



General Statement of the Head of the German Delegation
Federal Minister Edelgard Bulmahn
at the WCDR in Kobe on January 18, 2005

Mr. President, dear Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the German government, I would like to thank the Government and the people of Japan for hosting this conference and the conference secretariat for the excellent work it has done in order to make this conference a success. I would also like to thank all our partners for their commitment to Disaster Risk Reduction and in particular the EU Presidency for their excellent statement which Germany fully supports.

10 years after the Kobe Earthquake disaster the tsunami from December last year has shown the world the vulnerability of our societies by natural disasters in an absolutely unexpected dimension.

A never seen world-wide humanitarian support has started with remarkable financial support from private and governmental sources for the affected people.

The continuous medical support and economic development for these regions have highest priority in the next future.

World leaders are convinced that there is a need for an international early warning system. The Secretary General called for an universal early warning system.

To keep up the momentum of this conference Germany would like to make two proposals:

First we want to make sure that no important early warning potential worldwide remains unassessed. After having hosted already two international conferences on early warning in 1998 and 2003 Germany has proposed in a letter addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations to host a third conference on early warning in 2005 focussing on implementation of prioritized projects.

- Since the UN through the International Secretariat for Disaster Reduction has set up a platform for the promotion of early warning, we suggest that this platform should prepare and convene the event as an UN-conference at its seat in Bonn.
- Germany will present a more detailed outline for such a conference in form of a draft resolution during the course of this event and asks for your support.

As a second proposal Germany offers scientific and technical assistance to the governments of the troubled regions in combination with capacity building for decision-makers, experts and the population in regions at risk to establish an Early Tsunami Warning System.

- Germany's concept is based on the partnership model suggested by Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. It is designed as an open and decentralized system. It is open for all interested partners, donors and UN-Agencies. It focuses in a first step on bilateral scientific-technical cooperation.
- The concept will be realized in close cooperation with the United Nations University (UNU) Institute for Environment and Human Security in Bonn, Germany.
- Together with the British Southampton Oceanographic Center (SOC) and the French IFREMER we understand the concept being an European initiative.
- The Early Warning System which we provide can also be used to prevent such natural disasters as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. It will be managed by the GeoForschungsZentrum (GFZ) on behalf of Germany's science community under the umbrella of a contract between GFZ and UNESCO, signed by Secretary General Matsuura, focussing on Early Warning Systems.
- The Federal Government has asked the GFZ as a world wide accepted institution in disaster research, seismology and satellite technologies, especially Sea Level measurements to take the lead for the German contributions. Satellite measurements will be used only for humanitarian purposes.
- To start the action immediately Germany's Research Vessel SONNE will take the opportunity of its cruise in the Indian Ocean Area near Indonesia September this year to set out GPS-equipped buoys as well as ocean bottom instruments regarding the Tsunami Early Warning System.

I am looking forward to a close partnership to all those who committed themselves to prevention and reduction of the effects of natural disasters.