

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
First session, Geneva, Switzerland
5 - 7 June 2007

Country : Turkey
Speaker : Mr. Mustafa TAYMAZ
General Director of the General Directorate of Disaster Affairs (GDDA)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to take the floor at this very important meeting. I would like to express my gratitude to all participants and thank everybody who has a role in the preparation of this meeting, especially the ISDR secretariat.

Early and effective preparation focusing on pre-disaster activities is the only way to respond to disasters and decrease their negative impact on our societies. As you know, Turkey just like many other countries in the world faced several devastating natural disasters in recent decades and the results of most recent ones are still quite fresh in our memories. Natural hazards, coupled with physical and social vulnerability have caused losses of life, damage to property and adverse effect on economy. Being a disaster prone country, Turkey is giving priority to the disaster related studies especially to disaster risk reduction activities with all institutions and bodies involved. After 1992 Erzincan and 1999 Marmara Region earthquakes, Turkey has reviewed and renewed her understanding of disaster management and reduction efforts and deficiencies in every aspect. As well as legal arrangements, practical preparations and pre-disaster issues were given priority in disaster management.

Turkey is the fifth after China, Iran, Russia, and Peru with respect to the damage of earthquakes in the world according to the international databases. On the basis of "Earthquake Zoning Map of Turkey", 96% of our country is under the risk of earthquake hazard in various scales and 98% of our population live on these areas. Earthquakes occurred in the last century caused approximately 613.000 buildings to be destroyed seriously and 100.000 casualties.

1999 catastrophic earthquake had been perceived as a shock by the public and mutual willpower was displayed to renew the disaster management system by putting forth the deficiencies of the existing system. Following the traditional disaster response activities like search and rescue, first aid, temporary sheltering, health, food and security which were the major subjects on the first week of the earthquake, Government realized where the system was stopped and went wrong during the rehabilitation and reconstruction stages. After this disaster event, more attention was paid to disaster risk reduction and pre-disaster studies more than traditional post disaster relief and rehabilitation activities.

These experiences and further studies proved that disaster management and creating disaster resilient societies can only be achieved by strong institutional bodies, knowledge sharing, enhancing the educational and awareness capacity, risk reduction activities and more efforts on scientific researches. Building a strong and disaster resilient society is also a key element for a sustainable development.

In Turkey, General Directorate of Disaster Affairs, General Directorate of Civil Defence and Turkish Emergency Management General Directorate have overall responsibilities with respect to disaster management duties. In addition to those governmental organisations there are many ministries, institutions, agencies and NGOs who has duties and responsibilities clearly indicated by laws and regulations.

Latest *Hyogo Strategy* is also be a key document for disaster risk reduction studies and strategies. UN-ISDR with its bodies plays an important coordination role among the countries to share political, scientific and application experiences. In today's world all countries have to act in a spirit of partnership to deal with catastrophic affects of disasters.

Establishment of a concrete and well organised National Platform will be the primary priority of Turkey for the future. As the focal point to ISDR, GDDA is executing the role of coordination between relevant institutes and bodies especially on the risk reduction related issues. However, we believe that establishment of a national platform in Turkey

with several academic and governmental bodies involved will contribute to the development of risk reduction culture in our country.

Finally, I again would like to extend our gratitude on behalf of myself and members of delegation to ISDR secretariat and government of Switzerland for their efforts and warm hospitality in organizing this valuable meeting.