



INFORMATION SHEET:

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION GROUP FOR THE PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING AND MITIGATION SYSTEM (ICG/PTWS)

WHAT: The ICG/PTWS is subsidiary body of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The ICG/PTWS was renamed from the International Coordination Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific (ICG/ITSU) in 2005 to an intergovernmental body focusing on commitments of member states to continually embrace the comprehensive nature of tsunami risk reduction. The ICG/PTWS has been operating since 1965. For more information, visit <http://ioc3.unesco.org/ptws/>. For general information on tsunamis, visit <http://www.tsunamiwave.info>

WHO: The ICG/PTWS is comprised of IOC Member States bordering and within the Pacific Ocean and other interested Member States. Presently, 33 countries have designated Tsunami National Contacts and Tsunami Warning Focal Points for receiving information on regional tsunami mitigation activities and tsunami alerts or advisories from the PTWC, JMA, and WC/ATWC that serve as the international tsunami warning centres for the PTWS. These are: Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, France, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niue, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Singapore, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu (provisional), U.S.A., Vietnam.

Countries expressing interest in ICG/PTWS activities, but which have not yet formally designated a TNC and TWFP are: Brunei, Cambodia, Kiribati, Tokelau, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

Altogether, there are 45 countries that comprise the Pacific and its marginal seas.

PURPOSE: The ICG/PTWS acts to coordinate international tsunami warning and mitigation activities. One of the most important activities of the ICG/PTWS is ensure the timely issuance of tsunami warnings in the Pacific. This requires cooperation in sea level and seismic networks and data sharing, standardization and understanding of tsunami warning criteria and the dissemination of tsunami information according to the PTWS Operational Users Guide (*formerly Communications Plan*). Comprehensive tsunami mitigation programmes require complementary and sustained activities in tsunami hazard risk assessment, tsunami warning and emergency response, and preparedness. Stakeholder involvement and coordination is essential, and community-based, people-centred mitigation activities will help to build tsunami resiliency.

SUPPORTING CENTRES: The Tsunami Unit in IOC Paris Headquarters serves as the Secretariat for the PTWS, and provides overall direction for the implementation of the global tsunami warning and mitigation system. The IOC International Tsunami Information Centre (ITIC) in Honolulu, Hawaii serves as technical and capacity building resource to Member States.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Ewa Beach, Hawaii, USA serves as the operational headquarters of the tsunami warning system; sub-regional centres in Japan and Alaska, USA work with PTWC to provide international warnings and advisories for the Pacific and its marginal seas.

As a technical resource centre for Member States, the ITIC monitors the effectiveness of the PTWS in order to recommend and facilitate improvements in the timeliness and accuracy of tsunami warnings,

works closely with the PTWC and sub-regional centres to enhance its operations and directly with Member States to establish new or strengthen existing national tsunami warning systems, facilitates technology transfer through training and other capacity building activities, and acts as an information resource for the implementation of comprehensive national tsunami mitigation programmes, education, and awareness. The ITIC is the only centre in the world dedicated solely to mitigating tsunami hazards so as to save lives and reduce property damage.

The ITIC is supporting strongly the IOC's global tsunami warning and mitigation system implementation in the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean, and the north Atlantic and Mediterranean. As Member States of the PTWS also belong to the ICG/IOTWS or ICG/CARIBE-EWS, the 40-year-old PTWS is expected to play a leading role in ensuring system consistency across oceans. At the same time, since more than 80% of the tsunamis worldwide are observed in this region, the PTWS should be given Member States' highest priority for constantly improving and optimizing its system.

INTERNATIONAL WARNING SYSTEM ARRANGEMENTS:

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Ewa Beach, Hawaii, serves as the operational headquarters of the international tsunami warning system in the Pacific. The PTWC (started in 1949 after the 1946 Alaska tsunami), in close cooperation with sub-regional centers in Alaska, USA (West Coast / Alaska Tsunami Warning Center (WC/ATWC) started in 1967 after 1964 Alaska tsunami) and Japan (Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) started in 1952 as national tsunami warning centre; Northwest Pacific Tsunami Advisory Center (NWPTAC) started in 2005) issues international tsunami information for the Pacific that includes information bulletins, watches, and warnings for the largest earthquakes (M6.5 or greater). The messages are advisories to designated national authorities, as each country is individually responsible for issuing warnings and public safety information to its population.

The advisory alerts are provided to the Pacific Ocean and all marginal seas in the north- and southwest Pacific. These include the Philippine Sea, East China Sea, Yellow Sea, Sea of Okhotsk, Bering Sea, South China Sea and Eastern Archipelagic Seas such as the Singapore and Sunda Straits, Java Sea, Bali Sea, Flores Sea, Timor Sea, Arafura Sea, Banda Sea, Ceram Sea, Halmhera Sea, Molucca Sea, Sulawesi Sea, Mindanao Sea, Sulu Sea, and Celebes Sea, and those of the South Pacific Ocean, such as the Bismarck Sea, Solomon Sea, Coral Sea, and Tasman Sea.

The PTWC and Japan Meteorological Agency are cooperatively providing interim advisory information for the Indian Ocean (since April 2005) and the South China Sea Region (since April 2006). Within North America, the WC/ATWC monitors the Pacific, Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico to provide authoritative tsunami warnings for the US Alaska, the West, East, and Gulf Coast states, Puerto Rico, the US and British Virgin Islands, and for the West and East Coasts of Canada. PTWC similarly monitors these same oceans to provide authoritative warnings for Hawaii and US national interests in the Pacific and some island nations in the North Pacific, and interim advisory services for the wider Caribbean and adjacent seas.

National Tsunami Warning Centres are active in a number of countries. The oldest are in the Russian Federation (Sakhalin and Kamchatka Tsunami Warning Centers started after the 1952 Kamchatka tsunami), in Chile (Servicio Hidrográfico y Oceanográfico de la Armada de Chile (SHOA) Sistema Nacional de Alarma de Maremotos (SNAM), started in 1964 after the 1960 Chilean tsunami), and in Tahiti, France (Centre Polynésien de Prévention des Tsunamis (CPPT) started in 1965 after the 1964 Alaska tsunami and providing tsunami warnings for French Polynesia which encompasses a large geographic area of the south Pacific).

HOSTING COUNTRIES: The PTWC and WC/ATWC are part of the US NOAA National Weather Service (NWS), and coordinate their messages prior to issuance to ensure consistency and minimize confusion. The NOAA NWS has hosted the ITIC on behalf of the IOC since 1965; Chile has provided the ITIC Associate Director since 1998, and Japan has seconded a staff to the ITIC since April 2007.

WHEN DO ICG MEET:

The ICG normally meets every two years, or more often as needed, in order to review and report on progress, and identify, discuss, and take action to continually strengthen the system and enhance the timeliness and accuracy of tsunami alerts. The recommendations and resolutions from each ICG are provisional until formally presented and accepted at the annual sessions of the IOC General Assembly or Executive Council.

ICG/ITSU-XX: 3-7 October 2005, Vina del Mar, Chile

ICG/PTWS-XXI: 3-5 May 2006, Melbourne, Australia (Extraordinary Session)

ICG/PTWS-XXII: 17-20 September 2007, Ecuador

ICG/PTWS-XXIII: 16-18 February 2009, Samoa

ICG/PTWS-XXIV: 2011, Japan

HOW TO JOIN the ICG/PTWS: All PTWS Member States must be first be members of the IOC and UNESCO. There is no financial cost for membership to the IOC. Joining to the ICG/PTWS is made by letter request to the IOC Executive Secretary, Dr. Patricio Bernal. Government Foreign Ministries should send a formal letter requesting to join, and briefly explain their country's interest to join; if applicable the letter may come from the IOC Action Address.

The letter should also designate an official PTWS Tsunami National Contact (TNC) to which intergovernmental tsunami coordination information and activities will be directed towards, and a 7x24 Tsunami Warning Focal Point (TWFP) who will receive the international tsunami warning bulletins. Designations should come from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head of UNESCO National Commission, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, or Head of the specified national coordinating body for liaison with the Commission ("IOC Focal Point"). Upon receipt of the letter, the IOC shall reply confirming the designations. A TNC and TWFP Form is available for this purpose.

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