

Closing remarks by the President of the Conference, Minister Yoshitaka Murata

Distinguished Delegates, we have now completed our agenda and come to the end of our intensive gathering. As Mr. Egeland has said, this Conference has been a success. A success not only because we had a high number of participants (over 4,500 from over 150 countries with over 40 Ministers and 10 Heads of UN agencies), not only because we have had many very interesting thematic sessions and events in the public forum, not only because we have managed to adopt the texts that we had set to formulate. Successful because we have been able to put disaster risk reduction as a high priority on the international agenda. The tragic disasters we have witnessed in the last few months of 2004, culminating with terrible tsunami in the Indian Ocean, have brought home to many that it is high time to address disaster prevention, risk management, vulnerabilities as an unavoidable responsibility of States and of communities. There will always be hazards, but mankind has advanced enough in the past few decades to be able to protect itself from the tragic consequences that derive from the absence of preparedness. We have heard much about early warning in the past few days, particularly during the special session we had on the tsunami disaster. We have heard many verbal commitments in the past few days, from many countries. Let us ensure that this level of engagement is soon translated in real action. Let us make a firm pledge that the five days spent here in Kobe will make a real difference in the way we look at hazard, at risk and at vulnerability, and that we all truly engage on the road for a safer world.

Before closing the Conference, I would like to thank all participants for their gracious presence and their very valuable contributions. I thank the secretariat for their unfailing efforts and their hard work, whether in the substantive secretariat, the conference services or the Japanese secretariat. I thank the interpreters for their good work and flexibility, and the Geneva team of translators for their work and their patience. I thank all the staff from the hotel and other services that has made our stay a pleasant one. I hope you will all keep good memories of Kobe, Hyogo, despite the marathon sessions of the Main Committee. I wish you good luck in your endeavours, and bon voyage as you return home or fly away in other directions.

The World Conference on Disaster Reduction is now closed.