

Countries bordering Indian Ocean to test tsunami preparedness down to community level - North Korea Times

UNESCO Monday 5th September, 2016



Twenty-four countries will participate in a large scale tsunami simulation exercise organized under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO on 7 and 8 September.

Together, they will test standard operating procedures of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System including communications links between all stakeholders, as the rapid transmission of messages between authorities and populations at risk is crucial to save lives in the event of a tsunami. The exercise will include community evacuation drills in at least ten countries, involving over 50,000 participants.

The exercise, known as IOWave16, will comprise two scenarios: the first simulates an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.2 south of Sumatra, Indonesia, on 7 September (0300 UTC); the second simulates an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 in the Makran Trench south of Iran and Pakistan on 8 September (0600 UTC).

Operations will begin when the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre, the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre and the Indonesian Tsunami Early Warning System issue alert notifications to the 24 countries concerned. Simulating tsunami waves travelling across the Indian Ocean, both exercises will be conducted in real time lasting about 12 hours.'

The test is designed to assess the effectiveness of communication flows between the operational centres and stakeholders, emergency procedures, and country readiness.' Australia, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mauritius, Oman, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste will, moreover, carry out public evacuation exercises in coastal areas.

In Sri Lanka, 14 villages will be evacuated, involving some 7,000 participants.' In Oman eight schools and about 8,000 students will take part in simulated evacuations.' In India, community level evacuations will be carried out in about 350 villages involving some 35,000 participants. An evaluation will be conducted after the exercise to identify gaps and weaknesses and improve the Indian Ocean System.

Indian Ocean nations called for the establishment of an Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System in the wake of the 2004 tsunami disaster. The new System became operational in 2011 with the support of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, which continues to coordinate the system's governance mechanism.

UNESCO promotes scientific exchange and collaborative efforts in order to establish effective early warning systems for different hazards such as landslides, volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, droughts and tsunamis. UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission assists nations in improving standard operating procedures for tsunami through stakeholder workshops, development and evaluation of ocean wide exercises as well as overall scientific coordination across the regions.

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Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France (R'union), India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Yemen.