World Tsunami Awareness Day 2026

"Be Tsunami Ready: Resilience Starts with You"

Thursday, 5 November 2026 - UN Headquarters, New York

#GetToHighGround #ResilienceStartsWithYou #TsunamiDay

Co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Chile, Japan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Permanent Missions of Australia, Indonesia, Norway and Peru as Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Disaster Risk Reduction, and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Background

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, World Tsunami Awareness Day (WTAD) is observed annually on 5 November to raise awareness of tsunami risk and to promote comprehensive action to reduce it. Building on the 2025 commemoration — which marked a decade of WTAD and of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 — the 2026 edition shifts the focus from why we must invest in preparedness to how individuals and communities translate that investment into life-saving action.

Although tsunamis are low-frequency events, they remain among the deadliest natural hazards. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami claimed over 230,000 lives across 14 countries, and subsequent events in Japan, Indonesia, Tonga and other regions have shown that tsunami risk remains a persistent global challenge. Tsunamis can be generated not only by earthquakes, but also by volcanic eruptions, submarine landslides and other cascading or compound hazard events. Today, more than 700 million people live in low-lying coastal areas and small island developing states, with risks increasing due to sea-level rise, rapid urbanization and climate change.

Recent tsunami warnings and coastal evacuations, including those triggered by major seismic events in Japan and across the Pacific, have underscored a core lesson: even where warning systems are strong, survival often depends on whether individuals recognize natural warning signs, know their evacuation routes and take immediate protective action in the first critical minutes — the "last mile" of any early warning system.

This human-centred dimension of preparedness is central to the global disaster risk reduction agenda, to the Sendai Framework, and to the UN Secretary-General's Early Warnings for All initiative. It also aligns closely with the UNESCO-IOC Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme, whose community-level indicators — public awareness, education and regular drills — continue to expand across ocean basins worldwide.

For further information, please contact Ms. Marie Rakotonirainy, New York Liaison Office, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, at marie.rakotonirainy@un.org.

WTAD 2026 Theme

The theme of World Tsunami Awareness Day 2026 is ***"Be Tsunami Ready: Resilience Starts with You."***

The 2026 theme emphasizes that tsunami resilience is built through systems, financing and governance — but it becomes life-saving when people know how to act. It is designed to be simple, empowering and action-oriented, recognizing that every person in a tsunami-prone area has agency in reducing risk for themselves, their families and their communities.

Building directly on the 2025 theme, "Be Tsunami Ready: Invest in Tsunami Preparedness," the 2026 campaign moves from investment to action, focusing on the essential human dimension of preparedness. The theme supports global messaging around:

- Recognizing the natural warning signs of a tsunami — strong or prolonged ground shaking, unusual sea recession or rise, and a loud ocean roar;
- Moving immediately to high ground or inland when necessary, and knowing local evacuation routes;
- Preparing household and family emergency plans and participating in community drills;
- Helping children, older persons, persons with disabilities, tourists and others who may require additional support, so that no one is left behind;
- Building a culture of preparedness that is practised regularly, not only remembered after disasters.

In line with previous editions, the theme is intended to align with the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (13 October) and the broader UNDRR communications framing for 2026, and to reinforce the #GetToHighGround movement as the principal global call to action.

Objective

To promote individual and community-level tsunami preparedness worldwide, empowering people in coastal areas to take informed action before, during and after a tsunami, in alignment with the Sendai Framework, the Early Warnings for All initiative and the UNESCO-IOC Tsunami Ready Programme. The UN Headquarters commemoration will convene Member States, UN leadership, scientists, local government officials, youth representatives and disaster risk reduction practitioners for a high-level, forward-looking dialogue on human-centred preparedness and the "last mile" of early warning.

Event Format

The event will include a UNDRR video screening of *Tsunami Ladies*, followed by a 30-minute conversation bringing together Ambassadors from the co-sponsoring missions and resilience and community engagement experts.

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A high-level reception will be held after the event in the Sputnik Area, offering Member States, panellists and partners an opportunity for informal exchange.

Guiding Questions

- Why does survival so often depend on individual and community action in the first critical minutes?
- What role can local leadership play in building resilience in the face of a disaster?
- What makes a culture of preparedness stick, so that it is practised regularly and not only recalled after disaster?
- How can international cooperation support exchange between communities facing similar challenges before, during and after a tsunami?

Desired Outcomes

The event will aim to:

- Strengthen global awareness of tsunami risk and of the protective actions individuals and communities can take;
- Advance inclusive, human-centred preparedness that leaves no one behind;
- Showcase community-level success stories, including from Tsunami Ready-recognized communities, to inspire replication and peer learning;
- Reinforce partnerships among governments, UN entities, regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and communities;
- Sustain momentum for the Sendai Framework, Early Warnings for All and the UNESCO-IOC Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme.

Programme

Moderator: Ms. Paola Albrito, Director, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Opening Segment 4:00 PM	• Ms. Paola Albrito, Director, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction • His Excellency Mr. Tomohiro Mikanagi, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations • Recorded message from H.E. Mr. Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
UNDRR Video Screening: *Tsunami Ladies* Introduced by Emiliano Rodríguez Nuesch, producer 4:10 PM	

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Multi-Stakeholder Panel Discussion 4:20 PM Theme – "*Be Tsunami Ready: Resilience Starts with You*"	**Panellists**: • H.E. Mr. Roberto Ampuero Espinoza, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations • H.E. Ms. Pawaree Xuto Chaipatiyut, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations • Ms. Fesola'i Faamanatu Molly Nielsen, Chairperson National Tsunami Ready Board, ACEO Disaster Management Office, Samoa Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment • Ms. Chloe Demrovsky, Executive in Residence and Visiting Clinical Assistant Professor, NYU School of Professional Studies **Youth Voices from Japan:** • Presentation from Japanese students
Audience Q&A and Statements from the Floor 5:10 PM	• **Open floor for questions and reflections** • H.E. Mr. Jayantha Jayasuriya, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations
Closing segment 5:25 PM	• H.E. Mr. Ali Naseer Mohamed, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the United Nations
Reception – Sputnik Area Hors d'oeuvres and drinks Live Performance: String Quartet from the UN Symphony Orchestra	
Opening Segment 6:00 PM	• H.E. Ambassador Widya Sadnovic, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of Friends for Disaster Risk Reduction • Video Message from SRSG Kamal Kishore

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