

Agenda 9 The Public Forum Report on 22nd January 2005 at the Plenary

Reporting Statement on the Public Forum by Mr. Harada, Deputy Director General for Disaster Management, Cabinet Office of Japan

The Public Forum, open to the general public, has been held in the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. The Public Forum consists of workshops, exhibition booths, poster session, and its service center. These Public Forum events are held mainly at the International Conference Center Kobe and the Kobe International Exhibition Hall.

In cooperation with the WCDR Secretariat in the United Nations, the Japanese Government and the Hyogo Prefectural Government prepared and coordinated the Public Forum activities. The wide range of organizations including governmental organizations, UN organizations, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, scientific and academic organizations, and private sector applied for organizing events in the Public Forum. As the result, we have 66 workshops, exhibition booths by 189 organizations, and 82 poster sessions under the Public Forum.

As of today, workshops had 15,000 participants, exhibition booths and poster session had 25,000 participants. The total number of participants in the Public Forum is 40,000.

The Japanese Government with local Hyogo partners organized the Great Hanshing-Awaji Earthquake Forum under the theme of “Creating a Disaster Resilient Society” in this Public Forum, which consists of nine sessions during these five days of the Conference. This Forum introduced the experience of the earthquake, the lessons learned, and measures taken in the past 10 years to bring about recovery and restoration. I believe that sharing the experience of Hyogo with participants have a great contribution to other countries and regions affected by natural disasters for their recovery and reconstruction.

In the Public Forum, many workshops were organized jointly by United Nations related organizations, international organizations, NGOs, and private organizations. It is very meaningful to strengthen and establish partnerships and networks among actors for the concrete activities in the area of disaster reduction.

Through these events in the Public Forum, I believe that the large number of people have had opportunities to learn about disasters and various efforts and measures aiming at establishing disaster resilient societies. In discussions on the disaster reduction, many of key issues such as community based activities, establishment of a culture of disaster reduction, education, risk reduction, volunteer, partnership were addressed as critical elements and various proposals were made to tackle obstacles in these issues of the disaster reduction. I am sure that many events held in the Public Forum will lead to enhancement of activities, partnerships, initiatives, and network at individual and community level. This global endeavor will result in reducing damage and impacts caused by natural disasters.

Thank you very much.