

## Preface

The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, thought to be a rare, once every 1,000-year occurrence, caused many deaths and great damage to many communities. Cultural heritage and various types of tangible and intangible cultural properties also suffered great damage, and their restoration work continues even today. Specialists from across Japan have been volunteering in post-disaster efforts to rescue cultural properties, and we at the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage (NICH) have been providing support for these activities. The National Task Force for the Japanese Cultural Heritage Disaster Risk Mitigation Network was established at NICH headquarters in FY 2014 out of these intense experiences, to create a coordinated system of specialists inside and outside NICH to prepare for future disasters.



Coincidentally, the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) was held in Sendai March 14–18, 2015, four years after the March 11 disaster. Our experiences at the Second WCDRR in Kobe in 2005 led to an opportunity to hold a special session on cultural heritage disaster mitigation entitled “Resilient Cultural Heritage,” as part of the Sendai WCDRR conference. For this reason, UNESCO, ICCROM, the Agency for Cultural Affairs and NICH organized the conference; at the March 11 International Expert Meeting on Cultural Heritage and Disaster Resilient Communities in Tokyo, we were able to have the meeting conclusions reflected in the WDCRR working session.

As a welcome development brought through the initiative taken by UNESCO and ACA, the importance of a culture-sensitive approach is described throughout the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, which is a concluding document of the Third WCDRR.

Since the Expert Meeting covers a wide range of areas, I will refer to the text of the Recommendations of the International Expert Meeting on Cultural Heritage and Disaster Resilient Communities, which presents four main pillars in line with the framework of the WDCRR conference: 1) Understanding disaster risk, 2) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, 3) Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and 4) Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “build back better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. All these recommendations provide an important perspective in helping consider the future of cultural heritage disaster risk reduction.

As people who are involved in the protection of cultural heritage, I hope that we will be able to take the knowledge gained here and use it in future efforts to create a cultural heritage that is even more resilient.

In closing, I would like to express my thanks to everyone who made this symposium possible and to those who labored to create this report.

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