

ACT LOCAL, GUIDE GLOBAL

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1. It is a pleasure and honour to share my thoughts with you this afternoon, on the challenges we must address in achieving concrete progress in making Disaster Risk reduction an important element of sustainable development and good governance.

2. It is significant that we meet here today on the 35th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference on the Environment that in many ways signaled the start of a political commitment to reversing environmental degradation. On this World Environment Day we can draw lessons from the environment movement that has specific meaning for the global DRR movement as this first session of the GPDRR.

3. From the first World Climate Conference in 1979 to the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, the nations of the world appealed "to foresee and to prevent potential man-made changes in climate that might be adverse to the well-being of humanity". For nearly two decades, the text of the Kyoto Protocol was adopted at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997. The Kyoto Protocol, the only international instrument for global action to mitigate climate change entered into force on 16 February 2005. It took almost three decades to recognize that climate change is both a development and environmental issue. The long exasperating delay in these negotiations and international mechanisms was mainly attributed to complex climate system and uncertainties in climate change projections and associated impacts, though this does not justify inaction. From the recent evidences from the recent IPCC release, it is concluded that many of the impacts associated with climate change exacerbate or alter existing disaster risks.

4. With the growing recognition and attention to the risks of climate change, public health systems during emergencies are also becoming more complex. We must address the need to strengthen health emergency management systems by building relationships between health disciplines and by integrating the health sector into community-wide disaster management systems. Also, efforts must also be focused to strengthen the resilience of health care facilities, health facility emergency planning and managing large numbers of casualties. Strong commitment is needed to address continuing and

emerging challenges associated with natural disasters, technological disasters, pandemic preparedness, bio-terrorism and complex emergencies.

5. It is time to recognize the synergies between policy frameworks, institutional mechanisms and practical methodologies for disaster risk management within the context of adaptation. A stronger focus must be placed on disaster risk management, poverty reduction and sustainable development. We believe that the development and environment community must ensure that adaptation is not treated as a standalone issue, but in the context of disaster risk management, poverty reduction and safe development.

6. This meeting must plan and act on how to accelerate the pace of implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. And accelerate we must. It's a quarter of decade since the Kobe conference and even longer if you consider the beginnings of the modern DRR movement as 1990 with the start of the IDNDR.

7. This is the 15th anniversary year of the Rio Conference on Environment and development which gave us Agenda 21 - a global action agenda for the 21st century that linked environment to development and planned sustainable stewardship of Mother Nature's assets for use by future generations. Agenda 21 reminded politicians, planners and development financiers that environment matters, and inattention would not do. For all of us who call for mainstreaming of DRR into development today, we have much to learn from the successes and failures, and the strategies and tactics that those pioneers employed in making environment an integral part of political and technical decision making today.

8. So too we have learnt that Mother Nature protects; that natural resources in our coastal areas, wetlands or forests are nature's protective barrier against its hazards: which when weakened increases the impact of 'natural' hazards. Thus, sound environmental management is an integral part of disaster risk reduction, and both movements need to go hand in hand.

9. Reducing disaster risk is integrally linked to achieving sustainable development and lifting masses out of grinding poverty, a key aim we set ourselves at the turn of the 20th century with the globally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As one leader reminded us at the Stockholm conference in 1972- "Poverty is the greatest polluter". So too the DRR movement we seek to consolidate here must recognize that combating poverty is itself one sure way to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience of communities to

natural hazards, the raison de etre of HFA and our earlier Yokohama plan for a safer world. It is a happy coincidence that in the world conference on Disaster reduction in Kobe, we aligned the Hyogo framework deadlines to the MDG target dates- 2015. We must now consciously integrate our actions for HFA implementation to the national strategies and action plans for poverty reduction in each of our countries.

10. The Regional Consultative Committee on Disaster management (RCC); which ADPC serves as secretariat, in its 5th meeting in May 2005 in Vietnam committed its 26 member Asian countries to 'Mainstreaming Disaster reduction into Development' as its contribution to the first priority goal of the HFA. The RCC 5 Hanoi declaration called for integrating DRR into National Development Plans and poverty Reduction Strategies. Bangladesh has been a pioneer in integrating DRR into their PRSP and other Asian Governments have begun similar initiatives. We must all link DRR and HFA implementation to poverty Reduction and development programs at the provincial, district and local levels.

11. When I was elected Bangkok Governor in 1996 for a 4 year term, I had always initiated the thoughts to the civil servants as well as to the local Bangkokians. We have developed numerous programs and projects, which urged not only the central government but also local administration at all levels to functionally focus on energy efficiency measures as well as natural resource management. I had prioritized some of the initiatives such as improved environment for a green and clean Bangkok, better flood management with a total area of 1,500 square kilometers, and improved emergency coordination arrangements through setting up a disaster control center. It was not easy to retain focus on these aspects, with no immediate visible benefits, and in the face of other competing priorities. Firm commitment and leadership, and active support from citizens and environmental groups, were essential, but visible changes like cleanliness improvement and better livelihoods for riverside residents for longer periods of the year, and improved traffic flow because of the 24/7 control center, helped widen the support base among Bangkok resident. Paying attention to local level problems, finding specific solutions and linking with citizens concerns for development and better life, are keys to achieving success. Finding such multiple win solutions are strategies that DRR advocates should help politicians and decision makers deliver.

12. City level problems are close to my heart. In many Asian countries, as in other parts of the world, the 'urban' population is large and growing larger than the 'rural' population. Reducing 'urban' risk by good city

level preparedness and emergency management and wise land use and building control regulations an important part of the DRR globally, and must be made an integral part of the sustainable urban development agenda.

13. Here too not only 'mega cities' but secondary cities and smaller towns also need our attention. In fact these may provide more fertile ground for making a difference as our work in Asia has shown. Since 1995, ADPC has worked with city governments, urban development ministries, and agencies, and other concerned stakeholders in 25 Asian secondary cities and regional city associations. Over 200 'secondary' cities are at high risk from natural hazards. As we had called for at WCDR and started work with ICLEI thereafter, we need a " Safer sister cities program'.

14. In the late eighties, the environmental movement coined the phrase- Think Global, Act Local. Local communities and local governments at the commune, city and district level face the major impact of disasters and are the first responders. In Thailand, facing such threats, it has implemented OTOS (One Tambon, One Search and Rescue team) program as part of its approach to preparedness. Such local efforts, often self reliant and volunteer based for preparedness to face disasters, save the environment, develop sustainable livelihoods and combat risk have come of age and have their own unique, innovative, local solutions. Let us advocate that there is a better quality of life approach where we should deny heavily-consumed lifestyle. Let us appreciate and respect more the rights of the living and the non-living objects surrounding us. We, the homo sapiens, are not central species of everything; we are mere co-existor among others. These need to inspire us and shape our approach and vision. As we work over these next three days to implement HFA for building the resilience of communities to natural hazards, let us be guided by local wisdom and plan to "ACT LOCAL, GUIDE GLOBAL".

Khap khun krap!