

UNITAR

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE
FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH (UNITAR)
AT THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION

Mr. President,

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Colleagues,

UNITAR, a firm supporter of the goals and principles of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, is delighted to have the opportunity to address this prestigious forum. We congratulate the Government of Japan and the ISDR for the organization of the WCDR, which this week is home to the disaster reduction community.

As part of this community we believe that this is a milestone event. Together with our colleagues from the UN family we expect this Conference to increase the profile of disaster reduction and promote a strategic and systematic approach to address vulnerability and reduce risk.

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 10 years ago and the all too recent Asia Tsunami constitute a tragic background against which our collective responsibility can only look heavier and more important. These macro disasters stand out amid an uninterrupted series of smaller but equally lethal disasters that has been hitting humankind for centuries on end. At UNITAR we believe that since the Yokohama Conference in 1994 the international community has come a long way in devising measures to counter disaster risk.

However daunting the task still ahead of us, technical solutions exist today that can improve the life of millions and give substance to our collective aspiration to a safer world for future generations. We have the understanding of the key issues, we command a number of solutions, and therefore this is the time to make advancements on the implementation front. It has been said that this is not a question of COST, but rather one of INVESTMENT. We subscribe fully to this point of view.

Through its operational programme UNOSAT that was initiated in 2001 with the support of France and Norway, our agency is working with space agencies, UN sister agencies and a large user community to bring to fruition the potential provided by earth observation and satellite technology. We do so keeping in mind (1) The essential connection between the national and the community level, and (2) The continuum that characterizes disaster management, of which disaster prevention is a crucial component.

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