**Background and current status**

The IOC General Assembly held in Paris in June 2005 established the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for a Tsunami Early Warning and Mitigation System in the North Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean and Connected Seas (ICG/NEAMTWS) within the global framework of IOC (Resolution XXIII-14).

Europe and Mediterranean coasts are highly populated, and have been affected by large tsunamis according to historical records. Indeed, more than 10% of the recorded tsunamis took place in the Mediterranean. One particularity of this region is the short distance between the potential sources of tsunamis and the coasts. This poses a particular challenge to provide timely forecasts and warnings. Another important fact is the complex basin configuration in the region, composed of relatively isolated geographical areas. This could lead to the setting up of several regional tsunami watch centres (RTWC) to better deal with tsunamis in each particular area.

Taking all this into account, a two-phase implementation plan was designed and eventually adopted in the ICG/NEAMTWS-III meeting held in Bonn (2006) and has been continuously revised and updated after that. The first-phase (up to 2009) focuses in the detection of large-scale tsunamis which can potentially affect the whole basin. The second phase will also target local tsunamis as well as other marine physical hazards, including storm surges and extreme wind-forced waves.

The work of the ICG is divided into four areas/Working Groups: (i) hazard assessment, risk and modelling; (ii) seismic and geophysical measurements; (iii) sea level data collection and exchange, including offshore tsunami detection and instruments; and (iv) advisory, mitigation and public awareness. In addition to this, an ad-hoc Task Team to look into the NEAMTWS/RTWC architecture was established.

**Current status**

It must be noted that among the regions that are covered by the ICGs established by the IOC, the NEAM region is at present the only one without any interim tsunami warning system in place, which shows how urgent it is for the ICG/NEAMTWS to make any efforts to establish a first nucleus of this TWS as soon as possible.

In this respect, GFZ Potsdam has started January 1st, 2008, to operate its global earthquake monitoring system as an experimental seismic background data centre for the future interim NEAMTWS. The SeisComP3 (SC3) software, developed within the
GITEWS (German Indian Ocean Tsunami Early Warning System) project was extended to test the export and import of individual processing results within a cluster of SC3 systems. Spain, Portugal, France, Turkey, Italy and Greece will be taking part of the test. On the other hand, most existing real time sea level stations in the NEAM region are now providing data to the IOC/GLOSS (Global Sea Level Observing System) Sea Level Station Monitoring Facility hosted at the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ in Oostende, http://www.vliz.be/gauges) on a temporary basis.

Progress has also been achieved in the field of hazard assessment and modelling, with the compilation of documentation on numerical models, guidelines for inundation maps, mainly through collaboration with European Commission funded projects like TRANSFER and SCHEMA and the definition of a decision matrix for tsunami warnings, differentiating between NE Atlantic and Mediterranean tsunamis.

**Future actions**

The most recent session of the ICG/NEAMTW-S-V took place in Athens, 3-5 November 2008. Several countries showed their intention to set up their own National Tsunami Warning Centre and their interest to become Tsunami Regional Watch providers for specific areas yet no concrete plans or deadlines were provided.

The urgent need of nominating Tsunami Warning Focal Points (TWFP) and Tsunami National Contacts (TNC) was recalled. Also, it was agreed that the sharing and exchange of tsunami-relevant real-time observational data should be encouraged, fully complying with the UNESCO/IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy. Another important point it the strengthening of the cooperation with and involvement of North African Member States in the NEAMTWS coordination process.

The mandate of the Task Team was extended till the next ICG/NEAMTWS meeting. The Task Team produced a list of Roles and Requirements for National Tsunami Warning Centres (NTWC) and Regional Tsunami Watch Centres (RTWC) which was agreed upon in the meeting.

Another important decision was the use of the terminology watch and advisory solely for the two classes of alert issued by the RTWC, whereas warning will be used by the National Centres only.

The next ICG meeting will be hosted by Turkey in Istanbul in November 2009.

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BMM/ bmm