Twenty Seventh Session of the ICG/PTWS
Chair’s Report

From the 26th Session of the ICG/PTWS and the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the PTWS in Honolulu Hawaii 2015 kindly hosted by the US Government, a lot has progressed despite the challenges with time and resources and the obstacles encountered along the way.

During the intersessional period, a number of activities were implemented in Member States by National Tsunami Warning Centres and Disaster Management Offices, the Working Groups, and Task Teams, and the Tsunami Service Providers which you will hear about throughout this session.

I would like to highlight here some of the key achievements within the intersessional period. The first one is the successful implementation of the TsunamiReady pilot program in Honduras following the decision of the Steering Committee at its meeting in July 2016 for the Technical Working Group 3 to find out more about the tsunami ready by running a pilot program in the countries that expressed interest during this meeting.

The planning and execution of PACWAVE 16 and 17 exercises is another key achievement by this ICG that needs acknowledgement as it took a lot of effort, time and energy from the Task Team members to put together the scenarios, compile the coordinating instructions and develop evaluation surveys post-PACWAVE simulations and reports.

I would also like to highlight progress made by the Task Team established under the Steering Committee as per the decision made at the 26th Session of this ICG to focus on the development of the Future goals and performance monitoring framework for the PTWS as well as the national report template. A third version of this draft framework and the template for national reporting to the ICG has been made available on the UNESCO IOC website for your review and I would like to encourage you all to go through this document.

In addition, I would like to make mention of the progress made to date by the Task Team for the establishment of the South China Sea Advisory Services established under the Regional Working Group for the South China Sea and the progress made by the NWPTAC in developing its enhanced products for the North West Pacific.

During the intersessional period, two Steering Committee meetings were held. Due to financial resource limitations the Steering Committee decided to conduct one virtual meeting which was held in August 2015 and a face to face meeting which was held in Honolulu Hawaii in June/July 2016. The latter was also the mid-session joint meeting of the Working Groups, Tasks Teams and the Steering Committee as decided at the 26th Session of this ICG. It is important to note that the Steering Committee meetings is critical to setting the pace and direction of implementation of the decisions of this ICG and as a check point to discuss any issues and monitor the progress of implementation of recommendations from the ICG Sessions.

Some of the Technical and Regional Working Groups and Task Teams were able to meet during the intersessional period and you will hear about these meetings and what came out of them from the reports by the Chairs of these regional working groups and task teams during this session.
Due to national work commitments, I was not able to attend the 28th UNESCO IOC General Assembly that was held in June 2015 and the 10th TOWS Working Group Meeting that was held in Paris France in February 2017 and I would like to thank Mr. Tomoaki Ozaki of Japan who is also one of the Vice-Chairs of this ICG, for presenting the reports of the ICG/PTWS to these meetings and to the members of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat for assisting with the finalisation of the reports to these meetings. The report to the UNESCO IOC General Assembly and the TOWS Working Group focussed on the priorities and the decisions made at the 26th Session of this ICG.

It is important to bear in mind that realistically, nothing much can be achieved in one or two years due to the on-going challenges and issues in relation to availability of technical and financial resources and changes to the political and operational environment within member states which can have greater impact on national priorities, resource allocation and commitment to progressing improvements to national tsunami warning and mitigation systems as well as what the tsunami service providers can and can’t do. The 26th Session of the ICG PTWS placed a lot of emphasis on tsunami preparedness and mitigation, harmonisation of ICG governance and operations to ensure consistency, establishing standards and guidelines for aspects of tsunami warning and mitigation systems that are not well developed or where members states do not have the right capacity and capability to self-assist itself in progressing implementation, and alignment of the ICG’s strategic direction and aspirations with the global disaster risk management frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015-2030. As the Chair of this ICG, I would like to see our efforts for the next intersessional period to continue on this path, to focus more on preparedness and mitigation programs to further strengthen existing national and local tsunami preparedness and risk reduction programs such as the tsunami ready program; to look at further collaboration and more meaningful partnerships with tsunami training and warning service providers on areas of common interest; to explore feasible avenues to secure technical and financial resources to continue the implementation of programs to improve tsunami readiness of at risk communities; and to put in place a meaningful and smart monitoring and evaluation framework to continue to self-check the tsunami warning and mitigation systems that we have at local, national and regional levels.

In saying this, I would like to encourage all Member States that are being represented at this Session to contribute actively to the discussion and raise issues to help guide the future developments and strategic goals to further strengthen coordination of tsunami related work in Member States through your national tsunami warning centers and civil protection agencies, governance and policy matters for PTWS, the work and focus of any approved Working Groups and Task Teams, Tsunami Service Providers and the Secretariat.

To conclude my report, I would like to express sincere gratitude to the Tsunami Service Providers and your respective Governments for your commitment to continue the provision of this critical service to the Member States of this ICG, the commitment of financial resources and budgetary support, technical expertise, monitoring equipment, and other capacity building initiatives.

I would also like to acknowledge with appreciation the leadership and commitment made by the Government of French Polynesia in particular the local organising committee for organising the International Tsunami Workshop and the arrangements that you have made to make this Session possible.

It is important for the Member States to note that the PTWS Officers and members of the Steering Committee have their national responsibilities which is their priority. Any additional responsibilities
assigned to them is added on top of these national responsibilities. I want to thank you the PTWS Officers and the members of the Steering Committee for your dedication and commitment to the tasks assigned to you by this ICG.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Secretariat for your continuous support and guidance to the PTWS Officers, the Steering Committee, Working Groups and Tasks Teams, the Tsunami Service Providers and the Member States.

I look forward to fruitful and productive deliberations throughout this session.

Thank you.

Filomena Nelson
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