

**MALAYSIA**

**WORLD CONFERENCE DISASTER REDUCTION  
KOBE, 18-22 JANUARY 2005**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, the Malaysian delegation wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to you and the ISDR for organising this conference. This conference is indeed timely as the international community is galvanising its efforts to respond to the consequences of the 26 December earthquake and tsunami in an effective and comprehensive manner.

As one of the countries affected by one of the worst disasters in recent history, Malaysia is gratified by the swift and overwhelming response from the United Nations and its agencies as well as the international community.

I would also like to reiterate Malaysia's deepest sympathy and condolences to the Government and peoples of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and other affected countries for the tragic loss of lives brought by the disaster.

In Malaysia, 68 victims loss their lives and 276 people were injured when the tsunami struck the northwest coast of the country. In addition, thousands lost their livelihood or need to be relocated.

While it is coping with its own situation, Malaysia is also doing its best, within its limited resources to be part of the international relief efforts in other affected countries. Medical teams, search and rescue personnel, aircrafts and heavy equipments were promptly dispatched to assist the victims in Aceh. A field hospital is also being set up.

These were in addition to the humanitarian assistance in the form of medicines, medical equipments and supplies such as disinfectants, rubber gloves, masks, surgical sutures, dry food, bottled water, body bags, clothing etc. Assistance came not only from the Government but equally substantial were contributions from the private companies, business corporations, voluntary organizations and even political parties.

In addition, three Malaysian airports are being used as forward staging post for delivery of humanitarian assistance and one of them, the Subang airport is being used by WFP and other UN agencies as the air hub in their humanitarian operation.

Malaysians, through the voluntary medical organizations are also involved in the recovery work for the victims in Sri Lanka. As the Chairman of the OIC Summit, we are undertaking an initiative with other OIC countries to have a special programme for orphans in the affected regions.

For the medium term assistance, the Government had established the "Asian Tsunami Disaster Fund" with a starting amount of RM5 million. The fund had since multiplied with contributions from the public and will be distributed to the affected countries.

Although the damage suffered by Malaysia was relatively small, the tsunami was indeed a shock to our country whose experience and definition of natural disasters has been only flood and localised mudslides. Two important lessons for us were, despite its location being supposedly free of geological instabilities such volcanoes and earthquake zone, Malaysia is not spared from its effects.

Secondly, disaster of this nature has no prior indication which we could measure or observe over a period of time. The wave came and went within just a few minutes, leaving massive scale of deaths and devastation never seen before in our life time.

Questions are being asked as to whether it could happen again and whether we could be forewarned, so that death and devastation could be reduced, if not prevented. While we cannot stop another tsunami if it is going to strike, we could at least be prepared to mitigate its impact.

Along with the other delegates, we agree that early warnings and prevention are of great significance in dealing with natural disasters. In fact, although the technology to detect earthquakes and tsunamis is already long in existence, it is an enigma as to why no effort has been taken in the past to have it in place in a region that is surrounded by one of the highest concentration of geological activities and also one of the highest population density in the world.

In the wake of what has happened, we should spare no effort in developing and establishing an early warning system in the Indian Ocean region. In this regard, Malaysia welcomes the initiative of the WMO to join forces with the UNESCO to ensure that tsunami early warning systems will soon become a reality in the Indian Ocean and other at-risk regions.

For its part, Malaysia will be establishing its own national tsunami early warning system nationwide which enables detection of tsunami in the aftermath of the earthquake. Development of the system will require cooperation and support from the international community and in this regard, my delegation welcomes the proposals from the other delegations during this conference to assist in such project.

Mr. President,

Malaysia also shares the view that the current international effort should go beyond the provision of immediate humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and rehabilitation of the affected countries. Having been in the city of Kobe for the last three days since our arrival, we have been enjoying the facilities and the amenities that a modern city could offer. It is hard to imagine that this city was reduced to almost rubble when it was struck by a major earthquake only ten years ago.

Certainly the experience of Kobe is an inspiration to the affected countries and cities. Towards this end, we hope that there will be continuous and sustained support from the international community and in this regard, we are encouraged by the adoption of the resolution on *"Strengthening Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention on the Aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster"* by the General Assembly at its Resumed Session two days ago in New York. We would also like to express our support of the Hyogo Declaration as the outcome of this conference.

Finally, I would like to express our appreciation to the Government of Japan for their hospitality extended to my delegation during this conference.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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