

Our hearts go out to those in the surrounding countries of the Indian Ocean who have suffered losses of loved ones and personal property in the on-going geophysical disasters of the past two days. We note the early reports that humanitarian relief is being sent to those in need; we hope that it arrives swiftly.

How can IUGG respond? IUGG is not an aid agency, but is clearly concerned with these kinds of natural disasters in several ways. This special E-Journal issue names a few of these efforts, and asks those Associations with additional information to send it to the Secretariat for our continuing education.

The IUGG Union Commission on Geophysical Risk and Sustainability, chaired by A. Ismail-Zadeh (Germany), is actively concerned with these issues. Dr. Tom Beer (Australia), past-Chair of the GeoRisk Commission and Vice-President of IUGG, will participate in the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction from 18-22 January 2005 in Kobe, Japan.

During this conference, Dr. Beer will convene a meeting of the GeoUnions hazards topic team to consider collaborative work on an inter-Union initiative. (The GeoUnions are IUGG, International Union of Geological Sciences, International Union of Soil Sciences, the International Geographical Union, and the International Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing). The GeoRisk Commission also just successfully sponsored a request to IUGG from Dr. V. Gusiakov (Russia) to develop a comprehensive historical earthquake and tsunami database for the South-West Pacific.

The Tsunami Commission, a joint scientific commission of IAPSO, IASPEI, and IAVCEI, is likewise active and well-positioned to lead scientific discussions and promote recommendations. Dr. Kenji Satake (Japan), Chair, successfully requested IUGG funding to distribute of the proceedings of the 2003 IUGG Tsunami Symposium to tsunami warning centers in countries around the Pacific. He has also requested travel support for scientists from developing countries to attend the 2005 International Tsunami Symposium, hosted by the Institute of Geodynamics, National Observatory of Athens, scheduled for 27-29 June 2005 in Crete, Greece. This request is under consideration.

Dr. Peter Suhadolc (Italy), Secretary-General of the International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth's Interior (IASPEI) noted that the IASPEI/IAVCEI Joint Working Group on Subduction Zones Located in Developing Countries, chaired by S. Widiyantoro (Indonesia) is planning a Workshop in the Philippines next May and will also convene a workshop during the IASPEI Scientific Assembly in October in Chile. A special session on "Tsunamis: Case Studies, Warning System and Hazard Assessment" is planned during the IASPEI Assembly. The IASPEI Commission on Earthquake Hazard, Risk and Strong Ground Motion, chaired by Z. Wu (China), and the Asian Seismological Commission (ASC) Joint Working Group on Seismic Hazard and Risk Assessment for Asian-Pacific Regions, co-chaired by S. Balassanian (Armenia) and F. Romanelli (Italy), will also have a strong interest in being involved. An extension of the Early Warning System for tsunami alerts should be taken into consideration for the Indian Ocean. Dr. Fred Camfield (USA), Secretary General of the International Association for the Physical Sciences of the Oceans (IAPSO) encouraged contacting the standard funding agencies (UNESCO, etc.) to determine if they have resources to expand the system.

Oded Navon (Israel), President of the International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior (IAVCEI), wrote that he hopes to develop public opinion that would lead to the implementation and/or improvement of observatories that can monitor such geohazards, and issue alerts and forecasts. He intends to write to the WOVO commission (World Organization of Volcano Observatories) to ask them what IUGG can do in order to help them to raise the funds that would help

to mitigate against the next disaster.

Dr. Uri Shamir (Israel), President of IUGG, expressed his deep condolences for those caught in this tragedy and promised to assemble the list of IUGG related bodies in the region affected, and to contact them to see what IUGG can do.

This short, informal newsletter is intended to keep IUGG Member National Committees informed about the activities of the IUGG Associations, and actions of the IUGG Secretariat. Past issues are posted on the IUGG Web site. Your comments are welcome.

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