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03.10.2018 - Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

Grenada's St. Patrick Parish and Haiti's Fort Liberté recognized "Tsunami Ready"



"Tsunami Ready" ceremony at Fort Liberté, Haiti, on 28 September 2018.

Two Caribbean municipalities, St. Patrick Parish (Grenada) and Fort Liberté (Haiti), have been recognized as "Tsunami Ready" by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) upon meeting international guidelines for mitigation, preparedness and response to this natural disaster.

As many other coastal cities of Northern Haiti, Fort Liberté (over 20,000 habitants) was hit by a tsunami on 7 May 1842. Based on tsunami modelling, the city has an estimate of 2,000 people potentially exposed to tsunami inundation by a local source generated tsunami, leaving very short time to respond. Conscious of the danger, Mr Louis Jacques Etienne, Mayor of Fort Liberté, submitted a request for Tsunami Ready recognition, which was awarded on 28 September 2018. Funded by USAID, the program was implemented with the support of Haiti's National Civil Protection and Navigation and Maritime Service, and international partners including IOC/UNESCO and its Caribbean Tsunami Information Centre (CTIC), as well as the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/National Weather Service and its Caribbean Tsunami Warning Program (CTWP).

A week earlier, on 20 September 2018, the parish of St. Patrick, Grenada, also received the recognition, empowering one of the country's most vulnerable coastal communities to take effective action in the event of a potential tsunami. The CTWP and the CTIC implemented the project in collaboration with the Government of Grenada, NGOs and other regional organizations, with funding also provided by USAID.

Achieving Tsunami Ready recognition encompasses a variety of preparedness requirements, including tsunami inundation and evacuation mapping, installation of tsunami signage, distribution of preparedness and outreach materials, public awareness activities and tsunami exercises, preparation of local Standard Operating Procedures for tsunamis, and the identification and training of Local and National Tsunami Focal Points for receiving and disseminating alerts.

Over the past 500 years 75 tsunamis have killed 4,484 people in the Caribbean and adjacent regions, according to the Global Tsunami Database maintained by the U.S. NOAA. The tragic tsunami in Indonesia on 28 September 2018 highlights the need for at-risk communities to develop response plans should a tsunami arrive in order to save lives and minimize economic loss.

The Tsunami Ready recognition is granted only upon the satisfactory completion of a verification process confirming fulfilment of the guidelines – the conduct of the pilot projects in both Haiti and Grenada extended over one and half years. The programme is implemented by IOC's Intergovernmental Coordinating Group for the Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (ICG/CARIBE EWS).

St. Patrick Parish and Fort Liberté join over 50 other coastal communities in the Caribbean that have been recognized as Tsunami Ready. The CARIBE EWS Tsunami Ready pilot project is modelled after the successful US TsunamiReady® program executed in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands and an earlier Tsunami Ready project piloted jointly by the IOC/UNESCO and NOAA, which recognized the nominations of Anguilla and the Virgin Islands (UK). Just before Hurricane Irma, the Virgin Islands (UK) had renewed its Tsunami Ready status under the CARIBE EWS Programme.

Several other Caribbean Member States have indicated their interest in piloting the Tsunami Ready recognition programme, which is also being piloted across the other three regional tsunami early warning systems led by IOC/UNESCO – the Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean and the North Eastern Atlantic, Mediterranean and Connected Seas.

For more information, please contact:

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