Background information
ITU emergency Telecommunications Roster

Background

When disasters strike, they have devastating effects on the lives of the people and on the economy. The latest data show that from 2016 to 2017 more than 301 million people were affected by disasters. More than three million people were homeless, and the total damage surpassed 481 million USD. The impact is even worse for those living in remote and isolated areas with no access to basic information and communication facilities.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has also helped raise awareness of the importance of disaster risk reduction and management. Of the 17 goals for sustainable development established by the United Nations (UN), Goals 1, 2, 11 and 13 make reference to the need of nations and communities to address the challenges of disasters. **ICTs are critical to deliver early warnings and in the immediate aftermath of disasters by ensuring timely flow of vital information**. When disasters strike, and upon request by Member States, ITU deploys satellite telephones and terminals as well as other emergency telecommunications equipment to affected countries within the first 24 to 48 hours. **This equipment helps restore vital communication links** and is critical for coordination of disaster response activities within the government and humanitarian agencies involved in rescue and relief operations. The most recent deployments were to Mozambique and Zimbabwe, following the severe devastation caused by category 4 Hurricane Idai in March 2019, and more recently to Bahamas, following the category 5 Hurricane Dorian that caused extremely devastation to Grand Bahama and Abaco Islands.

ITU is an active member of the **Emergency Telecommunication Cluster (ETC),** which is a global network of organizations that work together to provide shared communications services in humanitarian emergencies. The ETC is led by World Food Programme (WFP), and during its recent plenary meeting, the ETC highlighted that the number of emergencies is on the rise, that they are getting longer and are more complex. Several discussions focused on the need to train more responders and volunteers to help cope with growing demand for support.

Expanding ITU's work on emergency telecommunication deployments

To respond to the increasing demand for support in delivering emergency telecommunications equipment and services, through the ITU emergency telecommunications roster, ITU staff will be trained on the deployment and use of the current (and future) ITU telecommunications equipment, which is usually used for restoring vital telecommunications links that provide voice and data connectivity in the most affected areas. The staff will also be trained in other activities that take place during deployments, such as delivering training to end users, liaising with national authorities and stakeholders on importation and licencing issues of telecommunications equipment, which usually belong to other humanitarian organizations involved in the response/recovery phase.

T**he main role of ITU would be to engage relevant government and regulatory authorities to facilitate the importation and use of communication equipment for the purpose of disaster relief**. This entails the fast-track expedition of customs clearance processes and enabling organizations to provide a fast response in a timely manner. ITU staff may also be providing training on the use of sat phones and BGAN terminals on the ground.

The **rostered ITU staff** will also receive specific training on security aspects that need to be considered when traveling and working on the ground. Deployment of ITU staff, which would last between 5-15 days for any deployment, and will require the (advance) approval of supervisors. ITU will work closely with other organisations deploying emergency telecommunications equipment on the ground, and in particular with the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC). ITU staff would have to be released from their regular duties during times of deployment.

The emergency roster will allow ITU **to respond more effectively to disasters, and to better assist Member States that are hit by disasters**. Furthermore, it will strengthen ITU's role in the ETC. ITU will be responsible for arranging the travel costs associated with each deployment as well as visa arrangements and security clearance. The **ET Trust Fund** would be the financial mechanism for funding the costs related to deployment of ITU staff, and donors are invited to provide contributions to this Trust Fund.

Selection criteria

In response to the call for expression, a total of 50 applications from staff from all ITU sectors with different backgrounds were received (G and P level), 3 applications form the Regional Offices and the remaining from HQ.

Selection criteria will be developed in the next coming weeks, in order to select applications to the roster.

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