

# THE NMUN KOBE TIMES



Kobe City University of Foreign Studies

## NMUN Japan Kicks Off in Kobe First Sessions Held to Set Agenda Order



Delegates meet in the opening ceremony for NMUN in Kobe

Some 350 delegates from around the world gathered on Wednesday to mark the opening of the National Model United Nations (NMUN) at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies (KCUFS). Over the course of the four-day conference, delegates are expected to display the fruits of the labor that they have been engaged in through months of hard preparation.

The first day started with a UN Forum—Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which was followed by the opening ceremony. DRR is a key theme for the conference because Kobe has taken a global leadership role in its area after being struck by a massive earthquake—the Great Hanshin

Earthquake in 1995. Speakers in the lectures explained the importance of reducing disaster risk from different viewpoints. The day ended with the first sessions of the four committees—General Assembly (GA), Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Security Council (SC)—in which the agenda order was set.

The UN Forum was preceded by opening remarks by Kaoru Nemoto, Director of the UN Information Centre (UNIC) in Tokyo. In her speech on “The 60-Year Relationship between the United Nations and Japan,” Nemoto looked back on the 60-year-history of Japan and UN.

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Since its accession to the UN in 1956, Japan has taken an active role in the field of peace and security, and especially has been instrumental for disarmament, humanitarian beliefs and economic development. Japan first became a non-permanent member of the SC in 1958.

Nemoto said there is no doubt that preparing for disaster and reducing future levels of risk from disasters would lead to sustainable development of societies. As a country that has suffered dreadful disasters, Japan can be a good example of disaster prevention, she said.

Recent changes in weather patterns are amplified by the effect of climate change. To raise the awareness of the need to prepare for disasters, GA in December 2015 designated Nov. 5 as the World Tsunami Awareness Day. On the day in 1854, when an

earthquake struck in Wakayama, a village leader knew he needed a way to get his villagers to run for high ground before a tsunami would strike. When he set fire to the rice stacks, the villagers came running to put the fire out, which saved the lives. She noted that the world continues to face earthquakes/tsunami disasters and must work hard to meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Indicating the audience she said, "You are at the central of change in society."

The following panel discussion with three panelists was moderated by Yuki Matsuoka from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). She expressed her delight to have this panel discussion on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) especially here in Japan because Japan has the long history of fighting with natural hazards like earthquakes, tsunamis and typhoons. By inviting three panelists, she thought we could hear a lot of ideas from different perspectives. This panel summarized how DRR has progressed over the last 20 years from both Japanese and global perspectives. Her presentation included statistics like 4.4 billion people affected and \$2 trillion in economic damage in the world during 1992-2012, which show how big the impact of natural hazards has been. This is especially true for the Asia-Pacific region, which is often exposed to weather related hazards.

In order to reduce disaster risks, she strongly recommended the reduction of society's vulnerability because we can't stop natural hazard but can minimize impacts by natural hazard by addressing our vulnerability. Also, she introduced the Sendai Framework for DRR which was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on DRR in 2015. The Framework serves as the central piece for global efforts on DRR until 2030.

This Framework specifies four priorities for action: 1) understanding disaster risk, 2) strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, 3) investing in DRR for resilience, and 4) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. With this framework, she suggested that Japan should continue to lead the world in disaster risk reduction and share its expertise all over the world.

Yoshiaki Kawata, a professor at Kansai University and executive director of the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution (DRI), introduced some examples of innovative activities of the Disaster Risk Alliance (DRA), Kobe. DRA is a loose alliance that exerts a synergic effect in the promotion of international cooperation towards disaster reduction. It consists of more than 20 organizations such as JICA.



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DRA is expected to play an important role in providing citizens with information and knowledge, which will contribute to disaster reduction worldwide. Large scale disasters, both natural and man-made, occur frequently in developed and developing countries around the world with ever widening diversity and complexity.

There are many kinds of disaster museums in the world to transmit disaster stories from generation to generation, and DRI in Kobe also falls into that category. People tend to easily forget and misunderstand, so those museums play an important role. Japan has already experienced a number of huge disasters. Moreover, a large earthquake, called the Nankai Trough is expected in the next years with a 70 percent certainty. It is estimated to have the potential to kill 320,000 people and produce a grave economic crisis. After the 3.11 earthquake in Tohoku in 2011 DRI proposed that the government strive to make a resilient society.

Kimio Takaya, distinguished technical advisor to the President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), talked about the importance of enhancing the DRR capacities of developing countries. He also shared his reflections on the Sendai Framework.



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He explained the deflation spiral—poverty, vulnerabilities and disaster. Usually poor people live in vulnerable areas because land is cheap and, even when it is illegal, and therefore they are prone to damage, from serious disasters, and loss of property. As a result, they may move to even more vulnerable areas. So, many developing countries cannot escape from this deflation spiral.

This is the focus of DRR. Though every country tries to develop, normal development can be interpreted by a disaster, setting development back again and again. Then, he explained the necessity to fill the

gap between normal development with no setbacks from disaster, and unescapable natural disasters. He stressed the importance of convincing political leaders to see DRR as an investment in interrupted development.

According to a report from the United Kingdom, most of donors' support is mainly concentrated on recovery after a disaster even though the cost of preventing disaster is much cheaper. He noted that Japan mainly supports the Hyogo Framework, which advocates spending money to reduce disaster risks (DR).

In 2015, the Sendai Framework was set including DRR, and this took the place of the Hyogo Framework. There are seven targets. He mentioned "...together with developing countries and together with developed countries, we must do it."

Sandra Wu Wen-Hsiu, chairperson and CEO, Kokusai Kogyo Co., Ltd. and Co-founder and Director Japan Asia Group Ltd., talked about the private sector in Japan. She is also the Chair of the private sector advisory working group, UNISDR Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.



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The private sector has long been living through national disasters, so all of them know how to make themselves resilient. To overcome disasters which suddenly happen, they have built a business plan for disasters. After 3.11, Japan's greatest earthquake, the private sector was able to rebuild the lifeline for the community and renew the supply chain. To reduce disaster risk, they play a significant role because they offer a lot of solutions and services to address all of the challenges. She also told the delegates even if they work in the public sector, they are part of society and therefore, it is important to understand the importance of the private sector for DRR because they will be the

leaders of the global world. "I am very honored to be called an ambassador. Personally, I benefit more than I contribute. I change myself and I also change my company and I hope today, I can also influence you to change yourself and we can change the world together."

The opening ceremony took place in the afternoon. In his welcome speech, Michael Eaton, Executive Director of the National Collegiate Conference Association (NCCA), a US-based non-profit organization that runs the NMUN, explained that over the next four days, 320 students from 35 different universities in 12 different countries will be addressing global issues in four committees.

Kizo Hisamoto, the 16th mayor of Kobe city, talked about the history of Kobe. In 1945, Kobe was destroyed by bombs, then in 1995, the Great Hanshin Earthquake hit the city. In spite of losing 4,571 people as a result of the earthquake, the city has been restored and rebuilt. It currently has 45,000 foreign residents from 113 countries, he said.

Sachiho Tani, Secretary General of this NMUN and a senior of KCUFS's International Relations Department, extended her warmest welcome to all and commented, "I still cannot believe that this day is really happening." She also felt really emotional because of the efforts of nearly 300 student volunteers and general support from many directions. She said everyone was aiming to prepare "the best possible NMUN event."

"NMUN is not only an opportunity for college students to acquire skills, knowledge and critical thinking," she said, "it is the opportunity to overcome differences and achieve mutual understanding."

Even more importantly, it enables the development of leadership in our generation. She also feels grateful to be able to celebrate the 70th anniversary of her university in the same year as Japan celebrates its 60th year as a member of the United Nations, a point President Chuta Funayama also noted. The KCUFS president expressed his hope that NMUN would provide an excellent opportunity to practice negotiation skills and gain cross-cultural confidence. He also wanted delegates to build international networks and friends for the next generation

Ms. Nemoto brought a message from Mrs. Sadako Ogata about how much the United Nations values Model United Nations activities. It is an ideal platform to broaden one's views and perspectives to enhance mutual understanding. Finally, the Director of the UN Information Centre of Tokyo concluded her speech with another quotation from Mrs. Ogata. "Think globally, act locally; local actions with global perspectives."



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Ambassador Motohide Yoshikawa, who was the representative of Japan at the United Nations until this June, reviewed the past 60 years of the relationship between Japan and the UN. He stated that Japan's role in World War II was a big mistake. In 1956, Japan was permitted to join the UN and this was joyful. After joining the United Nations, Japan contributed to three main areas of the organization; namely, international security, development, and human rights. In 1970, Japan became the second largest economy in the world after the United States and became the second largest contributor to the budget of the United Nations. In the 1990s, Japan became the largest provider of global development assistance.



At the moment, Japan is one of the safest countries in the world. Meanwhile, the country is facing problems as an aging society; this impacts economy and finance since 27 percent of Japanese are above 65 years of age, he said. Another concern is the slow increase in women's participation in economic activities and politics. Japan's world ranking in gender gap for this year is 111, out of 144 countries. Our gender gap is still very large compared to not only Europe but also in many countries in the Asia Pacific region. In addition, he has other concerns about the growing income gap in Japan. According to OECD, the income gap has widened in most of the OECD countries including Japan.



There is evidence here in Japan that it has become more difficult for low-income families to send children to universities because of the high cost of education, Yoshikawa said. Also, government and businesses are conscious of the decreasing number of Japanese choosing to study abroad and view this decline as a problem. Prime Minister Abe's government wants to double the number of students who go abroad from 60,000 in 2010 to 120,000 by 2020. Many companies try to give

scholarships for those who want to go abroad.

To conclude, Japan's post-war history, the activities of UN, and Japan's future has some concerns. Understanding other cultures and mutual respect are the keys to peace and prosperity. In conclusion, he hoped all the participants would have a fruitful discussion and enjoy Kobe and Japan.

The first committee sessions were held after the opening ceremony, where the agenda order was set in each committee, in a way to prioritize the following agenda.

GA	Agenda I	The elimination of weapons of mass destruction
UNCHR	Agenda I	Protecting children in crisis and conflict
SC	Agenda I	The situation in North Korea
ECOSOC	Agenda II	Building a resilient world through DRR

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