

'Rare but devastating' tsunamis underscore need for better preparation, UN chief urges on World Day

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called for greater preparedness to offset the disastrous impact of tsunamis, which are causing increasing human, economic and development losses, illustrated most recently by the destruction across the Indonesian island of Sulawesi.

"Tsunamis are rare but devastating," said the Secretary-General in a [message](#) on World Tsunami Awareness Day, adding that he saw the impact "first-hand" during his recent visit to Sulawesi.

[According](#) to the UN coordination office for humanitarian affairs (OCHA), the disaster claimed 2,077 lives, with more than 1,000 still missing. In all, over 1.5 million people were affected, including 211,000 displaced, and the disaster resulted in estimated \$910 million in damages.

Globally, the scale of losses to tsunamis is staggering: between 1998-2017, over 250,000 people died and \$280 billion was lost as a result of tsunami events, [according](#) to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), with countries along the Indian and Pacific Oceans worst hit.

Better preparation for likely disasters is therefore vital, added the Secretary-General, noting also that such efforts are required to implement the targets under the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) as well as for eradicating extreme poverty.

"World Tsunami Awareness Day is an opportunity to emphasize again the importance of disaster prevention and preparedness," he said, "including early warning, public education, science to better understand and predict tsunamis, and development that takes account of risk in seismic zones and exposed coastal areas."

In December 2015, the UN General Assembly designated 5 November as [World Tsunami Awareness Day](#), calling on all countries, international bodies and civil society to observe the day, to raise tsunami awareness and share innovative approaches to saving lives.

This year, the World Day focuses on Target "C" of the Sendai Framework, which aims at reducing economic losses due to tsunamis.