

Opening Remarks by H. E. Minoru Kiuchi
State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at the Official Opening of the Second Arab Conference
on Disaster Risk Reduction

September 14, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

As the representative of the host country of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR), let me express our appreciation for this opportunity to make a statement.

Japan has hosted this important UN conference on disaster risk reduction since its commencement. The first conference was held in Yokohama in 1994, the second conference was held in Kobe, Hyogo in 2005, and next year, in March, we are going to host the third conference, the WCDRR, in Sendai. The second conference adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA), which since then has been utilized as an international guideline for national implementation of DRR measures in each country. The coming WCDRR in Sendai will be a crucial occasion as it is expected to adopt the succeeding framework of the HFA, whose term will end in 2015.

Currently, the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda is actively going on at the UN and other various fora. Natural disasters are serious obstacle to efforts for poverty eradication and sustainable development since they deprive many people of their lives and wipe out long-term achievement of development in an instance. It is therefore important to advance the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction, namely introducing the DRR perspective in every development effort at the national level. And it is essential to clearly position disaster risk reduction in the post-2015 development agenda in the international arena. The WCDRR will be an important occasion to promote the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in development and provide inputs to the post-2015 development agenda.

In order to adopt an effective post-HFA and to make the Sendai Conference a success, Japan would like to have your cooperation in sharing your knowledge and experience in disaster risk reduction at this meeting, preparatory meetings and the WCDRR. In the Arab region, it was large rivers that brought about the prosperity of the great civilization. Behind the prosperity, there has always been the wisdom of building irrigation system to manage the risk of flood. The conference will provide the participants with great opportunities to share such inherent wisdom of this region. Japan would also like to share its experience, know-how and technologies to enhance

disaster risk reduction. Indeed, Japan has been actively cooperating with Arab countries through Official Development Assistance implemented by JICA, including Technical Cooperation, Grant Aid and Yen Loan, so as to reduce the risk of earthquake and flood in the region.

As described in the UN General Assembly resolution at 68th session, the WCDRR will be convened “at the highest possible level.” In order to implement effective DRR measures through ensuring priority in national policy and budget, political commitment is of extreme importance. In this sense also, we expect the participation of high-level figures such as heads of state/government and ministers gathering here today as well as many other participants involved with disaster risk reduction from your countries.

The WCDRR will be held in Sendai, a city hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011. It was the largest natural disaster for Japan in recent years with approximately 20,000 casualties. Many people evacuated from their hometowns and more than 200,000 people still live in temporary housing. The Earthquake and Tsunami wiped out many lives and long-term achievement of development, but we have been working on reconstruction in a more resilient manner based on the experience of the disaster – what we call “build back better.” We would like you to participate in the Sendai Conference and see in person how Japan has made efforts for the reconstruction of the communities in the region.

Let me conclude my statement by wishing a fruitful outcome of this meeting toward the WCDRR in March next year.

Thank you for your kind attention.