**Statement at 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**

**13-17 May, 2019 Geneva, Switzerland**

Mr/Madam. Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is my great honor to address the official statement on behalf of Iwate University, Japan at this session. My name is Katsumi Matsuoka, Professor and Deputy Director for the Research Center of Reginal Disaster Management.

Sendai Framework in Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 proclaimed the importance of disaster preparedness and ‘Build Back Better’ in recovery at the priority 4. Since 2011 East Japan Great Disaster, Iwate University has proactively implemented the activities to support the priority 4 as a national university located in the most affected areas by the disaster. In line with the priority 4, we have identified the importance of support to plan and to practice disaster preparedness on the ground. In this regard, our research center particularly takes a local community perspective in reducing disaster risks. That is to say, we think community-based disaster management is an integral part of the disaster risk reduction and resilience for “Building Back Better” as well as those of local and national level.

The disaster management model that we suggest is to construct a bottom-up disaster management system for residents living in local areas frequently hit by tsunamis, based on geological features, industrial composition, and traditional disaster culture. We have been engaged in facilitating local or community level preparedness such as planning and drills for evacuation, together with local government officials and citizens. In my prefecture of Iwate, a bottom-up disaster management system starts with a small community and promote the emergence of self -disaster prevention organization collaborated with volunteer firefighters. Why do we need such an organization? That kind of organization can serve as an effective social network against a large-scale disaster, and can create an efficient combination of self-help and mutual aid with social inclusiveness. This is nothing but a key to preparedness.

It is also our mission as the research and educational institution to disseminate what we have learned on those engagements and to take a lead in conveying practical knowledge how to take a strong leadership at local governments and communities at a time of disaster. It is generally recognized that the strength and resilience in every organization totally depend on its leader’s capacity. For this reason, we especially emphasize that in disaster risk reduction, top leaders should be aware of the danger of their complacency and should avoid “ doing just as well as before without innovation”.

Mr/Madam. Chair, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Two years ago, at Cancun Mexico, I addressed the official statement of Iwate University that the university advocated enhancing the mechanism of capacity building of leadership of local and national governments. As I mentioned before, since then the university and its affiliated research center have devoted to foster the leadership for local communities self-organized preparedness. We also have reached out to established “Rikuzentakata Global Campus” in a collaboration between its city government and another university. At the Rikuzentakata Global Campus, Iwate University has developed the platform to exchange ideas and information, to research for disaster risk reduction and to provide a wide range of program on disaster management for schools.

Moreover, we have been expanding this platform by joining the International Network for Disaster Studies with hosting international conferences and workshops. I hope to express the development of the platform in the next official statement.

Thank you very much.

 Katsumi MATSUOKA

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