

## The 6<sup>th</sup> ADRC International Meeting

### Session Summary

4 February 2004

13:20-15:00 Session 1

**Theme: “Sharing lessons learned from recent disasters”**

Last year, a number of major disasters had occurred in the region, exacting their toll on human lives and limbs, property and infrastructures, and the economy and environment of affected countries. These included the landslide in Sri Lanka in May, the super typhoon, Maemi, that hit Korea in September, and the landslides in central and southern Philippines in December. These disasters occurred in spite of existing disaster management programs and strategies in the country, thereby presenting challenges for more effective countermeasures and methodologies for disaster reduction. This session aimed at presenting and sharing the lessons learned from these recent disasters towards greater awareness of existing gaps and further development of more effective strategies for disaster reduction.

**\*Facilitator:** Mr. Markus N. Zimmerman, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

**\*Rapporteur:** Mr. Emmanuel de Guzman, Consultant, Asian Disaster Reduction Center

**\*Speakers:**

- Mr. Young-Ok Jun, deputy director of BDPP, Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, Korea
- Mr. Nimal D. Hettiarachchi, director of NDMC, Sri Lanka
- Mr. Zou Ming, deputy director of the Department of Disaster and Social Relief, China
- Mr. Bernardo Rafaelito Roldan Alejandro IV, Civil Defense Officer IV of the Office of Civil Defense, Philippines

**Summary:**

***Typhoon Maemi in Korea, September 2003***

**Mr. Young-Ok Jun**, deputy director of BDPP, Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, Korea, presented a film on the extent and types of damages wrought by Typhoon Maemi in Korea in September 2003. The typhoon killed 131 people and destroyed about \$3.5 billion worth of properties. It was Korea's worst typhoon. Unprecedented in rainfall and wind velocity, the typhoon caused big waves and landslides, resulting in enormous damages to public infrastructures and lifelines including power, communication and transport facilities, buildings and houses, rivers and agricultural land, among others. In view of this recent disaster experience in Korea and its detrimental effect on the country's economy, Mr. Young-Ok mentioned the longing of the people for a safer environment and the current shift in paradigms and policies on disaster management in the country. He conveyed the awakening process in Korea, particularly the increasing awareness on global climate changes and the vulnerability of communities. He also cited the changes in government policy on disaster management, particularly the emphasis on preparedness,

reinforcement of response capacity, strengthening of government organization for disaster management and the establishment of self-governing disaster prevention system at the local level. He also discussed the innovative disaster countermeasures in the country, i.e. the reinforcement of infrastructures, technological and expertise development, continuing policy development, use and application of IT technology, and adoption of a participatory system for government and private sectors.

### ***Landslide in Sri Lanka, May 2003***

**Mr. Nimal D. Hettiarachchi**, director of NDMC, Sri Lanka, discussed the direct and indirect causes of landslides in the country, which included rainfall, underlying geological formations, and man made activities such as improper land use and construction of roads and houses without consideration of landslide risks. He cited the incidents of landslides in the districts of Ratnapura, Matara, Hambantota and Kalutara. These incidents presented lessons in resource mobilization, local capacity for rapid assessment, commitment of local authorities, media support in information dissemination, and public awareness. He emphasized the importance of political will in disaster management, mobilization of stakeholders' support and the positive response of the victim families. In conclusion, Mr. Hettiarachchi presented hazard zone mapping, land use regulations, insurance and incentives as possible risk reduction measures.

### ***Establishment of Disaster Emergency Response System in China***

**Mr. Zou Ming**, deputy director of the Department of Disaster and Social Relief, China, gave a profile of flood, landslide and earthquake disasters in the country, citing their impact on human lives, property and the economy. He presented two cases of disaster situations, the earthquake in Bachu-Jiashi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and the well eruption in Kai County, Chong Qing, and an analysis of their respective impact and the corresponding response of national and local governments. Based on these two cases, Mr. Zou conveyed the importance of strengthening early warning systems, formulating disaster emergency response plan, enhancing disaster response capacity, ensuring effective disaster information sharing, improving collaboration and cooperation at all levels, raising public awareness on disaster prevention, and promoting disaster legislation.

### ***Landslides in the Philippines, December 2003***

**Mr. Bernardo Rafaelito Roldan Alejandro IV**, Civil Defense Officer IV of the Office of Civil Defense, Philippines, presented a comprehensive report on the effects of the recent landslide and flood incidents in the country. He cited the affected areas, the number of casualties, the extent of damage, the emergency response and relief operations of the government, the support of international organizations, and the assistance and recovery needs of the victims. Based on this disaster experience, Mr. Alejandro stressed the importance of a responsive needs assessment, coordinated relief operations, and a comprehensive recovery and rehabilitation plan for the affected communities. As regards policy development, he mentioned the recent presidential directive to conduct hazard mapping of landslide prone areas, the importance of land use policy, and the need to strengthen and institutionalize community-based disaster management program at the community level.

### **Open Forum:**

The following issues were raised and discussed:

- (1) Possible dissemination of the documentary film on Typhoon Maemi
- (2) Institutionalization of community-based disaster management program at the local level

in the Philippines

- (3) Institutional linkages on enhancing early warning in the Philippines
- (4) Importance and critical roles of local disaster coordinating councils

**Conclusion:**

The presentations conveyed that major disasters had occurred in spite of existing programs and efforts in disaster reduction at the country level. They demonstrated the challenge at hand to examine existing gaps in the disaster reduction cycle and the need for continuous effort to seek and enforce more effective disaster countermeasures. The lessons learned from the recent disasters presented conveyed the importance of hazard mapping, effective dissemination of early warning, and enhanced public awareness on hazards and risks. They highlighted also the importance of institutionalizing disaster reduction programs at the community level and improving coordination mechanisms and strengthening cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders in disaster reduction.