



Opening Speech

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Opening Speech

*Prof. Shinzo Kitamura,
Director and Vice President, Kobe University*



It is my pleasure to have an opportunity to be able to greet you at this meeting.

First of all, I would like to thank you all for participating in this Kobe University Sumatra Tsunami workshop. We are very much honored to have so many overseas participants from the countries, Indonesia, India and the United States. I should also like to mention of having a participation of Mr. Pitono Purnomo, the Consul General of the Republic of Indonesia, Osaka. He will give us a speech just after me. Many of participants have spent so much time for travel to come here and I would like to express my sincere thanks for their efforts and enthusiasms for participating in this workshop. By having such large number of international and domestic participants, I am quite sure that we will have a good start in achieving our goal of this workshop. We have two objectives at this workshop. The first one is to summarize the effects of tsunami disaster in each region and also to review the current status of reconstruction and the problems associated with that. Then, the second objective is to discuss how we should collaborate internationally to build a society with better capacity for tsunami disaster resilience. I am expecting that the enthusiasm among all participants will lead to some concrete agreement of international collaborations at the end of this workshop.

Now it may be appropriate for me to explain briefly how our project of Sumatra Tsunami Disaster Study and Reconstruction Support has started.

The Great Sumatra Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster occurred on December 26, 2004. Immediately when I heard of the news, it reminded us of the tragic moments we had when the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake attacked us in 1995.

In December and few months before that year 2004, we were planning to have a series of several events organized by our University to commemorate the ten years of the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. We had also a related symposium at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction last year.

Kobe University, which was only a multi-disciplinary university in an epicenter area of the 1995 earthquake, has recognized its responsibility to the society and to the world in studying the disaster mechanisms as well as the reconstruction process that will lead to the reductions of future disasters and tragedies. To fulfill our responsibility, we established the Research Center for Urban Safety and Security in 1996, and many university researchers have been involved in disaster related studies.

Therefore, it was a natural response for Kobe University to set up a research project on Sumatra

Tsunami Disaster Study and Reconstruction Supports, and I have asked Professor Takashi Okimura who is a deputy director of the Research Center to organize teams to cope with this tragic event. Following this, a three-year project has started in early 2005, and medical emergency teams and various reconnaissance teams have been dispatched. The members for the medical emergency and reconnaissance teams consisted of Faculties of Medicine, Engineering and the Center, and they went to Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and to India. We will hear the reports from these various teams this morning and tomorrow.

In addition to this 3-year project, teams from the Center of Excellence program, entitled "Design Strategy towards Safety and Symbiosis of Urban Space", visited Indonesia and Sri Lanka. This COE program is a five-year research initiative supported by the Ministry of Education. They will present their study as well. There were also several international collaborations in performing the field works, and such collaborations are with Pittsburgh University, and with ITB and Syiah Kuala University of Indonesia, and also with Anna University of India. The researchers from these collaboration partners will also present their work in this workshop. Kobe based disaster related organizations such as ADRC and IRP are also very much concerned with this Sumatra Tsunami Disaster, and they will present the part of their work. The current recovering situation of Banda Aceh and associated problems will be discussed by such organizations as BRR and UNDP, and also by ADB.

Finally, I would like to mention that we have received so much international supports during the Great-Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and have learnt many from the earthquake. We need to make use again of these international collaborations and the lessons learnt for the Sumatra Tsunami Disaster Study and Reconstruction. We do think that this workshop is a very important opportunity for all of us to sit together and to think how we can work together to prevent future disasters and to build a society with disaster resilient capacity. I do wish you all that these two days will be very successful in achieving the goal of the workshop.