

1. Asian Disaster Reduction Center

1-1. Background to the Establishment of the ADRC

The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) opened its office in Kobe, Japan, on July 30, 1998. The major steps leading up to ADRC's creation are outlined as follows:

(1) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR)

At its 42nd General Assembly in December 1987, the United Nations designated the 90's as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, and adopted a resolution aiming to sharply reduce damages caused by natural disasters around the world, particularly in developing countries, through joint international actions.

(2) World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction

In May 1994, the UN organized the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama, Japan, to conduct an interim review of the decade long initiative and propose an action plan for the future. At the meeting, the "Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World" was adopted, which pointed out the importance of international cooperation in regions that share common types of disasters and disaster reduction measures. Disaster Reduction activities have since been promoted throughout the world based on this strategy.

(3) Ministerial-level Asian Natural Disaster Reduction Conference

As the first step in regional level cooperation as per the Yokohama Strategy, the IDNDR Secretariat organized a meeting in Kobe in December, 1995 to formulate a policy on disaster reduction cooperation in Asia. Cabinet members in charge of disaster reduction from 28 countries attended the meeting, which adopted the Kobe Disaster Reduction Declaration consisting of ideas for promoting international cooperation in disasters, including a proposal by Japan to launch a feasibility study on a system that would act as the disaster reduction coordinator in the Asian region.

(4) Asian Natural Disaster Reduction Experts Meeting

The Government of Japan and the IDNDR Secretariat co-organized an experts meeting in October 1996 to hash out how a central disaster reduction system, as stated in the Kobe Disaster Reduction Declaration, might be created for the Asian region. Key participants from disaster reduction bureaus of 30 countries attended and agreed to study the creation of an "Asian Disaster Reduction Center" (tentative name) that would serve as the secretariat for promoting activities of the proposed system.

(5) Asian Disaster Reduction Cooperation Promotion Meeting

The Government of Japan and the IDNDR Secretariat co-organized a meeting in Tokyo in June 1997 to discuss specific activities of the proposed central disaster reduction system. Once again, key personnel from disaster reduction bureaus of 23 countries attended the meeting, the overall goal of which was to promote cooperation in disaster reduction efforts through concrete action. It was proposed at the meeting to create an office in Japan as the secretariat for the proposed system.

(6) ADRC's Establishment

With momentum gathering on this series of meetings, the Japanese government discussed the organization, budget and other aspects of the proposed office with other countries involved. Then, with the cooperation of Hyogo Prefecture, the Asian Disaster Reduction Center was officially established in Kobe on July 30, 1998.