



"3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction"

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Statement by

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Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

Madam Chair, Excellencies;

Distinguished Participants; Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a distinct privilege for me to address this august Conference on behalf of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). At the outset, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the people and the Government of Japan for the warm hospitality extended to us and the excellent arrangements made for this important Conference in this beautiful city of Sendai. My gratitude also goes to the United Nations, particularly to UNISDR office for organizing this important event.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Let me continue with presenting a brief introduction to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). ECO is an inter-governmental regional organization with covering more than 8 million square km territory and 440 million inhabitants. Bordering Europe, China, Russia and Persian Gulf, the ECO Region includes; Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

ECO scope of activities now embraces a range of fields with direct and indirect impacts on the social, economic development of individual Member states and the ECO Region as a whole. These includes, among others, trade, transport, energy, agriculture and food security, environment, health, drugs control, and also disaster risk reduction. ECO has always been positively responsive to and guided by the agenda of the international community and the United Nations.

ECO Region is suffering terribly from natural hazards. Such as earthquakes, landslides, drought and floods. Over the past two decades,

there has been a steady increase in the incidence rate of disasters in the Region, and empirical evidences along with scientific findings show that our Region may be prone to more calamities in the future. The majority of the 440 million ECO Region's inhabitants live in the moderate to very high risks earthquake hazard areas. The geographical vulnerability of ECO countries and the Region as a whole is exacerbated by phenomena such as climate change and urbanization. This compelled the ECO Member States to explore a regional and collective response to these phenomenal risks which constantly claim their economic and human capitals.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Right after the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005, where the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 was adopted, the ECO Member States decided to enter into arrangements for regional cooperation towards building resilience at the local, national and regional levels, as envisaged in the Hyogo Framework for Action. The ECO Regional Centre for Natural Disasters Management was also established in Mashhad, Iran and the possibility of an "ECO Fund for Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation" has been pursued. We soon realized the need for right approaches and sound policies, addressing all the contributing elements, including, but not limited to, the land use policies, construction safety and sustainability, early warning systems, information dissemination systems, local capacity and resilience building, community awareness raising, training, etc. In line with its policies in other fields of cooperation, ECO also decided to link its efforts to the international efforts. In 2007, ECO signed a MOU with UNISDR.

We also started to have constant regional policy dialogue on disaster risk reduction. Ever since, we have convened 7 ECO major conferences on disaster risk management where the need for a more focused and action-

oriented cooperation roadmap emerged. We are now in the process of revisiting our regional approach to disasters, developing new ECO regional strategy for disaster risk reduction. In the meantime, ECO began to incorporate other dimensions into its disaster policy. For instance, as a part of integrated approach of disaster risk reduction, ECO ministers of environment decided to seriously address the environmental aspects of disasters. As the latest effort, ECO ministers of environment decided to develop a regional approach to the environmental impacts in the post disaster situations and adaptations.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants

We are confident that ECO could be a major regional player and partner in the post-Sendai era. ECO Secretariat has been pursuing possible partnerships with potential regional and international partners who are active in the area of disaster risk reduction. The target is to explore possible technical and financial assistance and partnership needed for mitigating the negative impacts of natural hazards for peoples and countries of the Region in an overall "socio-economic development" context.

We need to update our approach to people affected by disasters. The priorities of Governments and International Organizations should include most vulnerable ones; orphans, children's; safety; homeless victims and jobless people left behind disasters. The scientists working in social and humanitarian sciences should be given more possibility to support the capacity of international and national organizations fighting against disasters.

Another important issue is that we need to concentrate on the financial consequences and financial risks that arise from disasters. Thereby, both prior and after disasters; we need to have strong financial structures and arrangements to overcome the individuals problems.

So; there is a clear need for the international organizations, including ECO to have attention to the financial dimensions of disaster risk management.

Concluding; I would like to state that ECO will soon develop a post-Sendai regional context reflecting the recommendations of the new global framework for disaster risk reduction. And regional strategy to achieve the respective goals; we expect partners' assistance in making regional arrangements for disaster risk management, mitigation and preparedness. We believe that addressing all these issue is the responsibility we share with the international community. And we also believe that international community will be interested in extending assistance to the ECO activities in this field.

Thank you for your attention