

Address by Mr. Toshizo Ido,
Governor of Hyogo Prefecture, Japan
At the ISDR Global Platform, Geneva
On June 5, 2007

Sir John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, National Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am deeply honored to be here today for the first session of the ISDR Global Platform, and would like to extend my sincerest appreciation to the UNISDR Secretariat and everyone else who helped make it possible.

First, I would like to express my appreciation for all the kind support we received during our recovery from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and when we held the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe.

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), adopted at the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction (UNWCDR) presented us with the most important actions for our future: reducing disaster risk, promoting education, and fostering a culture of disaster prevention and preparedness at every level of society. (Details are shown in the attached documents.)

That conference led to the foundation of the International Recovery Platform (IRP), and this past January, three hundred people, including ministerial-level representatives from four countries that were struck by the Indian Ocean tsunami and representatives from twenty different organizations, discussed housing reconstruction and the organizational framework of reconstruction at the “International Forum on Tsunami and Earthquake” held in Hyogo Prefecture.

Drawing from our history with international disaster prevention efforts and our experience with the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, I would like to comment on three points.

First, I would like to address the “Expectations for the Global Platform.”

The main point highlighted in the HFA is the importance of follow-up activities to increase effectiveness, increase system building, and reinforce the functions of the ISDR Task Force. It is important that this Global Platform, a cooperative effort of government officials and citizens, will encourage each member nation to participate proactively in the ISDR activities.

An ISDR Office is scheduled to open this year in Kobe, and we know that the cooperation between this and other nearby organizations will enable us to comprehensively cover the disaster management cycle of prevention, preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction.

Further, Hyogo will continue to work with the ISDR to promote international disaster reduction cooperation efforts. The IRP is central to thematic platform activities, and so I would like to reaffirm our pledge to continue donating the equivalent of about 50 million yen a year to support the IRP’s activities. This money can cover the research costs of 20 million yen, as well as personnel and office space costs.

Second, I would like to address “Hyogo’s promotion of international disaster mitigation efforts.”

Hyogo is promoting international cooperation on disaster reduction as a way to show thanks to everyone who helped us during the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake.

We believe we must share our experiences both home and abroad in order to help build a safer society, which is why we established a base at the Kobe New Eastern City Center that includes many UN agencies and international organizations, including the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, OCHA Kobe, and the WHO Kobe Center. The synergy effect of the coming together of these organizations helps Hyogo's international disaster management initiatives, and in turn benefits the activities of the ISDR.

For example, one organization at this center, the Disaster Reduction & Human Renovation Institution, sends experts to disaster stricken areas to provide consultations to local disaster management headquarters.

Another organization found there is the Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress, the first of its kind in Japan to focus on research, medical examinations, and communications on trauma and PTSD caused by natural disasters and accidents. This institute sent experts to Indonesia after the Indian Ocean Tsunami to consult with local medical care staff, and is as active at home as it is overseas.

Large-scale disasters put people all over the world in danger, and we believe that our role must be to develop disaster management experts. That is why we helped the Japan International Cooperation Agency establish the Disaster Reduction Learning Center at this base on May 17th.

This center will enable experts and personnel from developing countries to be trained in disaster risk management, which will help form a culture of disaster prevention and resilience, as well as provide good networking opportunities.

Finally, I would like to address "Hyogo's determination for the mitigation of disaster damage."

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake was the first vertical thrust earthquake to strike an urban society with an aging population. Above all, we learned about the importance of five things: disaster preparedness, initial responses, connections between disaster management organizations, community preparedness, and disaster-resilient society building.

We fully realize how important it is to be prepared for disasters, and believe that reinforcing our risk management systems and encouraging citizens to be aware of disaster preparedness is vital. We have established the Hyogo Mutual Aid System for Housing Reconstruction, a system of mutual aid among home owners that supports reconstruction and house repairs in times of disaster.

The "Phoenix Disaster Management System" is also in operation and offers round-the-clock monitoring and initial response systems so that they can smoothly assess crisis situations and instantly indicate the amount of personnel and relief goods needed.

When the earthquake occurred, as many as 80% of the survivors from collapsed houses were saved by their neighbors, reinforcing the importance of neighbors helping each other. Our efforts to make Hyogo a global model for disaster preparedness continue with comprehensive measures to enhance the disaster management capacities of local communities.

Hyogo will always remember the lessons of the earthquake and continue to promote disaster management measures. In realizing a safe and secure community we have achieved a "creative reconstruction" tailored to a mature society. It is our intention to handle disasters as they change with the expansion of cities and the aging of populations, while dealing with issues that have yet to be solved. We will appreciate your kind understanding and support with this process. Thank you very much.