Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (ICG/CARIBE EWS-VI)

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

26-29, April, 2011

STATUS OF OTHER ICGs

1 The main focus of the ICG/IOTWS in 2010 was on the workplan and programme for the transition from the Interim Advisory Service provided by PTWC and JMA to the RTWP service for the Indian Ocean. The three Indian Ocean Regional Tsunami Warning Providers (RTWP) of Australia, India and Indonesia continued to exchange bulletins between themselves on a trial basis, while work continued on the development of warning products and services. The trial exchange will be extended to the NTWCs in 2011, together with training in the new RTWP service.

2 Building on the successful development of tsunami risk assessment guidelines and the completion of a regional workshop on risk assessment and mitigation in 2009, country level workshops were conducted in Sri Lanka and Indonesia in 2010. The Indonesian workshop was used as a platform to develop specific guidelines for risk assessment at the national level. With the support of the UNESCAP Multi-donor Trust Fund, training workshops on the assessment and awareness of Makran tsunami hazards were held in Iran and Pakistan followed by a field workshop in Iran.

3 The Mentawai tsunami of 25 October 2010, which resulted in the loss of over 400 lives, highlighted the need to focus on the last mile of the tsunami warning chain, including the need for more training at the community level, better understanding of the role of the national and regional tsunami warning systems, and better communication with the media. The Tsunami Unit continued to conduct training in the development of end-to-end Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for tsunami warning and emergency response, with regional training workshops undertaken in Malaysia for South China Sea countries and Tanzania for East African and Western Indian Ocean countries. As part of the transition process,
further training workshops will be conducted in 2011 to assist Member States to adapt their SOPs to the new RTWP service.

The seventh session of the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami Early Warning and Mitigation System in the North-eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean and connected seas (ICG/NEAMTWS) was held in Paris at UNESCO on 23-25 November 2010, attended by 69 participants from 16 member countries, two observers and one cooperating organization. The session adopted the Operation Users Guide and established a task team on the multi-hazard approach to coastal inundation. However, the ICG still needs to agree upon the detailed architecture and procedures for the regional watch service.

Turkey, Greece and Portugal plan to start providing operational services as Regional Tsunami Watch Centres (RTWCs) by 2011 while France and Italy will follow in 2012.

A total of 92 sea level stations in the NEAMTWS countries are now transmitting data in real time.

3 new Tsunami National Contacts were nominated (Germany, March 2010, Slovenia, March 2010, Russian Federation, May 2010), now totaling 27 or 84% of the members of ICG/NEAMTWS.

Two communication test exercises among the candidate RTWCs were performed, led by the National Observatory of Athens (NOA), Greece (June 2010) and the Institute of Meteorology (IM), Portugal (September 2010) respectively.

Challenges for the NEAMTWS remain the slow pace of development of the TWS and the full involvement of North African countries in NEAMTWS, in particular real-time sharing of sea level and seismic data.

The Tsunami Information Centre for the North-eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (NEAMTIC) project was approved by the European Commission. The project partners, IOC, France (Commissariat à l’énergie atomique), Greece (National Observatory of Athens), Italy (Dipartimento della Protezione Civile), and Portugal (Fundação da Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa), aim
to develop awareness and education materials on tsunami and other sea-level related hazards for the North-eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean region.

11 The ICG/PTWS has conducted the post-event assessment after the Earthquake and Tsunami in Chile, 2010. The report was prepared by the Secretariat based on the responses received from 19 TWFPs and TNCs (out of 32 questionnaires sent). The report suggests that all TWFPs received the first PTWC bulletin. In addition, most of the countries reported PTWC as source of awareness of the earthquake. Fourteen countries issued a tsunami warning and in 9 Member States coastal zones were evacuated. In four countries, some areas were evacuated preventively (self-evacuation). Based on data and information collected from Member States the PTWS acted promptly and efficiently throughout the Pacific. However, and at the same time, this event demonstrated the need to reinforce the work of PTWS for near field events, particularly with denser sea level real time networks close to active subduction areas.