ABOUT THE EVENT

1. **Background**

Increasingly, natural disasters are causing considerable loss of life and disrupting national economies, severely weakening the affected countries. While neither natural nor man-made hazards can be entirely prevented, information and communication technologies (ICT) can help reduce their impact and avoid them turning into disasters that impede sustainable development. This event contributes to the progress made at the United Nations International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005), the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, 18-22 January 2005), and a series of other events having focused among other things on the establishment of a Tsunami Early Warning and Mitigation System for the Indian Ocean, including the Ministerial Meeting on Regional Cooperation on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements (Phuket, Thailand, 28-29 January 2005), the UNESCO International Coordination Meeting for the Development of a Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System for the Indian Ocean within a Global Framework (Paris, France, 3-8 March 2005), and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction organized Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (Geneva, Switzerland, 5-7 June 2007).

The event builds on a series of events held by ITU on this subject:

- Using ICT for Effective Disaster Management: Caribbean Forum 2006, 26-28 July 2006, Ocho Rios, Jamaica

- Joint ITU-ESCAP Regional Workshop on Disaster Communications, 12-15 December 2006, U.N. Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand

- Workshop on the Role of Telecommunications/ICT in Disaster Mitigation, 28 March 2007, Bandung, Indonesia

- Disaster: Relief and Management: International Cooperation & Role of ICT, 14-17 April 2007, Alexandria, Egypt

- ITU Sub-Regional Workshop on the Role of Telecommunications/ICT in Disaster Management for the Central African Region, 30 May – 1 June 2007, Yaoundé, Cameroon

- ITU Workshop on Emergency Telecommunications for Disaster Management in Sri Lanka: Developing a National Emergency Telecommunications Plan, 24 August 2007, Colombo, Sri Lanka

- ITU Workshop on Emergency Telecommunications for Disaster Management in Maldives: Developing a National Emergency Telecommunications Plan and Ratification of the Tampere Convention, 28 August 2007, Male, Maldives

2. Purpose of the event

The purpose of this event is to bring together the main stakeholders active in developing, deploying and using telecommunications/ICT for disaster mitigation, and to serve as a forum in which they can map out concrete strategies and adopt practical measures aimed at giving telecommunications/ICT a central role in disaster management, i.e. **early warning, preparedness, relief and response**. The discussions will focus on policy, regulation, technology, finance and the deployment of last-mile communications systems. The debate will take a **multi-hazard approach,** as the role of telecommunications/ICT remains the same irrespective of the nature or type of disaster at hand. Attention will also be focused on the ways in which last-mile solutions can be integrated into existing and future early warning systems. For this, cooperation among organizations involved in disaster prevention and management is an essential element. ITU will launch a major telecommunications/ICT initiative that seeks to coordinate the deployment of telecommunications resources for

disaster relief to maximize the use of such resources and ensure that there is timely and universal access to such resources in the immediate aftermath of disasters striking.

Participating organizations will have an opportunity to showcase innovative telecommunications/ICT solutions at the exhibition pavilion. Exhibition space is provided free but exhibitors are advised to focus on demonstrating their solutions and not marketing their products.

A number of partnership agreements and memoranda of understanding will be signed on 10 December between ITU and its partners. These agreements will focus on co-financing future activities aimed at mitigating the impact of disasters through the use of emergency telecommunications.

3. Expected outcomes

This event, which will attract high-level representation from governments, regulatory authorities, the private sector, United Nations entities, and Non-Governmental Organizations, will result in an increased awareness of the role that each of the participating entities play in giving telecommunications/ICT a central role in disaster mitigation. A number of new products and practical initiatives will be launched at this important event including:

- ITU Framework for Cooperation in Emergencies (IFCE)

- Compendium on ITU Work in Emergency Telecommunications (Telecommunication Standardization, Radiocommunication, Telecommunication Development)

- ITU Handbook on Best Practice in Emergency Telecommunications

- ITU Network of Volunteers for Emergency Telecommunications (VET)

- Signing of Multiple Partnership Agreements.

4. **Summary Description of ITU Initiatives**

   o The ITU Framework for Cooperation in Emergencies (IFCE) seeks to provide assistance to Member States affected by disasters, humanitarian workers, United Nations Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and local communities involved in disaster relief operations through the timely deployment of emergency telecommunications equipment and e-services such as telemedicine anywhere and anytime across the globe. The initiative seeks to mobilize resources from ITU Member States (191) and Sector Members (over 700).

   o ITU Network of Volunteers for Emergency Telecommunications

   This initiative seeks to mobilize and create a database of engineers who are willing to undertake ITU missions at short notice when disasters strike. This includes ITU retired engineers, ITU Member States and ITU Sector Member engineers (retired and serving) willing to participate in the deployment of emergency telecommunications in the immediate aftermath of disasters.

   o Compendium of ITU Work in Emergency Telecommunications

   This publication brings for the first time all ITU's innovative work in emergency telecommunications in the Telecommunications Standardization, Radiocommunication, and Telecommunication Development Sectors.

   o ITU Handbook on Best Practices

   This publication provides invaluable information on the creation of National Emergency Telecommunications Plans. It is based on a survey of practices by 14 countries that participated in ITU's research undertaken on this subject.

   o Cooperation Agreements

   ITU has negotiated with a number of its partners and will conclude memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements with key providers of emergency telecommunication resources to include remote sensing, geographical information systems, telecommunication equipment, etc.

5.   **Format of the meeting**

Global Forum on Effective Use of Telecommunications/ICT for Disaster Management: Saving Lives will comprise plenary sessions, panel discussions and thematic sessions, as outlined in the draft programme.

6.   Languages

Interpretation will be provided in six languages in (Arabic, English, French, Russian, Chinese and Spanish).

7.   Registration

Registration is by the accompanying registration form. This form is also available on the Web (http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/emergencytelecoms) and can be downloaded, completed and returned to the given coordinates. Badges will be available for collection from the registration desk located in the second basement of the ITU Montbrillant Building between 0800 and 0930 hours on 10 December 2007

8.   General information

Dates: 10 December (Monday) – 12 December (Wednesday) 2007

Venue: Geneva International Conference Center (CICG), Geneva, Switzerland

Hotels: Most hotels in Geneva provide a special ITU tariff when the booking is made directly with the hotel. Participants should make their own hotel reservations by visiting: http://www.itu.int/travel/

Access to this site will also be possible from the meeting venue.

9. Sponsorship Opportunities

Organizations wishing to sponsor this event are encouraged to do so. Any such sponsorship will be acknowledged at this event and at our website.