

Statement
by Mr. Apichai Chvajarernpun
Director General, Department of Mineral Resources,
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand
on Progress towards Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action
at the First Session of the Global Platform for Risk Disaster Reduction
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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, please allow me to convey on behalf of the Thai Delegation our sincere appreciation to UNISDR for its tremendous and invaluable endeavour in organizing this important event, as well as the generous invitation extended to us.

2. Like many other countries in the world, the trend of natural disasters in Thailand is on the rise both in terms of their frequency and intensity. We still are reminded of the unforgettable tragedy that occurred on 26th December 2004 when the Tsunami struck the southern coast of Thailand and many other coastal areas along the Indian Ocean. In Thailand alone, over 5,000 people lost their lives. People's livelihood, homes and properties were devastated. Last year, a series of strong tropical storms in northern Thailand caused heavy precipitation and triggered huge landslides that destroyed several villages with a death toll of 87 persons. Heavy and continuous rainfalls also caused major floods in the central plain of the country. During the past two years, several earthquakes occurred affecting the northern region and Bangkok Metropolis.

3. These calamities have indeed served as a wake up call for all stakeholders to be more vigilant, better prepared and ensure timely mobilization of needed resources. They have also brought home to us the fact that natural disasters, though inevitable, their devastating impact can be minimized and even deterred through disaster risk reduction.

4. The increasing incidents of natural hazards and their impact on people and communities living in areas at risk are of major concern to the Thai Government. This has led the Thai authorities to launch a diverse range of disaster risk reduction activities at the national level in line with the Hyogo

Framework for Action so as to build the resilience of communities at risk, as follows:

- Thailand took an immediate step after the most catastrophic and unprecedented event of the 26th December 2004 tsunami to set up the National Disaster Warning Center which serves as the national focal point among government agencies concerned on disaster management.

- The Tsunami Regional Trust Fund was established in September 2005 under the administration of UNESCAP to speed up the on-going efforts to enhance national capacity and create a reliable tsunami early warning system within the region.

- Thailand has adopted a "Community-Based Disaster Risk Management" (CBDRM) approach which aims to generate awareness and mobilize people's participation, thereby making disaster risk management more holistic.

- Local and international disaster management networks have been created for the transfer and sharing of information, related know-how and experiences.

Mr. Chairperson,

- Historically, disaster management in Thailand was response and relief operation oriented. Immediately after experiencing the most catastrophic disaster in our history - the 26th December 2004 tsunami, coupled with good practices from our international partners, we have shifted our emphasis toward disaster prevention and mitigation.

- Thailand has established a Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Academy in 2004 as the principal training center in the field of disaster management. The target group includes government officials both at national and local levels, employees of private sectors, and the general public.

- As local authorities are at the front line and are the first to respond to disasters, Thailand has continuously enhanced the capacity of local authorities through training, allocation of annual budget as well as supplying them with necessary equipment and tools.

- To be well-prepared, the Thai Government has assigned the provincial authorities in all 76 provinces in the country to draft a "Provincial Evacuation Plan and Drill", and to conduct evacuation drills at least twice annually.

- Last but not least, Thailand has adopted a Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for disaster risk reduction in collaboration with UNISDR.

A task force has been set up comprising key national players in disaster reduction to identify national priorities and formulate the SNAP.

5. We hope that this Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will be a forum for all of us to share information, experiences, know-how, and lessons-learnt in order to strengthen our disaster risk reduction efficiency for the safety and welfare of our people.

Lastly, Mr. Chairperson,

6. As we know, there is a strong linkage between climate change, natural disasters and disaster risk reduction. We are encouraged to see that climate change is at the top of the agenda of policy makers worldwide. This is an important first step, yet, there is still a long way to go to address this global threat. Therefore, it is vital that the First Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the main international forum devoted to disaster risk reduction, send a clear and unequivocal message that we cannot succeed in our efforts in disaster risk reduction unless all of us do more nationally, regionally and internationally to address the problem of climate change.

Thank you.
