

Address by H.E. Mr. Yoshitaka Murata
Head of the Japanese Delegation (Minister of State for Disaster Management)
On the occasion of the Opening Ceremony
for the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction
18 January 2005

Your Majesties the Emperor and the Empress,
Mr. Jan Egeland, U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs,
Representatives of Member States, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I am privileged to address my sincere congratulations on this occasion of the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction, which has attracted such a large attendance. I would like to extend, on behalf of the host country, Japan, a warm welcome to everyone present here. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to the Conference Secretariat and everyone involved, for their dedication in bringing this Conference into reality.

At the opening of the Conference, I would like to express my deepest condolences to the people killed by the Sumatra earthquake and the following tsunami which occurred at the end of last year and my sincerest sympathy to the millions of people affected who are suffering from the devastations. The international community has shown strong solidarity in response to the tragedy. Japan, as a member of Asia is also providing support to the maximum extent possible. I pray for the recovery and rehabilitation from the disaster to be as early as possible.

In addition, the world has witnessed numerous damage caused by various natural hazards, which are recognized as great obstacle to sustainable development. Last year, Japan was affected by the largest number of disasters in recent years. Just yesterday, we commemorated the tenth anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. As such, I believe the significance of disaster reduction has received growing attention among people in Japan and throughout the world, and therefore this opportunity to discuss on building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters is truly significant.

We have to live with the risk of natural hazards. However, we can alleviate the suffering from hazards by reducing the vulnerability of societies. When Japan was poorly prepared against disasters in the devastated and vulnerable land

