



WCDR – Kobe 18-22 Januari 2005
Statement by the Swedish delegation on the special session on the
Tsunami

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The death and destruction caused by the tsunami has shocked the world. The people of Sweden deeply mourn all those lost around the Indian Ocean. About a thousand Swedes are dead or missing since the tsunami hit the coast of Thailand. Many of us therefore share the grief over parents, children, friends and relatives in what is Indonesia's, Sri Lanka's, Thailand's, but also Sweden's largest catastrophe in modern times.

- However saddened and shocked we are over this immense tragedy, it has also made us see things that were known but not understood by so many before the tsunami. There are some very important lessons to be learned; lessons that have a clear bearing on disaster response, mitigation and reduction.

Three of these lessons are:

First, lives saved in the immediate aftermath of the calamity were saved by local people, by friends, neighbours and volunteers. The first line of defence is always local, providing a strong case of support to local disaster preparedness capacity.

Second, coastal management saves lives. There is clear evidence that where coastlines were protected by natural vegetation such as mangrove and where coral reefs had not been mined for minerals the impact of the tsunami on coastal communities was much reduced.

Third, disasters strike most violently against the poor. Families who make their living from the sea have seen their complete livelihoods taken away.