

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

Telecommunication Development Bureau



SPEECH

By

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**Workshop on the Role of Telecommunications/ ICT in Disaster
Mitigation**

Banding, Indonesia

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Mr. Chairman, Dr Basuki ISKANDAR, Deputy Minister for Posts and Telecommunications

Mr. Rinaldi Firmansyah, President Director of PT Telekom

Mr. Thomas vonDeak, Rapporteur of ITU-D Study Group 2, Question 22/2

Mr. Yasuhiko Kawasumi, Rapporteur of ITU-D Study Group 2, Question 10-2/2

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past few years, disasters have caused considerable loss of life and increasing economic damage, affecting the lives of millions of people worldwide. Indonesia has been one of the most affected countries with 5'778 people losing their lives in May 2006 following the earthquake that struck the country. Since then, different kinds of disasters have affected the country resulting in many deaths, injuries and displacements.

Indonesia as a venue for the two Study Group Rapporteurs' Meetings and this Workshop is therefore an appropriate one. I sincerely thank the Government of Indonesia for

offering to host this important event and for providing us with all the logistical support. We are looking forward to spending very productive time during our stay here.

Mr. Chairman,

This one-day event and the subsequent two-day Rapporteur's Meeting on Question 22/2 on the *Utilization of ICT for disaster management, resources, and active and passive space-based sensing systems as they apply to disaster and emergency relief situations*, will no doubt demonstrate the critical role of ICT in disaster alerting, detection, prediction, and response. Already, the deliberations that were held during the past two days by the Rapporteur's Group Meeting on Question 10-2/2 on *Telecommunications for rural and remote areas* have re-affirmed the importance of universal access in disseminating critical information for purposes of disaster mitigation.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Disasters disrupt national economies, severely weaken the poor and vulnerable and are recognized as major impediments to sustainable development and reduction of

poverty. I think that we have a duty to put in place practical measures aimed at mitigating the impact of both natural and man-made disasters. I have four key points that could positively contribute to this end:

- a) **Increasing participation of providers of telecommunications services:** Licensed telecommunications operators should be active in those initiatives that are aimed at disaster preparedness to avoid apathetic responses in times of disasters.
- b) **Elimination of regulatory constraints:** Lengthy approval procedures that hamper the deployment of telecommunications resources must be reviewed and appropriate rules and legislation should be put in place to prevent delays that are usually caused by complicated bureaucratic procedures that end up delaying the timely issuing of public warnings.
- c) **Addressing technical constraints:** Ensuring that telecommunication resources are readily available when disasters strike and that the telecom infrastructure can support sudden surges or increases in traffic occurring especially in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

d) **Allocating appropriate financial resources:**

Adequate financial resources should be allocated in advance for emergency telecommunications purposes so as to avoid panic in times of disasters. These could be in the form of government appropriations supplemented by private contributions.

Mr. Chairman,

As we grapple with the challenge of disaster mitigation, we should build an improved knowledge base, increase public participation through education and awareness, and provide authoritative information on impending, as well as ongoing disasters in a timely way. I hope that this workshop will contribute to this process.

ITU, through its work in radio communications, standards, and telecommunication development, is committed to finding creative and innovative ways of ensuring that ICT resources reach all those who require them. To ensure improved coordination, we have established an inter-sectoral team that shares information in real-time on ongoing work in the three sectors and ensures that there is synergy in ITU's work. ITU is also in the process of

launching its International Framework for Cooperation (IFCE) in Emergencies that seeks to ensure that all stakeholders pool resources with ITU before disasters strike and deploy them in a timely way when disasters strike. A background paper on the IFCE is among your papers for this workshop. Please take time to go through it as I understand that there will be a panel discussion on this issue later today. This Framework opens doors to all stakeholders such as governments, United Nations Agencies, private sector, industry, and civil society to work with us as will develop and deploy telecommunications/ICT solutions for disaster mitigation. The IFCE does not seek to duplicate or compete with any existing initiatives. Instead, it seeks to compliment them and strengthen the role of telecommunications/ICT at all phases of disasters.

Mr. Chairman,

I believe that one of the main hindrances to effective and timely deployment of telecommunications resources for disaster mitigation is the lack of an enabling legal and regulatory regime. We have the Tampere Convention that provides the legal framework for the use of telecommunications in international humanitarian

assistance, reduces regulatory barriers, and protects providers of telecommunication assistance while safeguarding the interests of the host country. ITU is looking at practical ways of helping countries to ratify the Tampere Convention and we have embarked on the assessment of the implementation of this treaty. This will no doubt, help us determine how best to smoothen the rough edges of the implementation process so as to pave way for a faster, unhindered, and effective deployment of telecommunications resources by all humanitarian actors before, during and after disasters strike.

Mr. Chairman,

In concluding, I want to underline the fact that, although we will never be able to totally prevent disasters from happening, what we should do – all of us – must go a long way in reducing human suffering and disruption of economic activity.

I thank you, and wish you successful and enjoyable deliberations.