IOC Executive Secretary’s Report

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

13-15 May 2014, St Thomas, US Virgin Islands

- Since the last ICG/CARIBE EWS meeting we have continued to see steady progress for the tsunami program despite the strained financial situation:
  - The third Inter-ICG Task Team on Hazard Assessment Related to Highest Potential Tsunami Source Areas to meet on 24 September 2013.
  - We managed to keep the ICG coordination process going last year through help from the UNESCO emergency fund.
  - Tsunami warning exercises have been carried out in Caribbean and Pacific.
  - Portugal and Italy have announced that their national tsunami warning centers will be operational in early 2014 and they will be ready to act as candidate Tsunami Watch providers for the NEAMTWS region.
  - The first phase of the NEAMTIC project (funded by the EU) came to a close in April 2013.
  - New tsunami warning products will be available in the Pacific in 2014, scheduled to officially commence on 1st October 2014.
  - South China Sea tsunami advisory center continues to advance as part of PTWS.
  - In the Caribbean we have seen a steady growth of the number of operational sea level stations and six stations were recently installed through funds by the IOC.
  - Progress has continued on the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and funding of 600,00 USD was committed to Tsunami Hazard Assessment in the Indian Ocean and for collecting eyewitness accounts and other information about the 1945 tsunami in the NW Indian Ocean (Makran area)
  - The unit managed to get a special contribution of 130,000 USD from the UNESCO Emergency Fund towards the establishment of the Caribbean Tsunami Information Centre.
  - Through extra budgetary projects and partnerships we have also maintained activities related toward awareness and preparedness, among others: (i) EU DG ECHO supports activities in Haiti and Dominican Republic; (ii) Australia renewed it support for two years to the IOTWS secretariat; EU DG ECHO will support the coordination of the NEAMWAVE 14 exercise; and the Jakarta UNESCO Office/ IOTIC has recently managed to attract some support from an Indonesian and Malaysian Funds in Trust.
  - The ECHO projects in Dominican Republic and Haiti will increase our scientific knowledge on the effects of the 1946 tsunami event in the north of the Hispniola Island and will provide a solid base to evaluate tsunami inundation in Northern Hispaniola. It has already provided a detailed technical report on earthquake and tsunami scenarios for Northern Hispaniola with the assistance of knowledgeable experts. It is also providing school manuals approved by the Minister of Education in Dominican Republic.
And overall we have managed to keep a fair level of training activities and publications flowing.

On the horizon:

(i) The first phase of Oman National Multi Hazard Early Warning System project (NMHEWS) will be coming to an end in 2015. The project will conclude with a major workshop in March 2015 which we hope the DG of UNESCO will attend. It will also mark the opening of the NMHEWS in Oman and provide enhanced alert coverage for the NW Indian Ocean.

(ii) ESCAP projects on coastal hazards and the Makran region will enhance national and local capabilities to deal with these threats.

(iii) the 10 year commemoration of the Indian Ocean Tsunami by the end of this year;

(iv) the 50 anniversary of the Pacific Tsunami Warning System in 2015,

(v) and 3rd UNISDR World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai, 14-18 March 2015)

In your deliberations at this session we hope you will also discuss the above high level events and consider how to make the most of these with respect to awareness raising for the tsunami program.

Now in closing let me just say a few words about the financial situation. While all the activities sound like things are just going well, the past two years the situation has been very challenging to manage. The unit has lost a number of staff over the last two years. The unit has many temporary staff and is critically dependent on ExB funds. At the same time the unit is dependent on having a stable staffing situation in order to sustain the system coordination and preserve corporate memory.

IOC Executive Secretary is keenly aware of this situation and is trying to do the possible with the DG to stabilize the situation.

For the future it is essential that we have Member States’s help and support in any possible way. As IOC is established by member states, have programs that are decided by member states and serve member states, it is also ultimately member states that have to pay for this one way or the other!