



# World Conference on Disaster Reduction

18-22 January 2005, Kobe, Hyogo, Japan

## Closing remarks at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction

**Jan Egeland,**

Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs

United Nations

22 January 2005

Friends and colleagues,

This Conference commenced in the shadow of the Indian Ocean disaster but ends with a strong message of hope in the shape of the Hyogo Declaration and the Framework for Action for the next decade.

The colossal tragedy intensified our obligation to define a road map for the future and to establish a clear framework for action to reduce risk, to build resilient communities.

We are gathered in the biggest venue ever to discuss and commit to disaster reduction: almost 4,000 participants; 168 States; 78 observer organizations from the UN and other inter-governmental organizations; 161 NGOs; and astonishingly, 154 media organizations represented by 562 journalists.

We know that our inability to reduce risk will hinder the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

As a result of our deliberations and negotiations this week we have made a commitment:

- To pursue an integrated multi-hazard approach for sustainable development to reduce the incidence and severity of disasters;
- To place disaster risk at the center of our political priorities and policies;
- To integrate disaster risk reduction in all our development work;
- To strengthen the capacity of disaster prone countries to address risk;
- To invest substantively in disaster preparedness;
- To reduce the relief-development gap and thereby reduce vulnerability;
- To enable civil society actors and affected communities to strengthen their resilience to disasters;
- To reduce the gap between what we know and what we do, with the critical ingredient being political commitment; and
- To build on the momentum of this World Conference to accelerate implementation of the Framework for Action.

Together we have reached a milestone: **Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities.** An ambitious agenda is set out in this Framework. We have promised **to substantially reduce the losses in lives and social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.**



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It is my personal conviction that through the faithful implementation of this action plan in the next ten years, the number of deaths caused by natural disasters should be halved compared to those of last decade. Hundreds of thousands of lives and many millions of livelihoods will be protected.

It is also realistic to have all new schools and all new hospitals and clinics in all disaster prone areas made disaster proof.

We shall in the course of the coming years have national disaster reduction platforms in all the 168 States that have come here to Kobe this week.

The partners of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction have been requested to prepare measurable and achievable indicator in the coming months. Both indicators and targets were discussed in detail in the thematic sessions.

While the decisions at this Conference are not legally binding, they carry a strong commitment by States and organizations to guide our policies and actions in the next 10 years.

All country delegates I have met with have pledged commitment to invest in the follow-up, and make sure we act. We must not fail in its implementation.

Time is short, the task is huge. Progress is contingent on **partnerships, on working together to meet this global challenge.**

Dozens of such partnerships have already been launched or re-energized in Kobe this week, among Governments, civil society actors and the United Nations, including:

- An International Early Warning Programme: We already started as UN agencies and member States this week to put together a specific plan for supporting the tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean;
- An International Flood Initiative and programme, with a center in Tsukuba, for promoting research, training and flood protection;
- Many education initiatives for disaster reduction – and community training with direct links between learning centers and people in the field;
- An open Alliance to support Earthquake Risk Reduction- and Earthquake Megacities Initiative, working with city officers in megacities around the world to develop city disaster management plans.

In addition to the Priorities for Action for the period 2005-2015, we also have recommendations for implementation at all levels, including, importantly for our common strategy: the ISDR.

I note the request to the Task Force members and the secretariat to commence in the development of a work plan in support of the follow-up to this Framework for Action. I call on each of you to support this, and will personally look into ways to ensure that this is achieved as rapidly as possible.



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Along with other principals of the UN organizations and agencies present, we have agreed to make each other accountable for ensuring follow-up to the various action points of the action plan and declaration. And for reminding each other and you, the member States, to ensure follow-up.

Such an ambitious endeavor will require guidance and know-how. This has been provided at the technical discussions that have taken place this week during three high level roundtables, the five thematic panels and 46 sessions, as well as the regional meetings and the rich and dynamic exchange of ideas that took place in the public forum, with examples and guidance on how to effectively apply disaster reduction.

The world may not be a safer place next week, but it should be in a year from now and certainly so at the end of the decade.

I, for one, am fully committed to working hard with the ISDR secretariat, the partners of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction and member States to ensure that the United Nations system strengthens its disaster reduction actions.

Finally, my sincere thanks to:

The hospitality of the people and Government of Japan, the Hyogo Prefecture and the City of Kobe,

The many hundreds of volunteers assisting us,

The many UN agencies, programmes and specialized organizations accompanying us here,

UN colleagues in the Conference services, security and interpreters,

The Conference secretariat, so ably led by our conference coordinator, John Horekens

The ISDR secretariat team, under the leadership of *Sálvano Briceño* and *Helena Molin Valdès*,

To *Marco Ferrari*, for steering the main committee to a safe harbour,

To you Minister *Murata*, for being a tireless and inspiring President of this Conference.

And to all the participants, thank you for making this Conference a success.

*Kobe, 22 January 2005*