

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF GOVERNMENT OF POLAND
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MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
POLAND**

Mr Chairman, Distinguish Delegates

Let me express my sincere thanks to the Government of Japan for hosting and organizing in such excellent manner II World Conference on Disaster Reduction. Significance of this event cannot be overestimated, especially in light of the recent tragic events in Southeast Asia and their consequences for the region and for all of us. I would like to express my deepest sorrow and sympathy to all who have suffered in this enormous disaster.

The Government of Poland attaches great importance to strategy of reduction of the consequences of natural and man-made disasters considerable changes. In the last 15 years Poland has undergone a very deep transformation, including law, organizational and technical infrastructure regarding preparedness for and response system to disasters.

Harmonized cooperation of all actors participating in the process requires their appropriate preparation and constitutes an essential condition for success. Consequently, training programs for professionals at different levels have been developed and improved.

As in many other disasters also in recent one it was clearly visible that local communities were inadequately prepared and they lacked knowledge about its potential consequences. Being aware of that Poland prepared a number of programs to improve awareness of risks and to educate and inform the population - "Safe Community" programmes. We believe that efforts in this area should be given top priority in the future action plan for the years 2005-2015.

In the light of the devastating effects of the recent severe tsunami it is more obvious that a lot can be done to reduce the consequences of such disasters. Development and implementation of adequate early warning systems, rapid communication and response in the region affected, regional cooperation would certainly have allowed for a significant reduction in casualties. Therefore Poland appreciate very much German proposal regarding development of a early warning system for South-East Asia region and will consider how we can contribute to this initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Floods constitute the greatest threat to people's health and life in Poland, generating at the same time the greatest losses to the economic infrastructure and the environment. Hence efforts are made by the government and authorities involved at all levels to improve the methods of predicting flood threats, preparing maps and appropriate systems of monitoring threats and early warning as well warnings citizens as soon as flood occurs.

Mr. Chairman - We consider proper preparation of the framework for cooperation of municipal, local, provincial authorities and their institutions with societies to be particularly

significant and we would like to express our support for the message of the draft program outcome document of the Conference regarding this matter. However, the Government of Poland is fully aware that the platform of national activities is insufficient even for protection of Polish society, as disasters have no borders and our citizens travel more frequently and further than few years ago. With this in mind Poland has signed bilateral agreements on cooperation regarding post disaster activities and mutual assistance in the event of disasters and serious accidents with neighbouring countries: Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Russian Federation, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Poland is also very active in expanding regional cooperation towards reducing risks. In that regard the Eurobaltic programme of cooperation within 11 countries of the Baltic Sea region in the area of civil protection is especially important for us and is one of the priority. This very efficient programme covers identification and mapping the risk in the region, safety elements of spatial planning, commitment of non-governmental organizations in reducing risks, utilization of new IT technologies in the decision-making processes, enhancing capacity building of institutions and individuals through common training and exercises. The program is one of the best examples of a good practice.

Ladies and Gentlemen - within the framework of the National Response and Rescue System operating in Poland specialized rescue groups have been formed, which have been prepared and volunteered for international activities coordinated by the EU, the UN and NATO. They have been part of international assistance during floods in the Czech Republic and Germany, earthquakes in India, Albania, Algeria, Iran and Turkey, and most recently with the tsunami in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Rescue teams also acquire experience through exercises. For several years international exercises of search and rescue groups have been organized in Poland. In 2005 international exercises called "EUPOLEX 2005" with the participation of search and rescue groups from EU countries, Ukraine and Russia (about 700 rescuers) will take place within the Community Mechanism. In that regard Poland would like to offer its potential and experience to all interested countries and organisations.

During the recent tragic catastrophe in Southeast Asia, Polish government institutions joined forces with numerous NGO's in providing humanitarian and financial aid, to the governments of Sri Lanka and Indonesia. This kind of cooperation we think is especially advisable in order to improve efficiency both in the event of national catastrophes and providing international assistance.

Finally, Poland shares the opinion express by presidency on behalf of the European Union that sustainable development of society is not possible without global cooperation in this area. Poland also thinks that reducing the negative effects of civilization on our environment, which contribute to an increased risk of natural disasters, should be also focus of our future work. In our opinion these matters are not properly reflected in the draft programme outcome document as it currently stands.

Mr. Chairman,

Summing up, I would like to confirm our commitment to being fully engaged in solving the problems of protection of the citizens the region and the world against the consequences of disasters.