



PRESS RELEASE

UN/ISDR 2005/09

18 February 2005

Tsunami: A technical seminar in Tokyo before Paris

High-level administrative policy-makers from the eleven most affected countries by the 26 December tsunami, will gather for three days in Tokyo, Japan from 22-24 February 2005 to understand how technically the early warning system on tsunami operates in Japan. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction has launched the invitation with the support of the Japanese Government.

“The operational and technical information that will be shared by the Government of Japan will be of a great value to those countries that are considering developing their own systems,” says Salvano Briceño, Director of the secretariat of ISDR. “Japan has a long experience on tsunami early warning systems dated back to the early 1950s which is considered as one of the best in the world.”

Two participants of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, India, Republic of Indonesia, Republic of Kenya, Malaysia, Republic of Maldives, Union of Myanmar, Republic of Seychelles, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, United Republic of Tanzania, and Kingdom of Thailand will attend the three days “Dialogue for High Level Administrative Policy Makers on establishing a Tsunami Warning Mechanism in the Indian Ocean”.

During the three days, Japan will provide examples of Tsunami disaster reduction based on its own experience, and will organise field visits to local governments and communities with tsunami programmes and facilities. Particular attention will be given to the issuance system and transmission of tsunami warnings.

“The problem with the early warning system for tsunami is not the technology, but how to make people aware and prepared them for the response. It is easy to issue warnings but it is much more difficult to get people to react to them,” says Salvano Briceño. “For nearby coast tsunamis, the response has to be quick before waters wash out everything and people have only few minutes to react. If the tsunami takes place across the ocean, people have more time but they still need to be prepared to cope with it. Public information, education and awareness make the difference and save lives.”

The seminar in Tokyo follows discussions held during the last World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan and other meetings in Thailand and China. It will provide a useful technical basis for the next gathering on the development of a Tsunami warning system in the Indian Ocean organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and UN/ISDR in Paris from 3 to 8 March 2005.

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