

Opening Address

Dr. Shigeru Itoh, Chairman of Asian Disaster Reduction Center

The Fifth ADRC International Meeting

Good morning, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Kobe and I would like to express my profound appreciation for your attendance, in spite of your busy schedule.

After the establishment of ADRC, we have enthusiastically pursued activities with the support of member countries, advisory countries, the Japanese government, Hyogo prefecture and many other organizations. These activities include providing disaster reduction information over the internet, welcoming visiting researchers from member countries, conducting disaster management education and training, and promoting cooperative disaster reduction projects with member countries.

ADRC has also been working closely with the United Nations and particularly with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Kobe with whom we are promoting a number of joint projects. One such project was to open a Kobe office of their Relief Web in August 2001, which strengthened both their and our ability to provide disaster reduction information to the world. Recently in Asia, NGOs are playing an increasingly more important role in disaster reduction and response. This was the background of our first effort in Asia together with OCHA to provide support in building the foundations for international cooperation and networking between Asian NGOs.

As another major step, ADRC was asked to join the Inter-Agency Task Force of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), giving us yet an even greater role in reducing the damage from natural disasters in the Asian region as it strives to attain sustainable development.

The threats of natural disasters are increasing for various reasons including rapid urbanization, population growth in vulnerable areas, degradation of the natural environment and climate change. ADRC will continue to develop constructive activities to help make Asia more safe and sustainable area in the 21st century.

We sincerely hope to count on your continued support and guidance at ADRC.

Thank you very much.