

**SPECIAL SESSION ON THE INDIAN OCEAN DISASTER : RISK REDUCTION FOR A SAFER FUTURE – KOBE, JAPAN 20 OCTOBER 2005**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank you for organizing this Special Session. Under your able stewardship, we are confident that our deliberation would result in a successful outcome.

I would like to reiterate Malaysia's position supporting the initiative of the UN and its relevant agencies to develop a regional tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean region.

On that fateful morning of 26 December, a hotel in Langkawi Islands in north-west Malaysia received a phone call from its counterpart in Phuket, Thailand, of the big waves hitting them. Due to their geographical positions, the lag time between the two locations was crucial, although only by a few minutes. None of the hotel guests lost their lives to the tsunami.

We could only guess what the death toll could have been had the phone call been ignored or did not trigger at all. It also shows that a warning system, in whatever form, could save lives. We now wonder whether the other victims in the other locations might be saved had they received a similar warning.

Given that the great majority of the countries in the Indian Ocean rim are developing countries, some places in the region even lack basic communication system for early warnings to be transmitted and received.

My delegation therefore believe that in parallel with the development of early warning systems, there must be adequate supporting infrastructure such as telecommunication system so that the warnings are relayed and acted upon.

Response constitutes the second half of disaster management. The experience of December 2004 tsunami has proven that the earliest response in most disaster situation comes from civil society. It is their awareness, involvement, and preparedness that made the difference so that the important message was relayed and appropriate action was taken.

The Government on its own could not undertake these measures comprehensively without the support of civil society and it is in this area that the role of the voluntary organizations and local administrations are essential. Needless to say, any outcome from this Special Session would not be comprehensive if the various roles of these institutions are not addressed. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our support for the effort to set a regional early warning system in the Indian Ocean rim, and it is the believe of my delegation that such systems should be complemented by capacity building programmes for the people in the region.

Thank you, Mr. President.