

# the opening session

## The Workshop Speeches

Dr. Binayak Bhadra, Director of Programmes and Acting Director General of ICIMOD, opened the workshop by highlighting the magnitude of water-induced disaster in the region and how it affects sustainable development. Implementation of disaster reduction measures constitutes a central aspect of any sustainable development policy. ICIMOD has been addressing the issues of land and water-related disasters for nearly two decades. He emphasised the need to develop synergy to better cope with the disasters at regional level, for which purpose the workshop was being organised.

In the inaugural speech, the Hon'ble Khum Bahadur Khadka, Minister for Home Affairs and Local Development, spoke about the increasing incidence of disasters in the region coupled by widespread poverty, illiteracy, and socio-economic inequities, which have been impediments to development in Nepal. The Government of Nepal has accorded high priority to integrating environmental development programmes by empowering people through decentralisation and participatory approaches to disaster management. The minister called for all stakeholders to develop the capacity of all concerned to reduce the risk as government efforts alone are insufficient to deal with the intensity of damage caused by land and water-related disasters. He also emphasised the need to integrate disaster management programmes with the regular development activities of the government by sharing responsibilities on mitigation, preparedness, and rehabilitation activities, and recognised that workshops of this kind are essential to refine policies and upgrade expertise in the region through mutual sharing of knowledge.

Minister Takemichi Okabe of the Embassy of Japan expressed happiness in taking part in the workshop and noted the variety of water-induced disasters in the lives of Nepalese people, which causes the loss of many lives and seriously damages property every year. Mitigation of disasters is an important issue for Nepal, which is located in a tectonically active and fragile geological region. The Government of Japan has supported the Participatory Disaster Management Programme (PDMP) in Nepal under Japan's special trust fund for women. The trust fund supports the empowerment of women and their families. He highlighted how government organisations, local government, CBOs, and NGOs have worked together to enhance the capacity of women and communities to manage water-induced disasters under the PDMP project. The Minister also emphasised the need for mutual cooperation and coordination in the field of disaster mitigation to strengthen understanding

among the experts in the region. This is essential to enable countermeasures to be taken to minimise the effects of disasters. He also hoped that the opportunities provided by this workshop for mutual cooperation would lead to a long-term positive effect in the region.

**Approach**

The workshop was designed to allow the participating countries to present outputs of various project activities related to landslide, debris-flow, floods, glacial lake outburst flooding, and forecasting and warning systems, as well as ongoing mitigation efforts. Resource persons from within and outside the region were invited to share experiences on new technologies to deal with such disasters. The workshop adopted a participatory approach for discussions in plenary and small groups to allow and encourage everybody to contribute and enrich knowledge. The initial programme of a day’s field excursion to study water-induced disaster had to be cancelled due to the emerging security situation in Nepal. Although disappointing, this did provide the group with more time for interaction and learning.

