



PRESS RELEASE

UN/ISDR 2005/17
Wednesday 22 June 2005

Early warning system in the Indian Ocean: one of the main achievements, six months after the tsunami tragedy

“Nearly six months after the tsunami tragedy in the Indian Ocean, one of the main achievements so far has been the rapid progress on a regional tsunami early warning system for the region. If another tsunami would happen today in the region, people will be safer and will have a better chance to save their lives” says Salvano Briceño, Director of the ISDR secretariat.

Since the 26 December, the UN’s tsunami authorities in UNESCO/IOC have pulled together two major international coordination meetings in Paris and Mauritius that have hammered out agreements between countries and with technical experts on the new tsunami warning system. Advances are being made on many fronts.

- The Indian Ocean observing system is being upgraded under UNESCO/IOC leadership.
- The regional telecommunications system for exchanging hazard data and warnings messages is being upgraded by WMO.
- National tsunami centres and programmes have been set up by India, Indonesia, Thailand and other countries.
- An interim tsunami advisory mechanism has been put in place supported by the Japan Meteorological Agency and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- Familiarisation visits to tsunami centres in Japan and Hawaii for high level administrators have been organised by ISDR and Japanese and US partners.
- Workshops for television broadcasters and warning experts have been organized by the ISDR and the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union.
- Missions by tsunami and risk management experts, led by UNESCO/IOC, are being undertaken to help countries assess their needs for support.

“In less than six months, the countries of the region and the international community have achieved in the Indian ocean what took a decade or more in the Pacific Ocean. This progress has only been possible through strong leadership by Indian Ocean countries and UN agencies and the support of many donors”, Mr Briceño said.

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The IOC Assembly which is taking place in Paris 21-30 June is an important opportunity to further advance the system, by setting up a formal Intergovernmental Coordination Group to manage detailed policies and plans for the Indian ocean tsunami warning and mitigation system.

“The foundations will soon be in place for a well-coordinated regional early warning system. But much remains to be done – we now have to build capacities at local and national levels, so that warnings reach everyone at risk and the people know how to react. Tsunamis have to be managed as part of a multi-hazard, resilience-based approach – being prepared for whatever may come” adds Salvano Briceno “ – this has to be the challenge for the next six months – and the years to come.”

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