ITU Southern and Eastern Africa Workshop on the Use of Telecommunications/ICT for Disaster Management:
Saving Lives

Lusaka, Zambia (17 – 18 July 2008)

REPORT

The Southern and Eastern Africa Workshop on the Use of Telecommunications/ICT for Disaster Management: Saving Lives, which was co-organized by the Communications Authority of Zambia and the International Telecommunications Union's Telecommunications Development Bureau was held from 17 to 18 July 2008 and hosted by the Government of Zambia. The Workshop was officially opened by Honourable Mubika Mubika MP, Deputy Minister of Communication and Transport, Mr. Marcelino Tayob, Head of ITU Area Office, Harare on behalf of Mr Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the Telecommunication Union, and Mr Richard Mwanza, Acting Chief Executive of Communications Authority of Zambia.

The workshop was attended by countries from the Eastern and Southern African Region and attracted more than 50 participants from 12 Countries, 3 Organisations and 5 Private Sectors. Speaking in the first session of the workshop, Dr. Cosmas L. Zavazava, Head, Least Developed Small Island Developing States and Emergency Telecommunications, ITU/BDT gave a presentation of the role of telecommunications/ICT in disaster management and an overview of *ITU's Work in Emergency Telecommunications*. The presentation covered technological, legal and regulatory trends in emergency telecommunications in response to the high frequency and increased devastating effects of disasters triggered in part by climate change.

The link between emergency telecommunications and geographical information systems was presented. The role of satellite communications in disaster management and that of telecommunications operators of mobile and fixed systems was also highlighted in the presentations made to the meeting.

Participating countries made presentations on the current disaster management practices in their countries with a particular focus on the deployment and use of telecommunications/ICT resources.

1. With respect to timely provision of telecommunications/ICT resources for disaster mitigation, policy and regulatory issues were identified as facilitators to the deployment of such technologies when disasters strike. The Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations was recognized as an important global international piece of legislation that would facilitate the cross-border movement of telecommunications resources by humanitarian actors when providing assistance to the affected countries should such assistance be required. Participants called on governments to put in place appropriate policies and telecommunications regulations that will pave way for the active participation of all stakeholders such as United Nations Agencies, the Private Sector, and Non-Governmental Organizations. In this respect, governments were urged to ensure the following:

   - **Institutional Strengthening**: The need to provide assistance to countries aimed at ensuring the availability of well trained people in government, telecommunications operators, and other stakeholders was highlighted. This would result in better preparedness that would facilitate the mobilization of both personnel and resources at a faster pace when disasters strike.

   - **Legislation and Regulatory Readiness**: The need for clear legislation and regulatory guidelines that eliminate lengthy approval procedures that hamper the efficiency in the deployment of telecommunications resources e.g. delays in issuing public warnings due to complicated approval procedures required from different authorities that have the potential to increase the danger levels and casualties was also raised. . The ratification and implementation of the Tampere Convention could facilitate the cross-border movement of telecommunications equipment during an emergency situation.

   - **Technical Support:** Need to have adequately trained telecommunications personnel who are capable of operating and maintaining the necessary equipment or disaster kits and for disaster relief/response. Every effort must be made to ensure that the telecommunications network can cope with network congestion in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

   - **Financial Standby Fund**: Highlights the need to establish a stand-by fund that can be used in emergencies without having to take fire-fighting measures such as embarking on an impromptu fund raising after in the aftermath of a disaster.

   - **National Emergency Telecommunications Plans**: The need to develop national emergency telecommunications plans for better preparedness including the setting up of early warning systems, and better response, was highlighted. The plans should be supported by clearly written and easy to understand standard operating procedures.

2. The Workshop:

a) Expressed the need for the ITU to provide assistance to individual countries, and to the two regions in developing national emergency telecommunications plans.

b) Urged Member States to work closely with all stakeholders that are involved in disaster management to take advantage of existing and emerging telecommunications/ICT technologies for purposes of saving human lives.

c) Requested ITU/BDT to continue to pro-actively find new ways of assisting Member States in incorporating telecommunications/ICT in their disaster management programmes.

d) Requested ITU/BDT in accordance with the 2006 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-06) Resolution 34 and the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference of 2006 (PP-06) Resolutions 36 and 136 to assist countries in their efforts to put in place early warning systems and to ratify and implement the Tampere Convention.

e) Requested ITU/BDT to explore additional innovative ways and initiatives in assisting Member States in using telecommunications/information and communication technologies for monitoring and management in emergency and disaster situations for early warning, prevention, mitigation and relief as part of implementing the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-06) Resolution 136.

3. ACTION PLAN

The Workshop adopted an Action Plan constituting of the following components that will be implemented between July 2008 and the next World Telecommunications Development Conference in 2010 where a detailed review/stocktaking will be undertaken:

a) Telecommunications/ICT for Disaster Management Strategy: In developing and adopting an ICT Policy and telecommunications/ICT regulatory framework that favor emergency telecommunications, countries will initiate national workshops that will bring together all the stakeholders such as relevant government Ministries, Regulatory Authorities, Immigration officials, Customs officials, and civil society. The national workshops that will be facilitated by the ITU/BDT will help prepare the countries to best use telecommunications/ICT for disaster management.

b) Countries will under the guidance of the International Telecommunications Union develop Emergency Telecommunications Plans as part of the preparedness.

c) As part of their overall development strategies, countries will incorporate disaster management features in their infrastructure/network development and operations, and ensure that appropriate telecommunications resources are set identified and aside for use when disasters strike.

d) Countries will take appropriate measures to study and ratify the Tampere Convention through the incorporation of its provisions into relevant national telecommunications/ICT legislation and regulations and will seek appropriate assistance from ITU when needed.

e) Upon ratifying the Convention, countries will seek to implement this treaty.

f) National drills will be undertaken as one of the key steps towards preparedness.

g) ITU resources such as easy-to-transport satellite terminals that are available at no cost to disaster affected countries will be provided in a timely manner for purposes of providing basic telecommunications and telemedicine services in the immediate aftermath of disasters.

This document was adopted during the closing session of the Workshop on the Role of Telecommunications/ICT in Disaster Mitigation held in Lusaka, Zambia from 17 to 18 July 2008 under the Chairmanship of Zambia