

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32435&Cr=tsunami&Cr1=>

## Indian Ocean nations to test UN-backed tsunami warning system



Aerial view of vast destruction of the Indonesian coast caused by 2004 tsunami

6 October 2009 – Eighteen countries around the Indian Ocean Rim will participate in a United Nations-backed tsunami exercise on 14 October to coincide with World Disaster Reduction Day, the first time that the warning system set up following the devastating disaster that struck the region in 2004 will be tested.

The exercise takes place in the wake of the tsunami that killed more than 100 people in Samoa last month, “providing a sober reminder that coastal communities everywhere need to be aware and prepared for such events,” stated the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Following the 2004 tsunami, UNESCO – through its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) – helped countries in the region set up the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWS).

The upcoming drill – known as “Exercise Indian Ocean Wave 09” – will test and evaluate the effectiveness of the system, identify weaknesses and areas of improvement, as well as aim to increase preparedness and improve coordination throughout the region.

The exercise will replicate the magnitude 9.2 earthquake that occurred off the northwest coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, in 2004, generating a destructive tsunami affecting countries from Australia to South Africa.

The simulated tsunami will spread in real time across the entire Indian Ocean, taking approximately 12 hours to travel from Indonesia to the coast of South Africa. Bulletins will be issued by the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) in Tokyo and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) in Hawaii, United States, which have served as the interim advisory services since 2005.

The recently established Regional Tsunami Watch Providers (RTWP) in Australia, India and Indonesia will also participate in the exercise and will share experimental real time bulletins between themselves only.

Countries participating in next week's drill are Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique,

Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Timor-Leste.

A similar drill was held in October 2008 to test the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (PTWS). Such early warning systems have also been set up in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean and Northeast Atlantic Ocean and connected seas.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today highlighted the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in addressing key issues, including natural disaster reduction.

“Through good climate science and information sharing, ICTs can help reduce the risk and impact of natural disasters,” he told heads of State and Chief Executive Officers attending Telecom World 2009 in Geneva. “When an earthquake hits, a coordinated ICT system can monitor developments, send out emergency messages and help people to cope.”

Organized by the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Telecom World is a unique event for the ICT community which brings together the top names from across the industry and around the world. This year's forum highlights the reach and role of telecommunications and ICT in areas such as the digital divide, climate change, and disaster relief.