

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Touré, Director of BDT,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this very important event. This workshop, which will deal with Telecommunications for Disaster Relief (TDR, for short), is an important step forwards in bringing together in the same room the players within and outside ITU who are addressing the different issues in Telecommunications for Emergency and Disaster Relief.

In this workshop, we bring together our best experts and the institutional users of telecommunication services and infrastructure in the cases of emergency and disaster situations: governmental entities, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and others. These experts are those who will, at the end of the day, help put in place the nuts and bolts of the standards that are needed in support of the users needs. We are aware of the many initiatives going on outside ITU, so we have also invited representatives of significant technical work in the field: ETSI, T1, TIA, IETF. Open and broad dialogue is essential for timely, efficient, and meaningful standards.

ITU-T's focus is on standardization. We want to hear from the users what their needs are in order to prepare a meaningful and timely work programme that will allow standards to be in place to adequately support those needs. We realise that discussing technology alone is not sufficient to achieve meaningful standards for TDR, as issues of sovereignty and national security are also often involved. We tried to make a thorough review of the regulatory framework, unfortunately, this we found, was a very difficult task as many Regions and Governments are still internally discussing the intricate policy and regulatory issues. Nevertheless, we still hope that, with this workshop, views will be exchanged amongst the participants, and that we can advance our understanding of the regulatory and policy frameworks. This is important because these matters may affect how technical features are supported or implemented in our technical standards. I see ITU-T's role as a provider of parts, of bricks that will allow the foundation for establishment, should national authorities so desire, of efficient and satisfactory telecommunications facilities for emergency and disaster relief. These facilities may be based on the existing infrastructure, which we expect will be converging towards multimedia-enabled, broadband, packet-based next generation networks; but these facilities may also involve integration or interconnection of islands of specific technologies, such as MESA and TETRA (that you will hear about during the workshop) with the public infrastructure, often crossing national borders.

We also have to carefully consider the cases where no infrastructure exists, or where very little of it is still operational; in these cases, ad-hoc infrastructure considerations and interworking and interfacing considerations are extremely important.

When disaster strikes, telecommunications networks are usually overwhelmed. Features need to be in place to ensure that the institutional users that need to communicate will have the communications channels they need, with appropriate security, and with the best possible level of quality for their communications.

We will be hearing about many initiatives in this direction during this workshop, and I, speaking from the ITU-T role and perspective, should like to encourage you to reflect upon the features that need to be supported in our standards. I would like to invite you to think of what would be an appropriate action plan for standardization in support of telecommunications for emergencies and disaster relief, of what would be the points where action is needed, and where appropriate standards are already in place.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, I wish that this event helps us to better understand each other, to better see the different roads, paved and unpaved, that lie ahead of us. I wish you a fruitful three-day event, that you may make many contacts, both users and experts, so that the dialogue does not end in the closing session, but may become an enduring relationship.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the excellent work performed by the Steering Committee of the workshop for their arduous organization work and frequent organization meetings, the session chairs and speakers for their kind acceptance to contribute to this event, I would also like to thank my colleague Mr. Touré, Director of BDT and Mr. Kevin Hughes, Head of BR Study Group Department for their support to the programme and their presence at this opening session and finally the TSB staff who worked endless hours behind the scenes to bring this event to fruition. I would like to recognize in particular the energy and enthusiasm that Mr Hal Folts has dedicated during the last few months, just before his retirement after 30 years of contributing to standardization activities.

Thank you for your attention.