



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

World Conference on Disaster Reduction

**18-22 January 2005
Kobe, Hyogo, Japan**

**Statement by
Mr. Tadateru Konoe
Governing Board Member of the International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

at the closing session on 22 January 2005

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The day before this conference began I stood representing the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and our worldwide network of National Societies at a memorial ceremony in the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress of Japan, in silence, to remember those who died when the Great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake devastated this city ten years ago.

Our grief was multiplied by the emotion we all felt, surrounded by news of the loss of more than 225,000 lives and the unspeakable suffering of millions of people after the Asian earthquakes and tsunamis.

This conference has brought together the biggest gathering ever of experience and knowledge on disaster reduction. Many of the presentations and judgements were given much greater relevance by the fact that at the same time the largest disaster relief and recovery operation ever was in progress.

Our task now is to work with partners, including civil society organisations with a strong community base to find ways to transform the encouraging statements made by Governments in their plenary statements into the concrete action which has been demanded, but not yet framed.

We will be advocating for clear political commitment on some particular issues – such as firm targets and indicators – when the next stages of decision-making debate take place.

Another concern is the need for commitment for more resources to build community resilience and preparedness. Only with this can people themselves reduce risks and withstand natural disaster.

It is essential also that risk reduction measures should be brought into development strategies and programmes. This is a program entirely consistent with the Goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.



We believe that the large number of participants attracted by this Conference, and the vigour with which they pursued these and other important issues in the plenaries and the parallel events is a sign that the political commitment we are seeking can and will be found.

So we congratulate you, Mr Chairman, the organisers, and of course our generous hosts the Government of Japan, for the progress which has been made in the identification of the way forward. We are sure that your energy will help all participants remain committed to the finalisation of the work which has started.

The conference may be over but the work will continue.

2005 must be remembered not only for the aftermath of one of the world's most catastrophic events but also as a watershed in disaster reduction. As 1995 - and Kobe - was Japan's.

Thank you Mr Chairman