process of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action with and for the benefit of all of you.

(SLIDE 15) Next steps (2003):

- Feed-back from experts, countries, organization on **monitoring framework** (*Living with Risk and UNDP vulnerability index*) with IATF working groups support
- **Water risk:** Participation in 3rd World Water Forum, Kyoto (March)
- **Early warning:** Regional consultation and global conference Oct 2003 (Germany)
- Planning for final event/s.... Kobe, Geneva...

(SLIDE 16) Expected outcome (2004-2005)

- A **programmatic document (plan of action for the next ten years...)**- identifying gaps, and providing the means to bridge these gaps, resources required
- A **set of guidelines for a programme of action** for practical application of disaster reduction
- Second version of an **inventory and review of disaster reduction initiatives** (*Living with Risk*), and a monitoring framework with targets and indicators
- **Political declaration** (commitment) carrying forward and enhancing the Yokohama message of 1994

I rely on you all to make of disaster prevention a reality and concrete collective effort, for the benefit of future generations. I am at your disposal anytime, either today or by e-mail, to discuss any views you might have to multiply success stories and renew the fruitful initiatives you may have experienced in the field of disaster reduction. I wish you fruitful sessions and discussions.

Thank you for your attention.
