

## FOREWORD

It was July, 1984, that Dr. Frank Press, President of the US Academy of Sciences, first proposed the idea of the International Decade of Hazard Reduction (IDHR) at the opening ceremonies of the Eighth World Conference on Earthquake Engineering held in San Francisco. In December, 1987, the forty-second General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously adopted a resolution in which the last decade of the 20th century was to be proclaimed as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). The objective of the Decade is to reduce through concerted international actions, especially in developing countries, loss of life, property damage, and social and economic disruption caused by natural disasters.

There have been a multitude of discussions and activities among various national/international and academic/non-academic groups since 1984, especially since 1987. Most of such discussions and activities, however, have not been well coordinated, and the rate of progress of the IDNDR implementation has been slow. The greatest reason for this, in my opinion, is the lack of self-help efforts by most of the persons and organizations related to disaster mitigation problems.

The UN resolution adopted in 1989, the year immediately prior to the start of the IDNDR, clearly states in its annex the importance of policy measures to be taken at the national level. Dr. Press, the original advocate of the IDNDR, also commented, "The IDNDR should certainly not be seen simply as a grand transfer of aid from industrialized countries to developing countries. It is to be an international partnership in the truest sense, where exchange is the order of the day--and each participating nation comes away more knowledgeable and better prepared to cope with the violent forces of nature."

Establishment of the new "International Center for Disaster-Mitigation Engineering (INCEDE)" is the result of such a self-help effort of our ERS group. It is true that there is a serious lack of funds for Decade-related activities at all levels. However, we cannot wait for all the difficult issues to be resolved before we act. Although small with only four members, INCEDE would like to be the place where scientists and engineers from all over the world will work together, in harmony with the goals of the IDNDR, to mitigate the calamities caused by natural disasters.



Tsuneo Katayama  
Professor and Director of INCEDE  
Institute of Industrial Science  
University of Tokyo