

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND

The Plenary of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction

(Kobe, Japan 18 - 22 January 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Mr Chairman, on your election as President for this World Conference, and our gratitude to the Government of Japan and the local authorities for their generosity and hospitality in providing these elegant and effective facilities for our work. I would also like to thank the ISDR Secretariat and its Director, Mr. Briceño for all their hard work in preparing this Conference.

Finland joins others in the global sorrow for the victims of the devastating tsunami. In a small country, like ours, practically everybody has been either directly or indirectly affected. We share with deep compassion the grief of those who have lost practically everything.

Finland fully concurs with the statement delivered by the Luxembourg presidency on behalf of the European Union.

Almost ten years ago in May 1994 the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World was adopted. A lot has been accomplished during these last 10 years, but regarding disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation we still face enormous challenges.

One of the observations in the Yokohama Strategy, based on experience, was that the concept of disaster reduction should be given holistic coverage, including natural and other disaster situations such as environmental and technological disasters.

Mr. Chairman,

Finland attaches great importance to the Framework for Action 2005-2015. It rightly guides us among other things to integrate disaster risk reduction and management considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming, as well as to developing and strengthening institutions, mechanisms and capacities which can build resilience to disasters. Finland is seeking a strongest possible outcome from this Conference, and therefore advocates prompt and effective implementation of the commitments made within the framework for action, (including the international legal instruments.)

The UN Millenium Declaration and its primary development objective, the eradication of extreme poverty should also guide our work in the field of disaster reduction. It is not enough to increase the level of safety in developing countries by improved technology only; we also have to tackle other economic and social conditions, which exacerbate the negative effects of disasters in poor countries. This should be recognized, when implementing the framework document.

Mr. Chairman,

*both at home and abroad,
recently in Central America
in the field of meteorology.*

In Finland we have gathered a lot of specific knowledge and experience in some specific fields of disaster reduction. We would be happy to share with you our experiences hoping that you will find them useful.

Firstly - We wish to stress the importance of the existing reliable national and international infrastructure for disaster preparedness. The national geophysical institutions provide critical information to their governments and risk managers at both local and national levels. This information enables the development of both traditional and innovative proactive strategies to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters.

In Finland we have a well-functioning 24h/7days warning system, which provides us with forecasts of hazardous conditions, a rapid, dependable distribution system for forecasts, public awareness and prompt, effective responses to warnings.

Secondly - Experiences in Finland have shown that in a flood situation it is important that the responsibility for managing operations be transferred in time from the water authorities to the rescue authorities.

In Finland a model-based flood forecasting procedure, which covers nearly all water systems, is used. Forecast images can be seen on the Internet.

Thirdly - We would like to mention two solutions, which are closely interrelated and make flexible cooperation by different safety authorities possible. The Emergency Response Centre Administration, which integrates the handling of urgent emergency calls for the police, rescue, social, and health services in joint emergency response centres, has proven an efficient and economical way of providing versatile, high-quality services.

In addition, Finland has built the world's first digital national radio network based on the **TETRA** standard for use by the safety authorities. The radio network will be operational also in exceptional conditions. There are altogether 1200 base stations all over Finland that will ensure coverage of the whole country.

Mr. Chairman,

The tsunami disaster brought to worldwide attention the need for establishing early warning systems. They need to include proper information, preparedness and crisis management systems. Finland is willing to participate in the development of such early warning systems at various levels.

Finally,

I should like to make reference to a positive event, which took place only a few days ago; namely the entry into force of the 1998 Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations. It is our sincere wish that all States should accede, approve or ratify this instrument and implement it effectively.

Thank you Mr. Chairman