

## The IDNDR after Yokohama

The World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction was a mid-term review of IDNDR that gave us a guidance/direction for the second half of the Decade, decisive not only for the Decade but for Disaster Reduction beyond the Decade's 10-year window of opportunity.

The window is closing very rapidly, in another five years Decade is over. The question for all of us here, during this meeting of the STC is how we are going to use this opportunity, to make the World Safer for the 21st Century, as advocated in Yokohama.

Today, half way through the Decade, we are in a different environment, facing many more constraints than ten years ago when the Decade was conceived, when the world was still relatively stable, the social conflict which is so predominant today still below the surface.

Today it is the social conflict that passes the threshold of news and catches the world attention more and more frequently. The disruption of the social fabric of the society in Africa, Middle East and even in Europe is big news that masks the increase of the natural and "environmental" disasters. And yet, these are hitting also, with greater intensity, the developing and developed countries alike.

The price tag of US\$ 100 billion, attributed to the earthquake in Kobe, Japan, is an indication of the escalating cost of natural disasters in modern, complex societies. It is a reminder, that we should not forget the threat of natural hazards, affecting many more countries on this earth than the social conflict does.

The trends for the second half of the Decade, unfortunately, do not seem favorable to implement what Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action recommend. There is more social conflict in stock. There is less money to support development, including the strengthening of the capacities of disaster prone countries for disaster reduction. The political will to address the root causes of disasters through concerted international effort seems to be waning.

With the change of the hazard scenario, there is also "blurring" of the distinction between natural, "environmental" and "social" disasters. Addressing one type only does not seem to solve the problems any more.

The tools and mechanisms developed for alert, information or management of disasters, on the other hand, also are multi-purpose, adjustable to dealing with disasters, whatever their origin.

Where does this leave IDNDR? How does the Decade framework respond to the changed environment? Does it have the right approaches to attract the support? Have the Decade partners started implementing what they agreed to in Yokohama? And, particularly important for this meeting, how does STC address the problems? How do we make sure that the advocacy for disaster reduction, application of science and strengthening of the support networks get the attention they need, for the objectives and goals to be reached by the end of the Decade?

These are among the questions to which we should seek answers during this meeting. I trust that, as at the beginning of the Decade when drafting the programme, the STC will raise to the challenge and come up with sound advice on what needs to be done.