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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the World Tsunami Awareness Day

5 November 2017

In 2017, on the second World Tsunami Awareness Day, we are committed to reduce the global number of affected people by 2030, so as to lower the average global figure per 100,000 between 2020-2030, as described in the *Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction*.

Our work is crucial, for more than 10 million people were affected by tsunamis between 2001 and 2015. In 2017, tsunamis affected Greenland (17th June), Greece & Turkey (12th June and 20th July) and Mexico (7th September). With recent storms in the Caribbean and Ireland, we see the vulnerability of many coastal nations. About 625 million people live in the low elevation coastal zone and 189 million live in the 100-year flood plain.

Education, community awareness of tsunami risk and preparedness are essential to act and react in case of a tsunami. All vulnerable regions need to adopt and develop more effective Tsunami Warning Systems. A perfect warning is useless if people do not know what to do, cannot recognize natural warning signs or do not evacuate immediately on higher grounds.

Over the last 50 years, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO has coordinated the Pacific Tsunami Warning System. Following the 26th December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, IOC/UNESCO has coordinated the development of a Global Tsunami Warning System, which now covers the ocean worldwide. Periodic exercises are organized and coupled with evacuation drills at the community level, to foster risk awareness, prevention and preparedness, to reduce

exposure and displacements through capacity building, knowledge sharing and networking, early warning and policy advice.

To do this, all countries need to work together. Tsunamis pay no heed to border, and no single country can tackle this challenge alone. This is why today, I call on all Member States to renew commitment and to share expertise and knowledge.

Irina Bokova