

Introduction

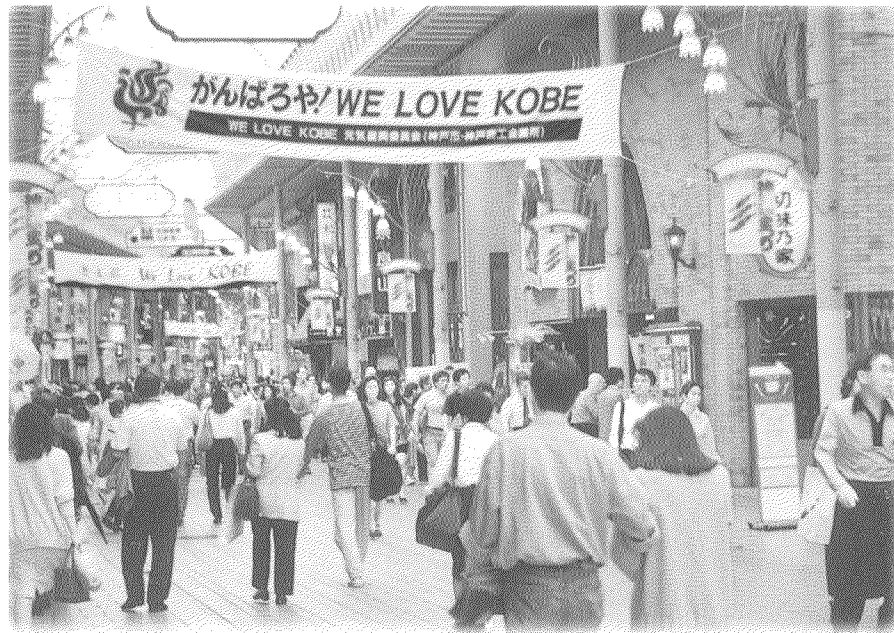
— Aiming to Rebuild Our Beloved, Beautiful Hometown of Kobe —

At 5:46 a.m. on January 17, 1995, the Southern Hyogo Prefectural Earthquake (the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake), the first major quake to directly hit a Japanese urban area, inflicted unprecedented heavy damage to such cities and their surrounding areas in the Hanshin-Awaji region as Kobe, Awaji, Ashiya and Nishinomiya.

The powerful jolt, which lasted barely 20 seconds, took 3,891 lives in Kobe city alone, practically reducing the elegant harbor city developed through many years of our ancestors' hard work to mere piles of debris and depriving many people of the very basis of their livelihood. I feel sorry beyond words for those who lost their homes and jobs that had long supported their families. I would also like to express my deep condolences for those who lost their loved ones in this recent catastrophe.

Surrounded by the sea and mountains, Kobe has been growing as a major international port city characterized by its open-minded atmosphere and by its readiness to accommodate cultural diversity. However, these natural surroundings, which otherwise benefited the city, often left it open to natural disasters like floods and tidal waves. The damage inflicted by the recent quake however, was indeed the worst ever. Still, in spite of all the pain and suffering it caused, I would call on you, my fellow citizens, to work together to rebuild Kobe and make it rise again. To do so, we must learn from our ancestors' indomitable spirit in which they struggled to rise to their feet again from the devastation caused by World War II and gather all the wisdom and resources we have developed over many years.

We have learned from our painful experience how important it is to care about and be kind to each other. In the wake of the quake, many people and organizations, including the national and city governments, as well as groups of volunteers from inside and outside the country, quickly undertook devoted and sympathetic relief activities for us and gave us hearty encouragement. I feel the deepest gratitude to all the people who sent us messages of "Fight on, Kobe!" from inside Japan as well as from many other countries around the world. I have no words to describe how greatly we were encouraged by those kind sentiments sent to us at our hardest and most painful time. In the aftermath of the quake, people in the disaster areas helped each other and acted calmly together to minimize the effects of the disaster. This is what all Kobe people are proud of, and I believe now is the time to make the best of the person-to-person network formed and strengthened by the experience of the quake in rebuilding our city.



The Kobe city government is making its own intense efforts to get the citizens' daily lives back to normal and to restore the functions of our city as quickly as possible. We are going to promote the restoration of Kobe so that it can rise again as a place where people can live with a sense of security--and as a city with vibrancy and appeal commensurate with its position as a cosmopolis of the 21st century

Fortunately, we have abundant resources, including highly-skilled citizens and advanced technology, which we have nurtured and developed for many years. Today, each of us is expected to do whatever he or she can to help rebuild our city so that it will serve as a model for any future reconstruction work that might be necessary in other cities in the world. This is exactly the mission we must carry out for those who lost their lives in the quake, as well as for our posterity and for all the people of the world.

However time-consuming and painstaking our restoration efforts may be, we will do our utmost to restore our beloved, beautiful hometown of Kobe. We would appreciate the continued understanding and support from the national government and many other organizations and people concerned

Finally, I firmly believe that if we can get over the current difficulties through close cooperation between our fellow citizens, businesses, and the city government, and successfully promote the "Urban Resort City Development Project", Kobe will be born again as a city our people can be proud of--and a city truly loved by all people around the world

June 30, 1995

Kazutoshi Sasayama

Mayor of Kobe

