

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
Launch of the HelpDesk for Integrated Flood Management

Complimentary Speech (draft)

By

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Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is a great honor for me to have this opportunity to say a few words at the launch of the “*HelpDesk for Integrated Flood Management*”.

2. As you may be well-aware, three out of four natural disasters are caused by weather-, climate- or water-related hazards. Floods, among other disasters, inflict serious damage all over the world every year. We can never forget that more than 130,000 people were killed in Myanmar last year, for example.

3. Japan has a long tradition of developing management of floods. Most of the major cities in Japan, including Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya, are located in a *floodplain*, which means that those cities are at risk of being flooded if an embankment breaks. Our history, namely the development of these cities along with the improvement of flood management, clearly illustrates that living in a floodplain offers enormous advantages to human prosperity, if floods are wisely managed.

4. Based on our history and experience, Japan has supported various activities for *integrated flood management*. Thanks to this *integrated approach* where water, land and other resources are developed and managed in a coordinated manner, flood management has now come to play an important role in development in support of poverty alleviation.

5. G8 Leaders declared at the Hokkaido Toyako Summit last year that *climate change adaptation strategies should be pursued as part of development and poverty eradication efforts, recognizing the linkage between the potential impacts of climate change and development*.

Due to the effect of climate change arising from global warming, there is rising concern that flood disasters will occur more frequently and the damage inflicted will become greater throughout the world. In fact, a number of countries have started experiencing flooding for the first time recently. A successful partnership among both developing and developed countries, especially with the ones that have rich experience in managing floods, is now called for in order to respond to climate change.

6. Our experience tells us that what is really important is the process of implementing the *integrated approach*. No matter how excellent a concept is, we cannot solve the problem without action based on a long-term strategy, detailed planning, and on-site experience.

For instance in Kenya, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), we are supporting “Community-based flood management”, which follows the strategy for integrated flood management supported by the WMO. The key achievement of this project where a community-driven flood management organization was established is that the actions taken for

flood management such as the construction of facilities, training for flood management, and education for disaster prevention are done together with other community-based activities in an integrated manner so that those actions can be sustainable at the community level.

I am also aware that the WMO has supported development of the strategy in the Kafue River Basin in Zambia. I believe these are good precursors of the *HelpDesk* that is now being launched.

7. Having said that, on behalf of the Japanese Government, I cordially welcome the launch of the *HelpDesk* today. It is a mechanism to help those who are in need, and it incorporates a number of existing partnerships for flood management. I am also happy that there are a number of organizations in Japan taking part in the *HelpDesk*.

8. Through various means, such as knowledge-based assistance and field implementation of development projects, the Japanese Government is pleased to support this IFM *HelpDesk*, closely collaborating with UN agencies, among them the WMO.

Thank you very much.