

Brazil

**World Conference on Disaster Reduction
(Kobe, 18-22 January, 2005)
BRAZIL
Opening Statement**

First of all, allow me to congratulate you for your election and to express Brazil's gratitude to the Government of Japan for hosting this conference, which constitutes an outstanding opportunity to discuss ways of strengthening our nations resilience to natural disasters. My Delegation believes that the participation of all stakeholders in the works of this meeting should be guided by the spirit of solidarity and co-operation. We are convinced that international co-operation constitutes an essential tool to implement viable alternatives aiming at lessening the vulnerability of our nations to natural disasters.

Also on behalf of the Government and the people of Brazil I join previous speakers in extending the deepest sympathy and condolences to the victims of the recent tsunami disaster and their families ~~and~~ to the people and Governments of those countries which tragically suffered huge loss of life and great material damages. It is worth noting that Brazilian nationals were among those who perished in the catastrophe.

At the same time, my Delegation commends the international community for the prompt support and contribution to the relief efforts, which reflects the firm commitment of countries to address, in a collective manner, challenges facing mankind. Brazil is proud to have joined other nations and international agencies in those relief efforts.

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There are many lessons from the latest tragedy in Southeast Asia to reflect upon. For instance, mechanisms for surveillance and early warning in the affected region could have saved many lives and avoided at least part of the social and economic negative consequences. In this regard, my Government favours initiatives to establish regional and global mechanisms for surveillance, early warning, prevention and assessment and to improve national capacities in disaster preparedness, mitigation and response. We believe that early-warning information should be made available in an unrestricted and timely manner to all interested Governments and concerned authorities. Furthermore, the capacity of countries to receive, use and disseminate this information should be enhanced.

Although a great amount of experience with disaster risk reduction has been gathered since the inception of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and the succeeding International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, much remains to learn and do. The efforts to strengthen the international and regional co-operation and co-ordination in disaster reduction and to improve the capacity of countries – in particular developing ones – to respond to natural disasters must be intensified. Brazil believes that these efforts should be conducted within the existing international institutional framework.

We should always bear in mind that economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development are essential for prevention and preparedness against natural disasters. Many emergencies reflect the underlying crisis in development faced by developing countries. In this context, relief assistance should be accompanied by a renewal of commitment to economic growth of developing countries, with the supply of adequate resources to address their development problems.

Regarding the relation between natural disaster reduction and environmental management, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities must always be taken into account. Likewise, it is of utmost importance that our countries prioritise disaster risk reduction in national policy. Every State bears responsibility for taking measures to reduce disaster risk and for the protection of its own people, infrastructure and other national assets.

My Delegation also considers that additional funds must be made available by donor countries and other countries in a position to do so, as well as international financial institutions, to enable recipient nations to fully implement the strategies and mechanisms for disaster reduction and prevention.

At this point, I would like to offer some brief comments on my country's related experience. Given the dimension of its territory and population, Brazil is among the twenty-five countries most affected by natural disasters. It faces droughts in the Northeast region, forest fires in the North and Midwest,

landslides in the Southeast, windstorms and hailstorms in the South and floods all over the territory, whose effects are amplified by non-planned urban growth. Due to this reality, our government promotes the co-ordination of educational programmes with activities related to disaster risk reduction. In Brazil, the National Secretary of Civil Defence, within the Ministry of National Integration, is responsible for articulating all activities related to disaster risk reduction. There are regional and local centres in charge of educating the public and adopting measures for rapid response. Public policies are elaborated based upon the notion that satisfactory results will only be reached through the involvement of affected communities and the dissemination of a culture of disaster risk.

To conclude, Brazil sincerely hopes that this Conference will produce fruitful results and that it will constitute a landmark to the enhancement of international cooperation mechanisms aiming at reducing the vulnerability of all nations to natural disasters.