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Preface

Losses of human lives and economic losses from natural disasters have increased drastically in the last decades. Especially developing regions are highly vulnerable to natural disasters. The reduction of escalating losses from natural disasters is essential for sustainable development. With such a problem consciousness, a concept of "Integrated Disaster Risk Management" has recently been paid attention by world's leading disaster researchers from natural and social sciences, and practitioners of governments, private firms, international organizations and NGOs. Thus this special issue is intended to deal with a piece of the latest discussions, the area of which the Journal of Natural Disaster Science should focus on.

The International Society for Integrated Disaster Risk Management (IDRiM Society) was founded in October, 2009 based on the decade-long achievements of annually repeated international conferences named "The IIASA-DPRI Forum series on Integrated Disaster Risk Management". The forum is now recognized as a very unique scientific initiative to advocate the concept of "IDRiM" as well as to translate the concept into implementable methodologies and technologies. In addition to many other successful outcomes the forum has achieved, it has continuously provided budding researchers and students with a special session called "the Young Scientists Session" in order to build up researchers and specialists of a younger generation who should take an important role in IDRiM in the near future.

The special issue is composed of five selected papers presented in the Young Scientists Session of "The 9th IIASA-DPRI Conference on Integrated Disaster Risk Management: Scientific Challenges in Implementing Integrated Disaster Risk Management in a Changing World" on October 12-16, 2009 in Kyoto, Japan. Two of five papers have already been given "Best Paper Awards" in the session while other three also gained high scores in the competition. The quality of these papers, however, is not just at "junior" level, but rather, they adhere to be more purely scientific than senior scientists' works that are sometimes forced to become oriented towards pragmatic solutions.

Readers will find the collection of papers extremely diverse and rich in focus, approach and region; it includes theoretical economic analysis on crop insurance in China, study on life-recovery in Indonesia with socio-economic investigation, evaluation of the impact of demographic transition in the context of the expected earthquake in Japan with a geographical approach, development of a multi-agent based simulation system applied to an issue of evacuation in an underground space in Japan, and development of mutual knowledge development system for sand mining management in a local community in Indonesia.

It is our sincere hope that this special issue will provide a fresh intellectual input to readers in different countries and regions with a variety of cultural and socio-economic settings, thus causing the prospective dynamism to be generated in the new academic field of IDRiM.