

## Message

### **Dissemination of a Message of Intention to Strengthen the Function of DRI for the Promotion of International Cooperation towards the Creation of a Safe and Secure Society (Including a Successful System for Providing Support and Assistance)**

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In her keynote speech, Ms. Margareta Wahlström, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, mentioned that 75 percent of disaster casualties in the last 40 years were concentrated in the Asia Pacific. Japan, in particular, is pronounced in its frequency of major natural disasters, most notably the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. In response to the Hanshin-Awaji quake, Japan established the Hyogo Earthquake Memorial 21st Century Research Institute. It was under this umbrella organization that the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution (DRI), a think tank, was established in 2002. Today's international disaster mitigation forum, held to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the DRI, was realized in partnership with the Disaster Reduction Alliance (DRA) and many other organizations. The numerous domestic and international experts invited as speakers, including Ms. Wahlström, discussed with more than 300 participants the concept of international cooperation toward realizing a society that is safe and secure against disaster.



I would like to summarize the forum by reiterating the importance of the following three points with regard to achieving international cooperation in realizing a low disaster-risk society in accordance with the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action.

In the wake of the Spitak Earthquake, relief efforts on the ground suffered confusion due to the influx of assistance conducted separately by the respective countries. Drawing a lesson from that experience, the United Nations in 1991 adopted a resolution stipulating that, as a rule, assistance operations be carried out at the request and with the consent of the affected country.

During today's discussions it was pointed out that countries differ in their willingness to seek international assistance: some appeal widely for international help, while others, though not averse to accepting all forms of assistance, do not actively seek international help. Very generally speaking, the more authoritarian states tend to be reluctant to receive external help. Myanmar following cyclone Nargis may have been such a case. Industrialized countries

likewise do not actively request help, because they believe they can cope on their own; Japan, while passionate about lending assistance, is highly reluctant and inexperienced when it comes to receiving assistance. Speakers from India and Indonesia pointed out during the forum that their governments were slow to decide aid acceptance, and that systems for specifying where the aid should go were inadequate; I think the same applies to Japan.

International aid following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake was accepted, though somewhat hesitantly and not without delay. The decision to accept aid was made swiftly on the occasion of the Great East Japan Earthquake, but coordination to enable aid personnel from abroad to function effectively was in no way adequate. Even as we ponder such shortcomings, we are pressed with the need to prepare for major quakes anticipated in the future, including a series of Nankai Trough mega-quakes, and a quake epicentered directly beneath the Tokyo metropolitan area. According to General Ryoichi Oriki, Chief of Staff, Joint Staff of the GSDF, the Great East Japan earthquake relief operations called for 120,000 SDF personnel, but in reality the SDF could only manage to deploy 107,000. Fortunately, this was supplemented by international help in the form of Operation Tomodachi by the U.S. Armed Forces, which included a daring landing operation—leveraging the troops’ military prowess—to conduct search and rescue operations on Oshima Island in Kesennuma, which the SDF could not approach, and swift clean-up operations to remove remaining debris from Sendai Airport.

As pointed out by Mr. Yoshiaki Kawata, executive director of the DRI, no matter how strongly Japan desires to manage on its own, shortage of manpower in all areas is sure to accompany the next major disaster - be it a near-field earthquake in the capital or a Nankai mega-thrust earthquake - which is expected to be much larger in scale than the Great East Japan Earthquake, for which the SDF, at the cost of virtually emptying bases all over the country, could only muster 107,000 persons. Today’s discussions drove home the realization that we simply cannot cope with the coming mega disaster without international help.

Numbers are not the only issue. We need to consult the wisdom of OCHA and other repositories of international coordination know-how. Equipped with extensive international experience, if not specific on-the-ground information, such organizations know, better than those of us in affected countries, each international assistance team’s capabilities and what kind of situation could best benefit from them. I keenly feel the future need for Japan to leverage such know-how, and become not only an enthusiastic giver, but also an obliging recipient of international aid.

I was also struck by the phrase “inappropriate assistance,” mentioned during the afternoon session. Indeed, not being self-sufficient, not being able to speak the local language, nor having an interpreter are out of the question. Aid givers must be properly prepared, sensitive to on-the-ground needs and considerate. In this respect, the episode shared by Mr. Isamu Sato,

Mayor of Kurihara City, about facilitating an Israeli medical team's work in Minami Sanriku Town, was deeply moving.

Mr. Oliver Lacey-Hall pointed out the uniqueness of Japan in being experienced both as international aid giver and aid recipient. I think that there is great significance in the suggestion that Japan, because of this characteristic, has the potential to play a role in forming a framework for international assistance and cooperation.

Secondly, as pointed out repeatedly during the discussions, there is a need for gender equality - in terms of delivering international assistance that is sensitive to requirements and ensuring that it reaches those who need it - in all post-disaster phases, ranging from immediate response to recovery and reconstruction. More than ever, when administering international aid we must pay careful attention to the human security of more vulnerable persons, including expectant mothers, children, the disabled, the elderly and foreign nationals. We are as well required to move beyond merely categorizing, for instance women as "vulnerable," and instead empower them so that decision-making reflects their voice, and so that they have access to training opportunities toward becoming proactive players in social reform.

To swiftly deliver necessary assistance to disaster victims, it is also important to develop methods for standardizing information gathering so as to grasp the conditions and needs of affected localities, and conduct assistance activities that are human-centered, that constantly picture the faces of affected people, and are committed to saving as many as possible.

Thirdly, in addition to focusing on recovery and reconstruction, we must place importance on capacity building for disaster prevention and mitigation. All too often, the obvious fact that prevention is far better and cheaper than recovery work fails to convince us to make rational choices. Someone must play the role of changing the course of society.

Organizations like the DRI are charged with the responsibility of leading society in such moves, but today's forum demonstrated that the role of the international community is equally significant. Disaster prevention is not just about building facilities and equipment, such as protective structures, nor is it merely about evacuation training - whose thorough implementation kept the number of deaths in the Sanriku Coast below 20,000 - and other forms of human capacity building. During today's discussion, it was very memorably argued that in Southeast Asia and other regions, we should prepare disaster-prevention funds so that financial resources are available whenever we need them.

While placing particular emphasis on the above three points, the DRI intends to maintain a wide range of activities in the future for realizing a society that is safe and secure against disaster both at home and abroad. It is DRI's goal to realize a disaster-resistant society that is prepared for disaster and is capable of responding accurately and appropriately if a disaster occurs. Important parts of our activities include working in partnership with UN disaster

reduction organizations and member organizations of the Disaster Reduction Alliance that have set up offices in HAT Kobe, promoting academic research into a wide spectrum of disaster-prevention and -mitigation issues, and translating outcomes into practice. For example, we would like to develop human capacity-building curriculums and further enrich our training programs for “disaster reduction leaders.” Furthermore, we would like to strengthen efforts to communicate to the general public the importance of disaster preparedness and mitigation, in order to raise public awareness of disaster preparedness and encourage a “disaster preparedness culture” to take root in the community, which in turn would encourage the national government to strengthen its measures for making Japan a more disaster-resistant country.

To this end we will collaborate with other disaster-related museums etc. in Japan and abroad, to disseminate experiences and lessons learned from major disasters. As a country that has both aid-giver and aid-recipient experience, Japan above all must take active initiative in promoting the kind of international cooperation mentioned above. The DRI, headed by Mr. Kawata, pledges to stay at the forefront, leading and participating in both discussions and activities toward such international cooperation.