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STATEMENT BY
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WORLD CONFERENCE ON
DISASTER REDUCTION

KOBE, JAPAN,
JANUARY 18-22, 2005

DÉCLARATION DE
M. PAUL KENNEDY
CHEF DE DÉLÉGATION

CONFÉRENCE MONDIALE
SUR LA PRÉVENTION DES
CATASTROPHES

KOBE, JAPON
LE 18-22 JANVIER, 2005

Au nom du gouvernement du Canada, j'aimerais remercier le gouvernement du Japon d'accueillir la Conférence mondiale sur la prévention des catastrophes, et remercier également le Secrétariat à la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie internationale de prévention des catastrophes (SIPC) pour son appui indéfectible au bon déroulement de la Conférence.

Cette conférence nous offre une occasion privilégiée de mettre en commun les enseignements tirés par divers pays ces dernières années – voire ces dernières semaines – ainsi que les pratiques exemplaires en cas de catastrophe naturelle ou d'autres événements tragiques. D'ailleurs, le bilan accablant des morts et des moyens d'existence ruinés par suite de la récente catastrophe qui a frappé l'Asie et l'Afrique orientale a monopolisé comme jamais auparavant l'attention du monde entier.

Conjugués à l'épouvantable série d'ouragans qu'ont connus les Caraïbes l'automne dernier, ces fléaux sont venus renforcer la leçon qu'ont pu tirer les gens de Kobe il y a une décennie – à savoir que l'élaboration et la mise en œuvre d'une stratégie globale de préparation à d'éventuelles calamités de tout genre et d'atténuation de leurs effets constituent pour nous le meilleur moyen de nous prémunir contre ces redoutables forces de la nature.

Le premier ministre du Canada, le très honorable Paul Martin, effectue actuellement une tournée en Asie comprenant un séjour au Japon. Au cours des derniers jours, il s'est rendu dans quelques-unes des régions les plus frappées par le tsunami. Sa visite souligne la longue tradition canadienne consistant à aider généreusement les populations touchées par des catastrophes naturelles, peu importe où elles surviennent. Elle souligne également l'engagement à long terme du Canada à collaborer avec tous les partenaires concernés à la prévention des désastres, y compris la préparation aux catastrophes et l'atténuation de leurs effets.

In this respect, Canada supports calls for a global multi-hazard early warning system, and the Prime Minister has affirmed our commitment to working cooperatively with Asian nations, within a multilateral framework, on a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean region.

Further, national governments and the international community must mainstream disaster reduction into development programming and public education programs, in order to build the capacity of vulnerable communities, countries and regions to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of natural disasters. For instance, better natural resource management practices can lead to better protection against hazards.

Towards this end, I am pleased to announce that Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), will invest one million dollars towards a global project to mainstream disaster reduction into the poverty reduction, governance and environment portfolios of the United Nations Development Program in 2005.

Increasing education and training on natural disaster reduction, especially in disaster-prone countries, is an essential capacity building tool and central to disaster prevention. Canada prioritizes capacity building at the country and regional levels through the United Nations, the Red Cross Movement, NGOs and community-based organizations. And in this spirit, we have made significant investments in disaster reduction efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean over the last decade.

Given their global reach and proximity to affected communities, I am also pleased to note that CIDA will contribute a further million dollar to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent for disaster preparedness and capacity building of National Societies. This builds on an earlier multi-year Canadian commitment.

Canada, through various government departments as well as non-governmental organizations, has also been pleased to share its technical expertise and collaborate with disaster-prone countries in the areas of sustainable development, emergency telecommunications and Geomatics. In the Pacific region, for instance, we are involved in international research projects focused on earthquake, tsunami and volcano hazard assessments and early warning, and engage in integrated hazard assessment and mitigation initiatives.

Domestically, in 2004 the Government of Canada announced a comprehensive new National Security Policy, entitled "Securing an Open Society". The policy highlights priorities and new resources for establishing a seamless and integrated national emergency management system to meet the challenges of protecting modern Canadian society from the effects of increasingly complex emergencies. A feature of our approach is the close collaboration between all levels of government - federal, provincial and territorial, municipal - which is key to meeting the needs of our citizens.

I am also very pleased to announce that Canada will be developing its first-ever National Disaster Mitigation Strategy. The Strategy will focus Canadian efforts at all levels and is aimed at reducing risks and the impact of natural disasters. Proposed amendments to *Canada's Emergency Preparedness Act* will strengthen disaster mitigation in comprehensive emergency management in Canada. The goal is to reduce the risk and severity of future natural hazards and disasters.

To effectively implement disaster reduction and public safety measures, close partnerships between government and civil society are required. I am pleased to report that, in this spirit, the Canadian official delegation to this conference includes three Non-governmental representatives. A relevant example of how civil society can contribute to our common objectives is the Canadian Risk and Hazards Network. This network of scholars and practitioners will work with the United Nation's Commission on Sustainable Development's Partnerships on Sustainable Development, under the collaborative approach promoted by the ISDR.

Mr. Chairman,

This gathering in Kobe will enable the international community to build on previous commitments made during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, including the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, as well in the Johannesburg Plan of Action. Indeed, during the course of the International Decade, the international community developed a greater global awareness of the social and economic consequences of natural disasters. We have seen again and again how a natural disaster can cause suffering and undermine years of development work. There is no longer any doubt that developing and implementing disaster reduction policies are wise investments.

The agenda we set in Kobe is an urgent one and the framework for action we establish must be pragmatic and action oriented, so that together we can reduce global vulnerability to natural disasters and the havoc they create.

Canada is pleased to participate in this World Conference and is committed to doing its part in support of international disaster reduction efforts. We look forward to building on the momentum created here in Kobe, and collaborating closely with all partners present.

Thank you Mr. Chairman