ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Multi-Stakeholder Forum
on Emergency Telecommunications
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Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Welcome Remarks by
Mr Houlin Zhao
ITU Deputy Secretary-General

His Excellency Mr Enkhbold Miye-Gombo, Deputy Prime Minister of Mongolia
Mr Bat-Erdene Jalavsuren, Chairman, Information, Communication Technology, and Post Authority of Mongolia
Mr Boldbaatar Bat-Amgalan, Chairman and CEO, Communications Regulatory Commission of Mongolia

Distinguished Delegates, Participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning,

It is my great pleasure to be at this opening of the ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Multi-stakeholder Forum on Emergency Telecommunications, which is kindly hosted by the Government of Mongolia, the Information, Communication Technology, and Post Authority (ICTPA) in particular.

This is my first visit to Mongolia. Mongolia has achieved a lot of its ICT development in the past years. This year has an important milestone for Mongolia. I would like to congratulate the government and people of Mongolia on the 90th Anniversary of ICT. I was pleased to learn that ITU was also part of the country’s celebration during the 90th ICT EXPO 2011 recently held. This ITU Forum on Emergency Telecommunications in particular, is appraised as another major event this
year not only for the Government of Mongolia, but also for ITU. Hence, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr Enkhbold Miye-Gombo, Deputy Prime Minister of Mongolia, the Information, Communication Technology, and Post Authority (ICTPA) for its kind hosting and very warm hospitality. I am also grateful to the key supports of this Forum: the Communication Regulatory Commission of Mongolia (CRC), the Australian Government, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and especially Mr Xuan Zengpei, Director of ICT and Development Section.

Mongolia has successfully demonstrated the use of ICT to drive its national development from both social and economic aspects. The ICT Sector in Mongolia *inter alia* has grown significantly in the last decade, during when mobile penetration in both urban and rural areas has doubled - i.e., 91% in 2009, while the revenue of telecommunication/ICT sector also stood high at 7.1% of Gross National Income, as of 2009. The trend is that this growth will still continue in Mongolia. I checked the ITU statistics before I left Geneva and found that Mongolia enjoys a good ranking of ICT development in the North and Central Asia Area. In many aspects, Mongolia enjoys its advanced position than its neighbours in Asia.

Distinguished delegates and participants,

Now, let me turn to this ITU Forum. I am pleased to see many friends from many members of this region to join us today. It is evident that the Asia-Pacific region, in particular, has experienced more disasters than any other region in recent years and natural disasters still keep threatening many countries in the region. Emergency telecommunications play a critical role in both warning of disasters and their immediate aftermath by ensuring timely flow of information needed by government agencies and other humanitarian actors involved in rescue operations and providing medical assistance to the injured.

Since its launch in 2007, the ITU Framework for Cooperation in Emergencies (IFCE) has been recognized by ITU Member States as an important cooperation and a key mechanism in responding to disasters in a timely manner, and ITU implemented the requirements of the Framework successfully. For instance, ITU deployed satellite phones and broadband satellite terminals in Bangladesh, following floods that displaced over 5 million people in 2007; Myanmar, that was hit on 2 May 2008 by Cyclone Nargis killing over 75,000 people in Sichuan (China), following an earthquake
that struck central China on 12 May 2008 and killed over 80,000 people and displaced millions in the South Pacific hit by tsunami on 29 September 2009, and in Indonesia (Padang) immediately following the very strong earthquake in September 2009.

This year, following the 9.0 Richter earthquakes and tsunami that struck the coastal areas of Japan, ITU dispatched over 100 satellite phones and terminals to severely affected areas. The Australian and Chinese Governments also contributed to the ITU Emergency Telecommunications Fund with an aim to support airtime of the satellite equipment.

While the Framework has served well the needs from countries for emergency responses, emergency telecommunications still remain a challenge in many developing countries not only in disaster relief and response, but also disaster prevention and preparedness. In this regard, the Hyderabad Action Plan (HAP) adopted at the ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference 2010 (WTDC-10) in Hyderabad, India, includes the ITU-D Programme on ‘Emergency telecommunications and climate change adaptation’. The Programme also aims to provide assistance to developing countries in the use of ICTs to mitigate and address the effects of climate change taking into account the impact of ICTs on the environment.

For Asia-Pacific in particular, the Hyderabad Action Plan also adopted the Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative on ‘Emergency Communications’ which aims to provide assistance to Member States particularly in the Asia-Pacific region at all phases of disaster management throughout the four-year period of 2011-2014.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an opportune time for us to discuss the emergency communications at this Forum in order to find ways for strengthening and improving cooperation in emergencies at both international and national levels. It is also important for us to aim at a concrete action plan to be implemented by multi-stakeholders after this Forum. We all know that “an emergency needs an emergency action”.

Finally, I thank again the presence of His Excellency Mr Enkhbold Miye-Gombo, and I welcome you all and wish you a very successful and fruitful discussion at the Forum. Thank you.