



## INTERNATIONAL TSUNAMI INFORMATION CENTRE

A UNESCO/IOC – NOAA Partnership

1845 Wasp Blvd, Bldg. 176, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96818 USA

Phone: <1> 808-725-6050 Fax: <1> 808-725-6055 E-mail: [itic.tsunami@noaa.gov](mailto:itic.tsunami@noaa.gov)

URL : <http://www.tsunamiwave.org>, <https://tsunami.ioc.unesco.org/en/pacific/itic>

27 October 2026

Dr. Jorge Herrera  
President, Universidad Nacional  
Costa Rica

### SINAMOT Closure – Role of the Country NTWC

Dear Dr. Herrera :

I am writing on behalf of the International Tsunami Information Center (ITIC), a partnership of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with support from the Chilean Navy Servicio Hidrográfico y Oceanográfico (SHOA), to express our strong concern on the possible closure of the Costa Rica National Tsunami Warning Center (Sistema Nacional Monitoreo de Tsunamis, SINAMOT). As Director of the ITIC, please allow me to share important information on the critical roles that SINAMOT as an NTWC plays in saving lives from tsunamis.

Over the past two decades, the National University of Costa Rica (UNA), through SINAMOT, has served as the country's premier authority for tsunami risk reduction. In addition, SINAMOT has contributed continuously and strongly to the activities of the PTWS, CARIBE-EWS, and the Global Tsunami Early Warning System, notably by

- Serving as the National Tsunami Warning Center (NTWC), operating 24x7 to assess the tsunami threat and issue timely tsunami warning to its coastal population, working seamlessly with the CNE;
- Working with communities to become Tsunami Ready, especially for local events. Since 2017, 11 communities have attained recognition by successfully achieving the 12 indicators in tsunami hazard assessment, preparedness, and response. In the Pacific, 99% of the casualties have been caused by local or regional tsunamis where waves attack in minutes to hours (for example, the 1991 Limon earthquake generated a local tsunami killing three persons);
- Supporting capacity development regionally and globally with the ITIC by serving as trainers on tsunami early warning systems, tsunami warning center standard operating procedures, NTWC Minimum Staff Competencies, and Tsunami Ready
- Monitoring tsunamis through deployment of real-time sea level stations with data shared internationally, documenting impact through post-tsunami event assessments, and conducting tsunami hazard risk assessments nationally, regionally, and globally
- Supporting the UN Ocean Decade for Sustainable Development actions and leading the IOC Tsunami Science Committee development of its 2021-2030 implementation plan.

The IOC-coordinated global tsunami warning and mitigation system is considered the most successful humanitarian effort today, having been in operation to save lives through early warning since 1965. The system works because it is a system of national systems, with each country operating key resources to meet its own warning assessment requirements, while also contributing these to the PTWS and CARIBE-EWS

system save lives and property. Each regional system is supported by Tsunami Information Centers (such as ITIC) and Tsunami Service Providers (such as the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC, since 1965) and Central America Tsunami Advisory Center (starting late 2026 or early 2027)).

The ITIC supports the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (PTWS) as the IOC's Tsunami Information Center for the Pacific by

- Monitoring and improving tsunami warning services in collaboration with the IOC. The PTWS encompasses 46 countries of the Pacific Ocean and its marginal seas.
- Assisting countries to establish and strengthen their national warning systems through capacity building, and reduce tsunami risk through programmes like Tsunami Ready
- Serving as a central hub and clearinghouse for educational resources, post-event surveys, historical data archiving, and life-saving research
- Operating the ITIC Caribbean Office to support the IOC's Caribbean Tsunami Information Center, which covers 28 countries in the Caribbean Sea and adjacent basins.

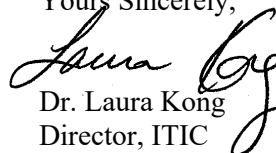
*The heart of the system is the country's National Tsunami Warning Center (NTWC), which is defined to be the 'centre officially designated by the government to monitor and issue tsunami warnings and other related statements within their country according to established National Standard Operating Procedure (IOC Circular Letter 2563, 2015). '... it is the NTWCs, operating within the legal framework of the sovereign nation in which they reside and serve, that provide the authoritative tsunami alerts for saving lives within their respective countries or territories (IOC TS 130, Tsunami Watch Operations, Global Service Definition Document, rev 2025)*

*While the Tsunami Services Providers (PTWC and CATAAC for the Pacific and Caribbean) do operate 24x7, they provide 'advice-only' to Member States – in other words, TSPs do not issue tsunami warnings for a country as that responsibility lies with its NTWC to assess its threat and alert its citizens. I enclose a short summary that I received from the PTWC Director regarding their roles of a TSP with respect to NTWCs.*

For ITIC, Costa Rica's SINAMOT has been a shining star in our global system, providing science-based leadership and on-the-ground action in mitigating against tsunamis. Dr. Chacón Barrantes and her staff have been steadfast in their support and strong in their dedication, graciously contributing their expertise and time, at all hours of the day and on so many tsunami topics. ITIC expresses sincere concern for the potential loss of SINAMOT services and capacities as not only a degradation of the capabilities within the PTWS and CARIBE-EWS, but within the context of long-standing subject matter expertise in a continually evolving and burgeoning global network of NTWCs and tsunami warning capabilities across the globe. When we invest to save lives, we have to invest in people as they are truly our most critical and essential resource, and key to success. Please let us know if ITIC can assist in any way.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Yours Sincerely,

  
Dr. Laura Kong  
Director, ITIC

Enclosure: TSP and NTWC information, Dr. Charles McCreery, Director, PTWC

CC: Dr. Silvia Chacón Barrantes, Costa Rica Tsunami National Contact; Coordinator, Sistema Nacional Monitoreo de Tsunamis (SINAMOT), Universidad Nacional  
Lt. Nicol Alarcon, Associate Director, ITIC; Head, Oceanography Dept., Servicio Hidrográfico y Oceanográfico (SHOA), Armada de Chile  
Bernardo Aliaga, IOC PTWS Technical Secretary; Head, IOC Tsunami Resiliency Section  
Gregory Schoor, United States of America Tsunami National Contact

Enclosure:

TSP and NTWC information, Dr. Charles McCreery, Director, PTWC, 26 October 2026

Operating in alignment with the UNESCO/IOC global framework for robust tsunami warning operations, the National Tsunami Warning Center (NTWC) represents the country's authoritative tsunami warning center. Under this model, individual nations manage national warning centers equipped with specialized knowledge of local hazards and vulnerabilities, alongside independent capabilities for detection, analysis, and forecasting whenever possible. NTWC staff serve as subject matter experts to advise on the tsunami risk to a country's coastal populations. For Costa Rica, this is SINAMOT.

The UNESCO/IOC tsunami warning and mitigation systems provide independent but more general detection, analysis, and forecasting capabilities through their Tsunami Service Providers (TSPs), such as PTWC and CATAC for the Pacific and Caribbean. TSP information to the NTWCs is offered as advice-only and it may be less timely and less-accurate than what an NTWC can provide based on its national knowledge, especially for local tsunami events.

SINAMOT's role as an NTWC within the PTWS and CARIBE-EWS acts in accordance with the UNESCO/IOC framework. Operating within the legal structure of their sovereign nations, NTWCs ultimately hold the sole authority to issue life-saving science-based tsunami alerts for their respective countries and territories.