

**International Tsunami Symposium Commemorating
50th Anniversary of the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System
Making the Pacific Ready for the Tsunami Threat**

**1. Opening Ceremony,
UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)
Dr. Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary
April 20, 2015**

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Since the beginning of March this year I have been serving as Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. I have learnt a lot in this one and a half month, and one of the most impressive revelations for me has been how enthusiastic the tsunami community is! You do a very important job protecting millions of people on the coasts of the world ocean and it is gratifying to see that you are energetic, devoted, in addition to being highly professional. It is the combination of expertise and energy that moves this world forward!

The Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System provides tsunami threat information to 46 countries. It is the most mature component of the IOC network of Tsunami Warning Systems. It is also one of the first and the most successful IOC initiatives. It is very unfortunate that such needed systems have obtained strong incentives and resources for their establishment only after tragic tsunami events. This was the case of Pacific, in which the system started to be built after the Chile tsunami of 1960. And the same is true for the Indian Ocean. The devastating Sumatra tsunami in 2004 was needed to set in motion the development of the International System in the Indian Ocean. With the establishment of systems in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Caribbean we hope to break this very sad rule.

Fifty years is an important anniversary for the Pacific Tsunami Warning Network. As the Executive Secretary of IOC, I really wanted, to be with you today, , to show the level of support that IOC is committed to provide to you, , to express to you how thankful IOC is for your work, and of course to congratulate you on the jubilee and celebrate it with you. Unfortunately, I am tied up in the meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board that determines our future budget. Without a budget, our support will become only moral and this may be not enough for providing intergovernmental coordination of the warning system operation and its further development. So, sorry, I have chosen the option of more money and less entertainment, and a part of the funding that we are defending these days is destined to support your system.

Let me say a few words about the Pacific Tsunami Warning System and the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System. Clearly your work is a hallmark for other regions in how successfully you have pursued a structured approach to prepare Pacific nations for facing the tsunami threat. The history of the Pacific System has been marked by several seminal planning documents, which already long time ago showed creativity in communicating the message about the importance of disaster risk reduction. I would like to refer specifically to the

document called “Tsunami - Where Next?” that was prepared and accepted at the 9th session of International Coordination Group, here in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1984. That document formed the basis for the Master Plan approved in 1987. It was subsequently revised in 1999, and has served as the template for the current PTWS Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021.

For the future IOC hopes the Pacific system will successfully continue its technical development - including the use of new types of observations and associated products interpretation. Equally important is a strong educational and awareness creation component - through work with civil protection and local communities, as well as continuous further improvement of standard operating procedures, and, very importantly, successful work with governments to make sure that this system is sustained into the future.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning System is a truly international network. But you are meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, United States. Let me use this opportunity to deeply thank the Government of United States for establishing and supporting two key elements of the system, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center and the International Tsunami Information Center and for providing, for very long time, their services to the entire Pacific region and beyond.

What is the future of disaster risk reduction activities, seen from the international perspective, particularly as the world is considering the post-2015 development agenda? We are aware that people continue to migrate to coastal zones, and the exposure of people and assets to marine and ocean hazards is constantly increasing in time. At the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, recently hosted by the Government of Japan in Sendai, countries from all around the world underscored the increasingly important role of Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems. In my view, it is important that the current trends in the domain of disaster risk reduction are taken into account in planning of the further development of tsunami warning systems. This may help to sustain the tsunami warning systems as part of major national and international developments.

I wish you all a very successful symposium, and hope that its outcomes will be very positive and long lasting. Once again, please allow me to reiterate that the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO stands ready to continue the support and effective intergovernmental coordination of tsunami warning systems around the world.