

STATEMENT
BY THE INDONESIAN DELEGATION
AT THE WORLD CONFERENCE
ON DISASTER REDUCTION

Kobe, Japan, 19 January 2005

Mr President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me, before I make my general statement, to express, on behalf of the Indonesian delegation, our most sincere gratitude to all the countries, to the national, regional and international organizations and NGOs, as well as to the individual donors who have demonstrated their deepest sympathy and solidarity through countless contributions to assist the Indonesian victims of the recent unprecedented earthquake and tsunami. We should also like to convey our most heartfelt thanks and appreciation in particular to the Government and people of Japan for all their support and generous efforts to help Indonesia in the wake of the disaster.

May I now join the other speakers in congratulating you, Mr President, on your appointment to chair this important and momentous World Conference on Disaster Reduction. I am confident that your able leadership and guidance will ensure that this gathering achieves fruitful and concrete results.

We applaud the Government of Japan for hosting the Conference at this historic city of Kobe which coincides with the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake occurred on 17 January 1995. It is thus our fervent hope that, through this august Conference, delegates will reaffirm their commitment to prevent such tragedies occurring in the future and to draw and act on every lesson.

Mr President,

Let me begin with a recollection of 26 December 2004, when an earthquake with a magnitude of 9 on the Richter scale, with its epicenter at around 149 kilometers south of the city of Meulaboh, struck and unleashed a series of tsunami that brought catastrophe to beaches of countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Horn of Africa. It robbed more than a hundred and fifty thousand people of their lives. It was a disaster of unprecedented magnitude in recent decades and one of the worst natural disasters in modern history. No one had imagined the impact of that calamity.

As of 18 January 2005, the grim statistics of this catastrophe in Indonesia estimated 90,000 dead and buried, more than 130,000 are missing and more than 655,000 displaced. More than 350,000 houses and public facilities were damaged. About 82 percent of the roads were damaged; only 30 percent of electric power facilities remained operational while an estimated 78,000 kilometers of fixed telecommunication lines were destroyed. The humanitarian crisis that we are facing today, however, is truly unprecedented: the number of human casualties is approximately three times as great as the toll when Mount Krakatau erupted in 1883.

Indeed, the tsunami has proved that natural disasters can affect not just one or two countries, but every country in a region, and that no country can survive alone. Thus, we need to strengthen our cooperation, bilaterally, regionally and internationally, to establish a guidance mechanism for disaster management.

Mr. President,

In the wake of tsunami of 26 December, we underscore the importance of early warning systems especially in the Indian Ocean area. It is in this respect

that we welcome the initiative of the Prime Minister of Japan to convene a special session in this World Conference, as expressed during the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami at Jakarta on 6th of January 2005. Indonesia, as the most affected country, will participate in this special session by sharing experience on lessons learned in dealing with this calamity.

The Jakarta Summit has been instrumental in gathering political commitments at the highest levels, in relation not only to the ensuing reconstruction effort but also to the disaster management aspects which are relevant to this Conference. The spirit of the Summit should therefore be reflected in the final outcome of this Conference.

The Summit has agreed on a *Declaration on the Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in the Aftermath of the Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004*. The Declaration stated among others wholehearted commitment of the leaders and participants to the establishment of a regional early warning system such as Regional Tsunami Early Warning Center on the Indian Ocean and the Southeast Asia region.

To respond to the outcome of this Summit, the Government of Indonesia has initiated activities dealing with plan of setting up a Tsunami Early Warning System by convening an "International Workshop on Post Sumatera Earthquake and Tsunami: Bridging Science into Policy" in the third week of February. This workshop will bring together experts and policy makers from various countries, especially those affected ones, and representatives of international organizations. The objective of the workshop is to exchange views on and analyze the impact of such a catastrophe and to recommend measures that should be taken to ensure future preparedness.

At the regional level, the existing ASEAN Earthquake Information Center needs to be strengthened and further developed by setting up a tsunami early warning mechanism in order to prevent the recent tragedy from recurring in the region. The events of the past weeks testify only too convincingly to the fact that the likelihood of a tsunami such as the one that hit the Indian Ocean rim can bring death and devastation on a scale beyond imagination. We therefore need the tools and expertise to establish a regional prevention mechanism.

In addition, ASEAN also has a Regional Program on Disaster Management (ARPDMD). This program would develop a regional instrument to coordinate and facilitate the movement of assistance across borders. Through this program, ASEAN should be able to enhance its capacity and capability for disaster management.

Mr President,

Ten years have passed since we gathered in Yokohama in 1994 to adopt the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action. The Strategy sent a clear message that sustainable economic development could never be achieved without mitigating the damage caused by disaster. It also stressed the need for a global framework for the realization of this aim, such as the establishment of focal points for disaster reduction and the formation of regional networks for the same purpose, but these steps represent only the beginning.

As for Indonesia, with the limited national capacity, the Government has endeavoured to implement strategy and its plan of action among others by establishing the National Coordinating Board for Disaster Management (BAKORNAS). Its main task is to coordinate the actions of the various government agencies in handling natural disasters, with further responsibility for handling the relief response in complex emergency cases. This Board has played

important role in coordinating all the emergency relief efforts of the recent calamity of the 26 December in Aceh and North Sumatera.

We share the views of other delegations on the importance of community participation in reducing the impacts of disaster. The participation includes the ability to organize the community to mitigate and cope with disasters. In this regard, my government has encouraged greater awareness among local communities in order to strengthen their capacity to cope with natural disasters. One recent pertinent example is the story of how people of Simeuleu Island near Aceh were able to escape from the tsunami by taking refuge to higher grounds after witnessing the dramatic change of water level at the seashore. Their quick responses in fact were guided by folktales and local wisdom.

In closing, it is our hope that a Framework of Actions emanating from this Conference would constitute the first step in improving our response and preparedness to natural disaster. Let us not forget about January 17 in Kobe and December 26 in Sumatra. Let us not forget the compassionate and caring of individuals and communities to the victims. This proves once again the essential solidarity of the human race, which, in the long run, is our best instrument for survival.

Thank you Mr President.