

## FOREWORD

It was a tragic irony that a number of devastating earthquakes took place in rapid succession in the closing year of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). The 1999 Kocaeli and Duzce Earthquakes, Turkey, and Chi-Chi Earthquake, Taiwan, have raised the need to reduce the fault-inflicted damage to structures, a formidable problem demanding a lot of research and discussions. Bad things never come single. The new century has started with some killer earthquakes. El Salvador, one of the smallest nations in Central America, was struck by two devastating earthquakes within a month. The first quake of Jan. 13, 2001, which was centered off El Salvador's southern coast, damaged and/or destroyed nearly 280,000 houses, and killed at least 844 people, including hundreds of residents buried in a huge amount of soil slipped down Las Colinas mountainside in the city of Neuva San Salvador. While authorities were trying to gauge the scope of the tragedy, the second quake of magnitude 6.6 hit several central provinces on Tuesday, Feb. 13. The second quake, killing at least 322 people and destroying more than 34,500 homes, was also substantially big in terms of damage. A M7.9 powerful earthquake that struck Gujarat, India, at 8:46 am on 26 January 2001 caused a large loss of life and property. The number of deaths is still rising with more information coming in, and the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, India, is keeping track of the current scope of the tragedy. As of March 16, 2001, over 20005 persons were reported to be dead and over 167,000 injured.

All these tragic events remind me of a question "Are earthquake professionals falling behind in reducing earthquake risk worldwide?", a question raised in the plenary debate at the 12<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Earthquake Engineering, 2000. Earthquake professionals have been doing their bests for mitigating possible damage to particular structures and systems at their own times, to be sure but in this technology-driven age, it is all too easy for us to change drastically our local and global environments, causing outlooks of earthquake impacts on both advanced and developing areas to be remarkably different from what we knew, and thus making some lessens from the past earthquakes somehow out of place. We, earthquake professionals, are all the more responsible for providing clear and scientific evidence that we are unconsciously creating some risky environments, and when we don't have that evidence we are prone to do nothing at all, regardless of the risks. Although small with a limited number of research laboratories, ERS makes a fresh resolution to take this responsibility of providing scientific knowledge for mitigating calamity of earthquakes.



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