Report of the Chair of PTWS Regional Working Group on Tsunami Warning and Mitigation in the Southwest Pacific

ICG/PTWS-XXVII, 28-31 March 2017
SWP WG Terms of Reference

1. To continually review and evaluate capabilities of and make recommendations for improvements to countries in the Southwest Pacific (SWP) Region for providing end-to-end tsunami warning and mitigation services.

2. To support the involvement and contribution of SWP countries in the activities of the ICG/PTWS.

3. To promote and facilitate the tsunami hazard and risk studies in the SWP region.

4. To facilitate cooperation in the establishment and upgrading of seismic and sea level stations and networks in the region, and the interoperability of these systems in accordance with ICG/PTWS requirements.

5. To facilitate training and capacity building in the end to end tsunami warning and mitigation system in the region.

6. To encourage the sharing of tsunami information in the region, including but not limited to the free and open exchange of data.

7. To facilitate tsunami awareness in school curricula, and development and dissemination of public educational materials.

8. To work in cooperation with PTWS Working Group 3, especially on activities which strengthen country capacity in tsunami emergency response.
PTWS Regional Working Group on Tsunami Warning and Mitigation in the Southwest Pacific

Membership
Open to all Members & Territories of Pacific Community (SPC)

4th Meeting, 22-23 Aug’16, Honiara, Solomon Islands
Attended by 30 participants from 13 Countries & Territories, SPREP, WMO and IOC
PTWS Regional Working Group on Tsunami Warning and Mitigation in the Southwest Pacific

Decisions and Recommendations
26th ICG/PTWS and SC OUTCOMES

1) The WG Members to attend the 27th Session of ICG for PTWS to be held from 28-31 March 2017 in Tahiti, French Polynesia. Preceded by a one-day seminar/workshop on recent tsunamis (2009-2016) and on disaster management and preparedness.

2) The WG requested countries to nominate members/experts appropriate to serve on PTWS Working Groups and Task Teams, especially on WG2- Tsunami Detection, Warning and Dissemination and WG3- Disaster Management, Preparedness and Risk Reduction.

3) The WG requested for countries to keep their Tsunami National Contact (TNC) and Tsunami Warning Focal Point (TWFP) information updated at all times.

4) WG Noted that the United Nations has designated 5th of November of every year as the “World Tsunami Awareness Day” and encouraged its members to organize activities to mark this Day.
5) The WG was pleased to learn of the substantial progress being made in the region to improve seismic networks, tsunami warning, dissemination and response measures.

6) The WG noted that some of the needs and challenges still faced by countries included:

   i. Need improvement of national seismic and sea level monitoring networks and communication systems for data collection and international exchange.

   ii. Need upgrading of CISN software and display systems.

   iii. Need to improve resolution of their bathymetry, coastline and topography data for tsunami inundation and coastal modelling.
REVIEW OF TSUNAMI DETECTION, WARNING AND RESPONSE AND TSUNAMI MITIGATION ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

7) Need for all seismic stations to be fully incorporated into the Oceania Regional Seismic Network (ORSNET)
8) Need for all TWCs to go 24/7 operations which is a major challenge
9) Need for training on Metadata and development of Tsunami evacuation maps and plans
10) Need for updating of National Tsunami Plans and agency SOPs in light of recent changes to PTWS
11) Need for legislation of Tsunami Warning Service providers within countries
12) Need for inclusion of Tsunami hazard in aerodrome warnings for aerodrome safety
13) Need for multi-hazard approach by countries that are yet to embark on this.
14) The WG noted the need for regular training of tsunami warning centre staff to ensure optimum service delivery. It felt that the 1-day tsunami introduction in the current Hawaii-based Pacific International Training Desk (PITD): Pacific Desk was too short to develop necessary staff competence. The meeting requested the Pacific Desk to consider expanding its tsunami training accordingly.

15) The WG recognised the substantial efforts by ITIC and IOC in offering training to countries under the International ITIC Training Programme (ITP-International). It expressed particular appreciation for the In-country Training on Tsunami Warning and Response in the context of the PTWC Enhanced Products provided to Cook Is (16-20 Nov’15), Solomon Is (22-25 Sep’15), Tonga (24-27 Aug’15) and Vanuatu (05-08 April’16), as well as the plans to do similar training for Fiji, Kiribati and Tuvalu. At the same time, it noted that Niue, Papua New Guinea and Samoa were currently not listed as part of the training and requested IOC and ITIC to include them in the in-country training programme.
COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR NATIONAL TSUNAMI WARNING CENTRE OPERATIONAL STAFF

16) The WG agreed on need for addressing competency requirements for tsunami operational personnel and decided to form a TASK TEAM to develop competency guidelines.

   Membership: Tonga (Lead), ITIC, PTWC, Australia, New Caledonia, Solomon Is, New Zealand and IOC.

17) The WG requested ITIC to consider shifting focus of its ITP training, where relevant, to meet competency requirements of tsunami warning service providers.

INVENTORY OF SEISMIC & SEA LEVEL STATIONS

18) The WG agreed for ORSNET Data Centres in New Caledonia and Vanuatu to collaborate with IOC for the development and upkeep of inventories for seismic and sea-level stations in the SW Pacific region.
COMMUNICATIONS

19) The WG noted the advancements in communication systems which provided reliable options for the timely receipt of tsunami advisory products and getting warning messages across to remote local/island communities. It encouraged countries that were facing problems to consider deploying such technologies to ensure speedy delivery of information for optimising tsunami response.

20) The WG encouraged countries to make greater use of SMS and Cell broadcasts for timely dissemination of warnings to end users.

PACIFIC TSUNAMI READY PROGRAM

21) The WG agreed the proposed International Tsunami Ready for the Pacific (TR-P) gives important mitigation, preparedness and response guidelines for communities to be ready for the next tsunami.

22) It appointed a TASK TEAM on piloting the Tsunami Ready Programme in the region including to review the existing TR-P checklist for adoption by the Working Group.

Members: Samoa (Lead), Vanuatu, Tonga, New Zealand, Niue, Kiribati, ITIC, IOC, SPREP, SPC and IOC.
23) The WG noted the presentation from ITIC on its Coastal Hazard Impact Tool, and agreed that the tool will be valuable for planning, exercises, and quick first-order assessment during a real event.

24) The WG agreed that every vulnerable community should have an evacuation map so its citizens can evacuate quickly and safely on a natural or official warning.

25) The meeting agreed to appoint a Task Team to identify needs and priorities and develop an actions plan to improve response to local tsunami.

Members: Tonga (Lead), Samoa, Solomon Is, Vanuatu, ITIC, PTWC, SPC, SPREP, IOC
NEW INITIATIVES

26) The meeting noted the following new initiatives in the region and the need for close collaboration to ensure tsunami warning and response needs of the countries were adequately reflected in their respective programmes and activities:

– WMO/IOC Ocean Data Buoy Cooperation Panel (DBCP) DBCP Panel aimed at improving ocean observations & data applications, and relevant capacity building.

– World Bank funded Pacific Resilience Project (PREP) in Samoa and Tonga and regional component implemented by SPC and PIFS which has strengthening of Tsunami and other coastal hazards included in its EWS component. Other countries are likely to join this project later.

– WMO Coastal Inundation Forecasting Demonstration Project in Fiji. Recent funding by Korea is being provided to SPC to develop a coastal inundation forecasting tool.

– Regional project on "Methodology for storm surge /wave hazard forecasting in SIDs", which the Government of Samoa is leading with funding from the Ministry of Environment of Japan. An inception workshop for this Project will be held in Fiji on September 16, 2016

– The Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), an intergovernmental institution established in 2009 for the generation and application of user relevant early warning information. Currently only PNG is part of RIMES and there are aims to extend membership to other Pacific Countries with a regional workshop in this regard to be held in PNG in late 2017.
INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

27) The WG noted that besides IOC there were other international and regional initiatives in the areas of oceans and marine hazards, e.g. PMC-PIMOS Panel, SPC and WMO, and the need for IOC to develop closer working relationship with these organizations to advance work on Tsunami and other coastal hazards and review the TORs of these working groups to ensure better collaborative efforts in the Region.

28) The WG agreed to investigate the formation of a Trust Fund for supporting WG activities noting there were discussions to establish a Trust Fund under PMC for support to emergency communications.

NEXT MEETING OF WORKING GROUP

29) The WG expressed concern that there was no secure funding for regular meetings of the WG to advance its work. It requested IOC Secretariat to take steps to address this critical need.

30) WG agreed for the next WG meeting to be considered back-to-back with the 4th SPREP - PMC meeting to be held in Honiara, Solomon Islands in August 2017.
Recommendations for ICG/PTWS-XXVII

(1) That the Regional working Group on Warning and Mitigation for the South Pacific be re-established

(i) That a Task Team on developing competency guidelines for tsunami warning personnel be formed under the Working Group

(ii) That a Task Team on improving response to local tsunami

(2) Requests that donors are encouraged to help South West Pacific countries achieve the goals of the WG and the TTs established under it.