



Welcome Address

By

**Ms. Areewan Haorangsi
Secretary General, APT**

**Mr. Wanchai Sakudomchai, Director-General of Meteorological Department,
Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Thailand**

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning to you all and welcome to the 7th APT Workshop on Disaster Management/Communications here in Bangkok, Thailand.

First let me take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT), Thailand, for hosting this important Workshop. MICT has been a big support of the APT and has kindly agreed to host a number of important events of the APT this year.

I would also like to thank the Department of Communications, Australian Government, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Government of Japan, for their financial support for this Workshop.

Distinguished Delegates,

Earlier this month, the deadly earthquakes of 6.5 and 7.3 magnitude struck the Japanese southwestern island of Kyushu, killing at least forty-two people, injuring thousands, and trapping people in collapsed buildings. I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathies to the Government and the people of Japan, particularly to the families of the victims and all those affected by the strong earthquakes.

These recent incidents in Japan are another good example of how efficient and effective disaster management and communication can minimize damages from natural hazards. Although there were damages over a wide area, the Japanese government, with their extensive experience and excellent systems, was able to determine the extent of the damage, carry out effective rescue and recovery operations, and obtain accurate information for the citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Asia-Pacific region represents the widest and most disaster-prone area in the world. This year, there have already been many natural disasters that have affected APT members. The record-low temperatures due to an Arctic cold snap that brought snow to several tropical areas

across East Asia have caused deaths, flight cancellations and chaos. An earthquake that struck New Zealand's South Island caused many injuries. Cyclone Winston in Fiji resulted in tens of thousands of people becoming homeless. There was also a powerful 6.1 magnitude quake that stroke the southeast of Tonga. The silent killers and forgotten disasters such as drought were also experienced by many countries.

No doubt disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction are vital issues for the region and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an important tool for assisting in all stages of disaster risk reduction activities, which cover mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery from disasters. These challenging issues can be overcome with the efficient deployment of ICTs through national action and regional cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Getting the right information to the right people at the right time saves lives and reduces losses, while also boosting people's resilience. This includes good data collection for pre-disaster assessment, early warning systems, swift and reliable communication during the time of disaster, and the collection of information in the aftermath of a disaster useful for restoration efforts. We are very fortunate today to have a number of international experts to share their experiences in disaster management. New technologies for disaster risk reduction will also be introduced by experts from Japan during this Workshop.

I would like to highlight that in the afternoon of the second day of this Workshop there will be a site visit to the Meteorological Department of Thailand and the National Disaster Warning Center. There will be a presentation on the work of the Weather Forecast Bureau, Seismological Bureau, and National Disaster Warning Center. I hope you find the site visit useful.

During the final session of the Workshop, we would like to have your views on the way forward by the APT relating to Disaster Management/Communication. It is important for the APT to consider how to implement further disaster management activities. Your contributions to this session will be greatly appreciated.

Finally, may I reiterate my thanks to the MICT, Thailand, for hosting this Workshop and for all arrangements for the site visit.

I wish you all a successful Workshop and enjoy your time in Bangkok.

Thank you very much.
