

**Chair's Summary of the Regional/Thematic Special Session in the WCDR
Promotion of tsunami disaster mitigation in the Indian Ocean
- Towards establishment of tsunami early warning systems in the Indian Ocean
by sharing experiences in the Pacific Ocean -
19 January 2005
Kobe, Japan**

On 19 January 2005, the Special Session gathered about 300 participants with experts from the Indian and Pacific Ocean region and relevant international organizations. Mr. Koichi Nagasaka, Director-General, Japan Meteorological Agency chaired the Session.

The purpose of the Special Session was to identify the items to be considered by the parties involved in the establishment of the tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean from the professional point of view, giving particular emphasis on the enhancement of the warning systems of the individual countries and development of an international mechanism to coordinate those systems.

The Session focused upon the activities and experiences accumulated in the Pacific Ocean through the International Coordination Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific under the auspice of UNESCO/IOC. The Session recognized in particular the effectiveness of sharing experience of the tsunami early warning system in the Pacific Ocean.

The Session reviewed the current situation of capability in the countries of the Indian Ocean and reaffirmed that a tsunami early warning system, which is a prerequisite and fundamental measure for mitigation of tsunami disasters, should be established by the governments of the relevant countries with their primary responsibility. The Session also emphasized the importance of supports by the international community. The issues discussed were: (1) promoting knowledge about tsunami, (2) identifying and publicizing high-risk areas, (3) ensuring delivery of tsunami warnings to the people in the coastal area, and (4) issuing tsunami warning quickly.

As for actions to be taken by the countries of the Indian Ocean on their initiatives, some experts emphasized the efficiency of mobilizing existing available means of communication to ensure the delivery of tsunami warnings to those at risk in the coastal areas as well as the importance of public education. As for actions to be taken by the international community to support the countries of the Indian Ocean, some experts pointed out the effectiveness of offering existing knowledge of tsunamis, expertise in tsunami-hazard maps, and techniques for operating systems for issuing/disseminating tsunami warnings and of developing human resources through expert services, seminars, and trainings.

The Session sought the way to establish the international tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean region through the expansion and enhancement of international coordination.

As for urgent actions in the upcoming 6 months, some experts emphasized the need to assess tsunami warning capabilities of the countries of the Indian Ocean. Particular issues discussed by several experts included dissemination of tsunami watch information in the Indian Ocean on a provisional basis. It was pointed out that the interim network of the dissemination of the tsunami watch information should be established, even though it is inferior to tsunami warning, by utilizing existing telecommunication tools and currently

available seismic/sea level data and by employing the experiences accumulated in the Pacific Ocean, until the tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean becomes fully operational.

As for actions to be taken until the tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean becomes fully operational, many experts recognized the need to develop an integrated strategy for the establishment of the tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean, including the identification of the organizations relevant to the system, paying attention to the spatial bias of tsunami generating and affected areas in the Indian Ocean. Some experts suggested that all the countries and institutions running seismic and sea level observation systems should provide their data to allow relevant countries and organizations including those in the Indian Ocean region.

As for actions after the tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean becomes fully operational, some experts emphasized that broad-ranging cooperation and support from the international community should be secured with a view to having the activities of the tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean serve as a useful reference to other regions which are also under threat of tsunamis such as Mediterranean Sea and Caribbean Sea.

The Chair concluded the Session by expecting the immediate actions by individual countries in the Indian Ocean region and by the international community, particularly relevant international organizations such as UNESCO, UN/ISDR, WMO and the countries with advanced techniques and valuable experiences of tsunami warning systems.