



Islamic Republic of Iran

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Statement by

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The Islamic Republic of Iran

at

the World Conference  
on Disaster Reduction

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**In the name of God  
The Compassionate the Merciful**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to be here in the City of Kobe to address the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

I would like to begin by extending our profound gratitude to the Government and people of Japan for their warm welcome and generous hospitality. Our appreciation also goes to the ISDR Secretariat for their relentless efforts in the course of the preparatory process of the WCDR.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt sorrow over the Tsunami catastrophe and convey our sincere condolences to the people and governments of the countries affected. The Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to offer whatever assistance is possible to alleviate the suffering of the victims.

The convening of this world conference, on the tenth anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake, in the aftermath of the Tsunami catastrophe and one year after the Bam tragedy in Iran, brings back the painful memory of tremendous human losses arising from these disasters. I sincerely believe that being here at the WCDR to concrete international actions on Disaster reduction is the most meaningful way to commemorate the memory of the victims of those disasters and others.

Given its particularly hazardous situation in terms of natural disasters, Iran fully realizes the value of the WCDR. As a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee Iran did its utmost and actively contributed to the preparatory process of the WCDR.

This conference is taking place shortly after the violent Tsunami which affected a number of Asian countries. The tragedy reminds us once again that while we cannot do much to stop such natural events, we can do much to reduce their disastrous impacts on lives and properties.

Mr. Chairman

Due to the diversity of its climate and environment, Iran has long been marked as a disaster-prone country facing thirty one types of natural disasters. Among these, frequent earthquakes are the most devastating bearing in mind that Iran is located in one of the most seismically active areas in the world, namely the Alp-Himalaya orogenic belt with a major earthquake occurring every two to three years. Floods, drought, climate and weather hazards, land degradation, deforestation, and desertification have been equally if not more costly in terms of financial losses.

The most recent major earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale struck the ancient city of Bam and surrounding villages on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2003. The earthquake killed more than 30000 people, rendered more than 75000 people homeless, and severely destroyed around 85 percent of the houses, commercial units, health facilities and administrative buildings. The historic citadel of Bam (Arg-e-Bam), a national heritage site and popular tourist attraction was severely damaged. The Islamic Republic of Iran would like to extend its profound appreciation to all countries and organizations for their generous humanitarian assistance to the quake hit people of Bam.

Over the past decade, the Islamic Republic of Iran has worked hard to adhere to the "Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World, (1994); Guidelines for Natural Disaster in Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation" and its Plan of Action. In line with the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR), the Islamic Republic of Iran established its National Committee for Natural Disaster Reduction (NCNDR). Moreover due to the disaster-prone situation of the country, all national civil and military bodies are actively engaged in the risk management comprehensive system that is being supervised by the President.

In the policy-making process we have tended to integrate risk assessment and disaster reduction into all relevant national laws and regulations in particular to set it as a fundamental component of the national development plans. We have endeavored to encourage civil society involvement as well as community based participation in disaster risk reduction activities.

Further to the efforts made at the national level, Iran has taken considerable steps towards boosting regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction. Over the past decade Iran has become a regional center for the exchange of knowledge and practical experiences in various aspects of disaster risk management *inter alia*; seismology and earthquake engineering, natural disaster prevention, rescue and relief operations and rehabilitation activities. As an example of our regional cooperation and since mid 2002, the UNDP country office in Iran has supported a preparatory assistance (PA) project for the establishment of a sub-regional initiative for Disaster risk management in Central and Southwest Asia.

Mr. Chairman

The WCDR will hopefully be the catalyst to raise the international profile of disaster risk reduction. Its Program Outcome, Declaration and other documents will be regarded as the key strategic guidelines for actions on disaster risk reduction in the course of the next decade (2005-2015). I would like to mention some brief points on disaster reduction based on our considerable experiences:

\* *The need to shift the focus from post-disaster reaction to pre-disaster prevention*

This could be achieved through the enhancement of research and knowledge capacities, the design and dissemination of risk mitigation measures, increased information, education and public awareness, risk assessment and development of early warning system.

- \* *A well balanced approach to all phases of disaster management*

Indeed this is a prerequisite for my previous point. We believe that it is only through such an approach that the various phases of disaster reduction from prevention and preparedness to early warning, rescue and relief and eventually mitigation and reconstruction can be adequately addressed.

- \* *Extending international cooperation in disaster risk reduction to the operational level*

Given the fact that much international and regional cooperation is generally restricted to research and analysis, it is imperative that this cooperation be extended to the operational level.

- \* *Relief efforts in a systematic and more coordinated manner*

The terrible situation arising from the recent Tsunami proves once again the necessity for such rescue and relief efforts to provide a timely and adequate response to victims of disasters. On the other hand there is a real need for capacity building to enable disaster prone countries, to absorb the international relief assistances. Needless to say there is an explicit role for the United Nations agencies, especially UNOCHA to develop such systematic relief efforts. In this context we support the promotion of the existing regional and international tools like the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG).

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Solidarity and sympathy provide the spirit of international humanitarian cooperation yet international cooperation at various levels is the key factor to minimize vulnerability to disasters. At this point allow me to quote a well-known poem of the great Iranian poet, Saadi-e Shirazi, who eloquently explains the point.

*"The sons of Adam are limbs of each other, Having been created of one essence.  
When the calamity of time affects one limb The other limbs cannot remain at rest.  
If thou hast no sympathy for the misery of others  
Thou art unworthy to be called by the name of a human."*

Mr. Chairman

To conclude, I would like to assure you of our full support and reiterate my delegation's sincere commitment to a positive outcome for the conference.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.