

## **South Asia: Phuket ministerial declaration on regional cooperation on tsunami early warning arrangements**

We, Ministers and Special Envoys of Australia, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Kingdom, United States, Viet Nam, Luxembourg as EU Presidency and the European Commission, met in Phuket on 29 January 2005 at the invitation of the Royal Thai Government for the purpose of furthering regional cooperation on tsunami early warning arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia; and

We decided on the following political declaration:

### **Preamble**

**1. We gather** in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami of 26 December 2004 and expressed our solemn sorrow at the tremendous losses to human lives and livelihoods that was caused. The tragedy not only threatens the security and sustainable development of affected countries, but is also a reminder that natural hazards know no borders. The global impact of the tragedy underlines that addressing threats from natural disasters are a common responsibility.

**2. We recognize** the leading role of affected countries in addressing the disaster and the valuable contributions of the international community and the United Nations in assisting affected countries and communities from the emergency relief phase into reconstruction and rehabilitation. We stress the need for such efforts to be sustained.

**3. We appreciate** the Opening Address by the Prime Minister of Thailand and the Statement by the Special Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance to Tsunami Affected Communities as representative of the United Nations Secretary-General. We also recognize the valuable contributions of senior representatives of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), the International Tsunami Information Centre (ITIC), and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre (PTWC), the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), and the Executive Director of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) who also attended the Meeting. We also appreciate the Concept Paper prepared by Thailand for the Phuket Ministerial Meeting (Attachment 1).

**4. We underline** the need to invest in preparedness, in particular early warning, to reduce losses from similar disasters in the future. Investment in reducing vulnerability to natural disasters is an important contribution to sustainable development, which is best achieved through strong national efforts and supported by international cooperation and partnership so as to enable countries to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those in the Millennium Declaration as well as the objectives of the Mauritius Strategy for further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We also recognize, as part of a comprehensive approach to

reduction and management of disasters, the need to explore ways and means to enhance the effectiveness of collective actions, including through consideration of possible standby arrangements at the regional and global levels.

**5. We are inspired** by the commitments made at the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami on 6 January 2005 in Jakarta to establish a regional early warning system. We welcome ASEAN's proactive role, including in proposing the Resolution "Strengthening Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention on Aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster" which was adopted by consensus by the 59th UNGA on 19 January 2005. We recall the discussions towards tsunami early warning arrangements at the UN Conference to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States on 10-14 January 2005 in Mauritius, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) on 18-22 January 2005 in Kobe, and the ASEAN-China Workshop on Tsunami Warning in Asia on 25-26 January 2005 in Beijing.

**6. We welcome**, in particular, the discussions and conclusions of the Special Session on the Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster at the WCDR, and note the various proposals for establishing a tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean announced by individual countries. We reaffirm that a regional early warning system should be tailored to the specific circumstances and requirements of the countries involved.

**7. We realize** the importance of strengthening national and regional capacities in providing public confidence against tsunamis. To do so an effective early warning system should contain the following components: risk assessment; hazard monitoring and detection; prediction and formulation of warning; dissemination and communication of warning messages; and knowledge and preparedness to act. It thus requires not only technology but an adequate supporting infrastructure that provides for awareness, information and knowledge sharing, and training. Capacity-building also encompasses technical assistance for countries and communities to be able to receive and absorb technology. It demands action at various levels and close cooperation among technical institutions, national agencies, civil society and local communities. A holistic strategy is called for - one that integrates early warning with preparedness, prevention, mitigation and response. Meanwhile, any tsunami early warning system must be integrated into existing hazard warning systems to promote a multi-hazard approach, and be integrated into national development plans.

### The Way Forward

**8. We declare** our political will not to let such a tragedy happen again, and commit to the early realization of an effective real-time early warning arrangement covering the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

**9. We agree** to build on the sense of urgency on realizing a regional system for tsunami warning, and underline the need to commence work immediately. We recognize, in this regard, that the linking of national mechanisms with sub-regional and regional capabilities would constitute concrete building blocks for a global system with a core role for the UN. We acknowledge the long-term experience and expertise available in the Pacific region through the International Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific (ITSU) coordinated by the IOC of UNESCO, the contribution of the Tropical Cyclones Centre of Réunion Island and the European meteorological satellite "Meteosat", as well as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems under the Intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEOSS).

**10. We decide**, to this end, to take immediate and practical steps to enhance early warning capabilities in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia and to cooperate towards the establishment of interim early warning arrangements and strengthening and upgrading of national systems, while moving towards a coordinated regional system. We welcome the offers of data and information exchange and financial or technical assistance by several countries and international organizations to support capacity-building activities in this regard.

**11. We decide** to develop a system for, and to undertake, the timely sharing of early warning information between our respective agencies and existing national centres as part of the enhancement of regional and international cooperation towards a tsunami early warning

system. We further encourage enhancement of networking between our respective focal points, including through regional fora such as the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and the Indian Ocean Commission, to constantly upgrade knowledge and capacities and share best practices.

**12. We decide**, furthermore, to establish clear timelines for implementing the essential elements for a regional tsunami early warning arrangement by mid-2006 as target date. The arrangement to be developed should be comprehensive in nature and allow and be supportive of International strategies to develop a global system of early warning, including those requested of the IOC of UNESCO and UNISDR. It should provide for risk reduction and disaster avoidance strategies and build on existing capabilities and mechanisms, where possible. It should further incorporate a multi-hazard approach so as to support long-term sustainability.

**13. We agree** to advance the establishment of such an arrangement through organization of expert meetings and needs assessments, to be undertaken with the support of relevant regional and international institutions and governments, as appropriate. Such activities should focus on the identification of gaps in existing capacities and include, inter alia, technical considerations as to the appropriate technology and modes to be utilized in detection, analysis and dissemination of early warning information, and supportive measures to enhance the effectiveness of early warning. Consideration should be given to how national and regional institutional capacity can be enhanced through international cooperation and partnership. Special importance should be given to ways and means to strengthen supporting infrastructure, in particular education and knowledge, and the participation of communities, private sector and civil society in disaster awareness, preparedness and prevention. These considerations should be taken into account at the IOC of UNESCO's 1st Regional Coordination Meeting to be held in Paris on 3-8 March 2005.

**14. We recognize** the valuable role of existing national and specialized regional institutions and agreed that they should be strengthened. We recognize, in this regard, the ADPC's stated goal, drawing on its long experience as a regional resource centre with international status, to strengthen its capacity, including through incorporating additional technological capabilities, and its readiness to serve as a regional centre or focal point for a multi-nodal tsunami early warning arrangement in the region, working together with relevant national and regional institutions such as the ASEAN Earthquake Information Centre (AEIC), ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Centre (ASMC) and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC), the Indian Ocean Global Ocean Observing System (IOGOOS). This arrangement shall be developed within the UN's international strategy coordinated by the IOC of UNESCO.

**15. We are determined** to mobilize adequate financial and technical resources for these initiatives. To this end, we welcome the establishment of a Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia so as to promote predictable funding and to strengthen national and regional capacities in early warning. The Voluntary Trust Fund should function on the basis of effectiveness, flexibility and sustainability, with UNESCAP as administrator. We welcome Thailand's pledge of the amount of US\$ 10 million as seed money. We invite all interested parties, including governments, international organizations and corporations, to make contributions for these initiatives, including through the Voluntary Trust Fund.

**16. We express** the wish that, considering the global nature of natural risks, warning systems and answers to natural risks should be addressed within the framework of the UN. We request UNESCO to commence study on ways and means to realize this, including ways to assist developing countries on accessibility.

**17. We also resolve** to ensure effective follow-up and coherence with other initiatives, including international conferences envisaged under the auspices of the IOC of UNESCO in partnership with relevant international organizations and GEOSS. We decide to establish an open-ended steering/coordinating group as a follow-up mechanism to promote implementation of the results of this Meeting and to make recommendations for further action. The first meeting of such a steering/coordinating group should take place soonest in the region.

**18. We commend** the highly effective response of the Government of Thailand to the 26 December 2004 tsunami. We welcome the leadership shown by the Prime Minister and Government of Thailand in calling the Phuket Ministerial Meeting and its contribution to the promotion of an effective regional early warning system.