



Although thirty percent of the world's earthquakes occur within the southwest Pacific and eighty-one percent of tsunamis in the region are generated by earthquake activity, the region experiences, on average, some of the slowest detection times for earthquake activity.

At the SPC/SOPAC Division's STAR meeting held in Nadi this week, Mrs Esline Garaebiti Bule, Vanuatu Meteorology and Geohazards Department (VMGD) said that the earthquake and tsunami events with casualties in Papua New Guinea, 1998, Vanuatu in 1999, Solomon Islands, 2007, and more recently, Tonga and Samoa in 2009 indicated the region needs a tsunami early-warning system based on fast earthquake detection system for the South West Pacific Region.

The STAR (Science, Technology and Resources Network) meeting was an integral part of SOPAC's first meeting as a Division since becoming a part of the Secretariat of the South Pacific Community (SPC) in January this year.

The meeting saw scientists from around the Pacific join the Division's 22 member countries and territories for a conference with the theme "Adapting to Climate and Environmental Change in the Pacific Islands."

Mrs Bule said that Pacific Island countries and territories need to have earthquake monitoring and tsunami alert systems, "based on multilateral cooperation, with the support of an open and free exchange of data, that they fully own."

The New Caledonia Institut de Recherche et Développement and the VMGD have taken steps towards this with a dual-government initiative that began in January this year.

"In order to have a successful local alert system, observatories need to detect the early signs of a potential tsunami as fast as possible.

"By using the same software, both Institutes are able to share knowledge and tools for earthquake monitoring and automatic detection. This helps improve the responsiveness and build the capacity of both organisations in earthquake monitoring and tsunami alert response.

## Cooperative tsunami-warning systems for Vanuatu and New Caledonia

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Mrs Bule would like to see the seismic information sharing expand to include other countries in the region that own local seismic networks such as Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea

“This initiative is also in line with the United Nations / Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission’s recommendations of the first and second meetings of the Pacific Tsunami Warning System (PTWS) Task Team on "Seismic Data Sharing in the South-west Pacific" as well as those of the International Federation of Digital Seismograph Networks (FDSN) community on Infrastructure for Seismology made during the XXV International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) General assembly to reduce tsunami threats,” said Mrs Bule.

Photo caption: *Tsunami aftermath, Samoa 2009.*