

Keynote Speech

The 3rd Joint Project Team Meeting on 13-15 March 2007

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor and a privilege for me and Asian Disaster Reduction Center to be here with you today at the 3rd Joint Project Team Meeting in Singapore for promoting the Sentinel Asia Project.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of Asian Disaster Reduction Center for making a substantial contribution as a regional organization for promoting disaster reduction in the application of the advanced satellite technology to disaster reduction in the region.

Since its establishment in 1998 after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, Asian Disaster Reduction Center has been dedicating to enhance the capacity of those countries in Asia for disaster reduction. The member countries of Asian Disaster Reduction Center are from East Asia, ASEAN, SAARC and Central Asia. The focal points of those countries are the organizations of the state governments in charge of disaster reduction.

The Asia is one of the most disaster prone areas in the world. According to the statistics from the Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) and the analysis by Asian Disaster Reduction Center, the number of disaster events has been increasing by about 5 folds from 1960s to 1990s and the 90 % of the total affected people due to those disasters in these 30 years lie in Asia. This is quite significant even if you consider the population of Asia to the world.

Asia is very prone to natural hazards not only in terms of events but also in terms of magnitude of them. Asia has suffered from a big earthquake in Indonesia and a landside in Philippines followed by the Big Tsunami in Indian Ocean and the earthquake in Kobe.

The increasing trend of disasters in the world is said to lie partly in climate change. The vulnerability of Asia to disasters is assumed to be caused by the rapid increase of urban area, unplanned land use and increase of the poor as socio economic factors. Also it is said as a physical factor that location of infrastructures in hazard prone areas deteriorates

the situation.

What we have to have always in mind about disasters is that natural hazards sometimes give critical impacts on the sustainable development of the countries and always drive a bigger wedge between the “haves” and the “have-nots”. In other words, natural hazards make the developing countries stagnate in economy and force the poor to remain the poor or even worse.

If you take a look at the major disasters in Asia, the economic loss due to one disaster event sometimes surpassed the Gross Domestic Product of a country. In Armenia they lost 9 times as much as their Gross Domestic Product due to the earthquake in 1988. The wealth which was twice as much as its National Income in Mongolia was burned down by the forest fire in 1996, whereas the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake destroyed only 2.5 % of the GDP of Japan.

The above mentioned clearly demonstrates that disaster reduction is a must for the sustainable development and a social security in Asia. In this regards, satellite application to disaster reduction will play a critical role in Asia, especially in such disaster affected areas with no access. It enables the policy makers to grasp the situation of the affected area and easy to make a relief operation plan and a recovery plan.

The satellite technique is also expected to be applied to vulnerability assessment and hazard mapping.

The mission of Asian Disaster Reduction Center in Sentinel Asia Project is, I believe, to advocate the advantage of satellite application to disaster reduction. The ADRC is to make its best to attract the attention from the policy makers and officials responsible for disaster reduction who have not been familiar with the satellite and let them get familiar with it. For this purpose Asian Disaster Reduction Center will organize one session for science technologies for disaster reduction in the next Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2007 Kazakhstan and the Sentinel Asia will be one of the main topics in the session.

For ASEAN and SAARC countries, ADRC with the cooperation with the relevant organizations will launch new initiatives for satellite application for disaster reduction.

Asian Disaster Reduction Center is also expected in the Sentinel Asia Project to receive the requests for satellite observation on the disaster affected area from the ADRC member countries and JPT members and convey those requests to JAXA. For this purpose ADRC has established the system to watch and check the requests for satellite observations.

Finally, for improving the Sentinel Asia Project, Asian Disaster Reduction Center will collect the suggestions and comments from the member countries and JPT members as the users of the Sentinel Asia Project with regards to the problems that those users have discovered in the system. It is expected that ADRC with its expertise on disaster reduction suggest and advise JAXA for further improving the system.

ADRC remains available and committed to make contribution in addressing these challenges in partnership with its member countries and JPT members in Asian facing various natural hazards.

I would like to conclude by wishing a very productive discussion in this meeting and looking forward to learning a lot from the distinguished participants with expertise in disaster management and satellite technology and could share such a recognition in common that the satellite application to disaster management would make the Asia more resilient to natural hazards.

I thank you for your attention.