

Press release

4 November 2016 – UNISDR 2016/30

400 YEARS OF DATA SHOW TSUNAMI THREAT EVER-PRESENT ACROSS THE WORLD

04 November 2016, GENEVA/NEW DELHI – The UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Mr. Robert Glasser, today warned against complacency in the face of the global tsunami threat which is often forgotten in parts of the world that have been affected in the distant past. The first ever World Tsunami Awareness Day is tomorrow, 5 November.

Mr. Glasser, speaking in New Delhi at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, said: “Two reports published today including a detailed examination by Tohoku University of 400 years of data show that damaging tsunami events can happen in most regions of the world. Europe and the Americas are vulnerable as well as the countries surrounding the Indian and Pacific Oceans which have suffered considerably over the last 20 years.”

The lead author of the study, “[A Global Assessment of Tsunami Hazards Over The Last 400 Years](#)”, Prof. Fumihiko Imamura, said: “It is a huge disaster risk to forget these events because they can recur. Some 50,000 people died in the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami of 1755. About 30,000 people died in tsunamis which struck Peru in the 17th and 19th centuries. The Mediterranean and North America have also been affected.”

Prof. Imamura said: “We need to raise people’s awareness of the tsunami threat. They are rare events so it is easy to forget but people must understand the phenomenon and most importantly know what to do and where to go once the alarm is raised. Hesitation can be fatal. In some cases tsunamis can reach populated areas in minutes.”

Another report, “[Tsunami Disaster Risk](#)”, issued by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, University of Louvain, Belgium, recalls that 16 major tsunamis killed 250,900 people in 21 countries between 1996 and 2016, including the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2011 Tohoku tsunami in Japan. Projected increases in deaths and numbers of affected by tsunamis and tsunami-like events globally are in the region of 16%.

About UNISDR: UNISDR is the UN office dedicated to disaster risk reduction. It is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 which seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses, in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.”