

Istanbul International Seismic Risk Mitigation Conference
Opening Remarks
Istanbul Grand Cevahir Hotel, December 8, 2009

- Distinguished Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers. Distinguished Undersecretaries, Governors, and Mayors. Esteemed guests and participants:
- It is a pleasure and an honor for me to be here with you in Istanbul today for the Istanbul International Conference for Seismic Risk Mitigation.
- I would like to **thank** the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency and the Istanbul Governor's Office for hosting this event.
- **Istanbul is one of the truly great cities in the world.** Istanbul is also **one of the world's most vulnerable cities.**
- This year marks the **10th anniversary of the devastating Marmara earthquakes of August 17 and November 12 of 1999.** 17,000 people died. Direct economic losses alone totaled about US \$5 billion.
- **With this conference,**
 - **we commemorate this catastrophic event;**
 - we reflect on the actions taken since then to anticipate, prepare for, and reduce the impact of such disasters—in Turkey and around the world;
 - and we look for ways to further reduce seismic risk in the future.
- **The Government of Turkey and the World Bank began a partnership in disaster risk management after the Erzincan Earthquake of 1992.**
- **Since then, Turkey implemented several major disaster management projects,** which the Bank has had the opportunity to support:
- **These projects were successful. They achieved three important results:**
 1. **The projects included major physical investments** for recovery and reconstruction.
 2. **The projects helped build and strengthen Turkey's institutions to *mitigate* disasters.**
 3. **The projects led to significant innovations in disaster management.**

- **I would like to highlight two examples of such innovations:**
 - One example is the creation of the **Turkish Catastrophe Insurance Pool, “DASK,”** in 1999. The pool helps provide damage compensation payments to people immediately when they need it, and it also spreads risks efficiently through the insurance markets.
 - Another advance was the **establishment, for the first time in Turkey, of a new, central coordination mechanism for emergency management, TEMAD.**

- **The Istanbul Seismic Risk Mitigation and Emergency Preparedness (ISMEP) project** that Istanbul Province started in February 2006, with financing from the Bank and the support of the Turkish Treasury, became the first project in Turkey **fully focused on disaster risk mitigation.** The project:
 - strengthens local disaster response and emergency management capacity;
 - retrofits schools, hospitals and other important public facilities;
 - and helps protect cultural heritage buildings from natural hazards.

- **The Istanbul Municipal Infrastructure Project** that Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is implementing, again with financing from the Bank and the support of the Turkish Treasury, also has **some seismic risk mitigation activities, such as strengthening of viaducts, underpasses and overpasses.**

- With the Istanbul Seismic Risk Mitigation and Emergency Preparedness (ISMEP) project, **the Government of Turkey took strategic steps to transform Istanbul, into a city resilient to major earthquakes within a decade or two.**
 - Indeed, Istanbul’s current seismic risk mitigation program is *large* by any international standards.
 - Moreover, the program follows international good practice and it has created a trusted and respected framework for Turkey to attract the coordinated support of the international community.

- **Istanbul has achieved much in disaster mitigation and management in recent years. I had the chance to visit the Disaster and Emergency Management Center of the Office of the Governor of Istanbul as well as Aya Irini**—which you will also have the chance to visit on the last day of the conference. I came away impressed with the state-of-the-art technology, with the high level of Istanbul’s preparedness, and also with Istanbul’s hospitality and readiness to share its experience.

- **While Istanbul is becoming a leader in disaster management in Turkey, indeed in the region, I would also like to highlight a major achievement in disaster mitigation and management at the *national* level in Turkey:** the establishment by the Turkish Government of a unified **Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency under the Prime Ministry** in June 2009.
 - The new Presidency consolidates three, until recently separate agencies.
 - This consolidation lays the basis for much improved coordination and for much more efficient and effective disaster management in Turkey.
 - It is a step that puts Turkey ahead of many other countries.
 - **The World Bank enthusiastically welcomes and supports this reform.**
- **This conference serves as a platform, 10 years after the Marmara Earthquakes, for *sharing* international experience and lessons learned in disaster mitigation and management.**
- **It also will serve, I hope, as a launching pad for more good practice action—including for *replicating* some of the achievements here in Istanbul.**
- In this way—sharing experiences and replicating good practices—**Turkey is set to become a “Center of Excellence”** in earthquake risk management.
- **On this path to excellence in earthquake and disaster risk management, we in the World Bank will be happy to continue our close partnership with Turkey,** and with the international disaster management community.
- **Thank you all** for joining us today. **Çok Teşekkürler.**