

PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

On behalf of the Philippine Government, we the Philippine delegates to this prestigious World Conference on Disaster Reduction, would like to express our congratulations to the Government of Japan and Kobe for hosting this very important event, and for the excellent preparations and hospitality accorded to all participants. We also express our thanks to our respective sponsors, the UN, ADRC and WHO for inviting us to attend, and congratulate.....on his election as Chairman of.....

We also express our profound sympathy to the countries affected by the tsunami. We are one with you in praying that may you overcome this tragedy as we are now slowly but surely recovering from the recent calamitous event which visited the Philippines.

Known as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, the Philippines often experience the wrath of nature, the most recent of which were the widespread flooding and landslides resulting from the four (4) consecutive typhoons which battered the country from 14 November until 5 December 2004, devastating scores of municipalities in 8 regions of the country, killing **1,068** people with another **1,160** more missing, washed out to sea, and now presumed dead.

The widespread destruction was unlike any other we have experienced before. **719,315 families** or more than **3.6 million persons** were affected; about **60,000** lost their homes, and damage to infrastructure, schools, hospitals and crops was estimated at almost **P10 billion pesos**.

With the assistance of UNDAC and the UN Disaster Management Team composed of UNDP, WHO, UN-Habitat and FAO, and with the support of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), a flash appeal was made to solicit funds from the international Donor community to support relief and emergency rehabilitation activities in the worst hit areas, seeking at least **US\$ 6.4 million** for a period of three (3) months from mid-December 2004 to mid-March 2005. Unfortunately, we were overtaken by a more tragic event, the tsunami in Southeast Asia, thus, only a fraction of the target amount needed was met.

Nevertheless, many countries and foreign organizations answered our call with donations in cash and in kind, notably the Government of Japan, JICA, Canada, and China; the United States who brought in heavy-lift aircraft and relief supplies; Indonesia, and some countries from the European Union.

Within a few days of the disaster occurrence, medical missions and communications group from France, Australia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore and other nearby countries arrived to augment our local teams in providing medical and health services. International NGO's like IFRC, OXFAM, Save the Children and others extended not only relief assistance, but also technical advice on various disaster- related concerns like sanitation and prevention of epidemics.

To all of you, our endless gratitude.

Presently, as we continue relief operations in mountain localities for indigenous people who were not readily reached due to damaged roads and bridges, we have restored electricity, cleared the area of debris, and repaired many road networks with the help of the armed forces, the local government, NGOs, volunteers and residents of the communities affected.

In the wake of the SEA tsunami, our President has directed the National Disaster Coordinating Council to strengthen further the existing Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation programs by upgrading our Early Warning System, not only for earthquake and tsunami, but for all types of hazards. We are now formulating a more extensive communication and training plan that will reach the lowest level, using all types of media, including face-to face communication at household level. We are also taking another serious look at environmental protection, strengthening of government and private sector partnership, and institutionalizing other risk reduction measures like hazard mapping and strict enforcement of local ordinances on land use, zoning and building safety.

However, the road to recovery is still hampered by many obstacles, foremost of which is funding for shelter and livelihood needs of the many thousands affected...problems of how we can rebuild the hundreds of school buildings, hospitals and public facilities destroyed...problem of funding these preparedness and mitigation programs.

We are only hoping that the pledges we have received from other donor countries are still forthcoming.

Meanwhile, we are very grateful for this opportunity to apprise you of our situation... for the invaluable knowledge gained from internationally known disaster experts, and from the good practices of other countries.

Good day and may God bless us all....