



GLOBAL FORUM ON EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS: SAVING LIVES, GET-2016

Final Report

Executive summary

The representatives of governments, international organizations, private sector entities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), met in Kuwait City, Kuwait from 26 to 28 January 2016 for the *ITU Second Global Forum Emergency Telecommunications: Saving Lives: GET-2016* to map out concrete strategies and adopt practical measures aimed at giving the use of telecommunications/ICT a central role in disaster risk reduction and management.

The Forum discussed the importance of policy, regulation, deployment of appropriate technology, and the setting up of a fund that will make rapid response possible. Discussions also evolved around the effective and timely implementation of the Smart Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. It was noted that sustainable development had to take into account climate change mitigation, as well as disaster management.

The Forum comprised a Ministerial Round Table on how policy intervention could contribute to saving lives, and ultimately to sustainable development; a Leaders' Dialogue that focused on technology, regulatory and operational issues; thematic sessions on emerging technological innovations on disaster risk reduction, and case presentations by countries on their experiences with natural disasters. Other sessions looked at challenges in deploying ICTs for disaster response; the role of private sector, and other non-state stakeholders in disaster risk reduction, and the challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

On the occasion of the Forum, ITU launched two new programs namely; the ITU Network of Volunteers for Emergency Telecommunications, and the Global Emergency Fund for Rapid Response. The VET seeks to mobilize and create a database of engineers and technical staff who are willing to undertake ITU missions at short notice when disasters strike. They would also serve in their countries if and when impacted by natural disasters. Volunteers

would include retired staff from the United Nations, National Governments and private sector. The volunteers would act as first responders. It seeks to raise funds from development banks, foundations, private sector and governments to finance the deployment of emergency telecommunications in the immediate aftermath of disasters. The fund will support the operations of the Telecommunication Development Bureau and could finance the chartering of aircrafts to carry equipment to affected areas. The ITU initiative on Smart sustainable Development Model's (SSDM) Advisory Board would continue to advise the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau in implementing the two initiatives.

We, participants at the *ITU Second Global Forum on Emergency Telecommunications: Saving Lives, (Kuwait, 2016)*, thank the Government of Kuwait and the International Telecommunication Union and its entire Membership, for organizing this forum and contributing to saving lives. We greatly appreciate the invaluable contributions made by all participants at this Forum and endorse the outcomes of the Forum as follows:

- a) The effort towards bridging the digital divide and the creation of a truly global information society should be closely linked with emergency telecommunications for the dissemination of information to raise awareness on disaster preparedness, for early warning, and for disaster relief.
- b) While natural disasters cannot be entirely prevented, ITU and partners through telecommunication/information and communication technologies (ICT) should help reduce their impact through monitoring, detection, and prediction of hazards and impending disasters including reducing the impact of global warming and climate change.

Effective disaster risk reduction through ICT contributes to the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Climate Change mitigation and adaptation should be of high priority in order to curb the increase of natural hazards linked to climate change and global warming.

- c) Effective policies and regulations are essential in responding better when disasters strike as well as reducing vulnerability. There is need for political leadership and commitment to ensure that governments priorities activities that seek to save human life in the aftermath of disasters. ITU is requested to continuously raise awareness on the importance of ICT in disaster mitigation and to build both institutional and human capacity at all levels of government.
- d) The legal and regulatory regimes have to be continuously reviewed, and where other barriers to the use of telecommunication resources for disaster response and relief exist, these should be addressed. The ratification and implementation of the Tampere Convention is important for global cooperation in the area of emergency telecommunications. This eliminates barriers that include, but are not limited to;

regulations restricting the movement of telecommunications equipment and personnel, at both national and international levels.

- e) Different technologies should be made available for emergency telecommunications and should be easily deployed in a timely manner when disasters strike. As much as possible the use of existing infrastructure, telecommunications/ICT systems and frequencies allocated for emergencies should be optimized.
- f) A multi-stakeholder arrangement is essential so as to enhance cooperation and coordination at international, regional and national levels is essential for public protection. A cooperative approach opens door to more effective use of telecommunications/ICT and optimal use of resources with the aim of saving lives. The cooperation could involve government institutions, United Nations Agencies, private sector, and non-governmental organizations.
- g) ITU should endeavor to provide more assistance to developing countries as a way of enhancing their capacity to develop and deploy appropriate systems for disaster management taking into account the special needs and challenges of land-locked developing countries, small islands developing states, economies in transition, and least developed countries.
- h) The Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) should sustain the current momentum of promoting and enhancing the participation of multi-stakeholders in emergency telecommunications, and should continue to coordinate and facilitate the creation of partnerships between governments and private enterprise, and between all other stakeholders involved in the deployment and use of telecommunications in humanitarian work.
- i) The **Global Forum on Emergency Telecommunications: Saving Lives**, should be held regularly, to ensure that emergency telecommunications adapt to rapid technological changes and pave way for:
 - the use of innovative multi-hazard solutions,
 - mapping of effective emergency telecommunications strategies by countries and,
 - facilitation of information sharing among countries and humanitarian actors.