

RIYADH DECLARATION ON RECONIZING THE ROLE OF TELECOMMUNICATION/ICTS FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT FOR THE ARAB REGION

at Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization (ARCO) Conference Hall, Riyadh, Kingdom
of Saudi Arabia

Thursday, 28 November 2019

THE PREAMBLE

The Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization (ARCO) organized a regional Multi-stakeholder Workshop on the Role of Telecommunications/ICTs for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management for Arab Region in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the period, 26 – 28 November 2019.

The objectives of the workshop were to, inter alia:

- I. Stimulate awareness in paving the way for enhancing the use of ICTs for disaster management in the region.
- II. Address key questions related to the best use of ICTs for disaster risk reduction and management.
- III. Served as a platform to exchange new experiences and best practices in the use of modern technologies for monitoring and early warning.
- IV. Exchange experiences and best practices in the use of modern technologies for monitoring and early warning
- V. Present ITU and ARCO emergency Telecommunications projects in the region
- VI. Provide an opportunity for policy makers and other participants to debate and adopt concrete strategies on how information and communication technologies support disaster risk reduction and management activities, contributing this way to the implementation of the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

We, the organizers call attention to:

1. The need for Arab countries to cooperate and unify their national vision, programs and plans in order to promote the use of ICTs for disaster management in the region and to address key issues related to the best use of ICTs for disaster risk reduction and in accordance with the principle of common responsibility of Arab countries;
2. The need for close cooperation between ITU, ARCO its members from Arab National Societies of Red Crescent and Red Cross, National Emergency Telecommunications Committees, United Nations specialized agencies working in the areas of humanitarian action, ministries in charge of

ICTs, telecommunications regulators and ministries in charge of Environment protection, disaster management, risk reduction and sustainable development.

3. Our shared interest in the safety, security and well-being of Arab peoples, their assets and livelihoods.
4. The considerable threats to national and regional economies, communities, livelihoods and lives posed by natural disasters
5. The critical role to be played by ICTs and associated emerging technologies in disaster risk reduction and management and therefore to building the regional, national and community resilience of countries to cope with natural and other disasters
6. The inclusion of persons with special needs prior to and during some natural disasters, and the ability of appropriate ICTs to effectively target and address many of their needs
7. The vulnerability of ICTs themselves to natural and other disasters
8. Existing initiatives by Arab Governments to embrace ICT to enhance their economic and social development and disaster risk reduction
9. The challenges faced by Arab countries, stretched for both financial and human resources, to individually pursue their ICT agenda and humanitarian work.
10. The considerable benefits of regional collaboration to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of ICT initiatives and resources; and the sustainability of actions and investments.
11. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which calls for an increase in the availability of multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and which highlights the importance of reducing disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services.
12. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes and reaffirms the urgent need to reduce the risk of disasters and acknowledges the role of ICTs as a cross-cutting tool for development and disaster risk reduction.

We, the organizers intend to:

1. Implement institutional strengthening where appropriate (e.g., governments, Arab National Societies of Red Crescent and Red Cross, telecommunication operators and other stakeholders) to ensure the availability of (i) well-trained IT personnel with requisite knowledge of IT operations in disaster management and (ii) appropriate processes and procedures to guide operations and facilitate partnerships during disasters
2. Build capacity for national and regional telecommunications networks to swiftly recover from service interruptions during and in the immediate aftermath of disasters
3. Promote legislation, regulatory frameworks and guidelines that support necessary actions and provisions through all stages of the disaster risk management cycle (mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery) including but not limited to the implementation, operation and sustainability of Early Warning (EW) and monitoring systems
4. Assist in the development of comprehensive National Emergency Telecommunications Plans which provide, inter alia, a framework for cooperation to use ICTs to save lives and livelihoods
5. Promoting the inclusion of new ICTs technologies and systems in the support of disaster risk management
6. Help all stakeholders to acquire financial and other contingency resources to mitigate, prepare for, provide relief to and recovery from emergencies

7. Establish a joint project with the goal to connect ARCO Research and Information Center with the ARCO-Arab Center for Disaster Preparedness and Crises for exchanging of information and support the humanitarian and relief operations
8. Promote the standard operating procedures for the creation and dissemination of early warning information using all means of ICTs including training on Common Alerting Protocol (CAP).
9. Develop a practical and time-bound action plan to implement the priorities referred to in this declaration.

Each of us individually further commit to:

I. ITU:

1. Provide assistance to Arab countries specially Arab Least Developing Countries (LDCs) to review/develop and implement a National Emergency Telecommunications Plans (NETPs)
2. Cooperate with ITU and UN agencies, partners and other humanitarian organizations to join efforts and work together on disaster risk reduction and management in Arab region and to enhance the use of ICTs in disaster risk reduction and management.

II. Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization (ARCO)

1. Cooperate with ITU and other UN and international agencies, local and regional counterparts including national societies, regarding additional innovative ways and initiatives to assist Arab countries to more effectively and efficiently use ICTs for monitoring, detecting, predicting, warning and responding in relation to disasters.
2. Hosts in conjunction with the ITU, national and regional workshops for stakeholders including Arab National Societies of Red Crescent and Red Cross involved in disaster management and in the provision of telecommunications/ICT resources for disaster mitigation and relief operations.

We, the organizers encourage governments in the Arab Region to:

1. Establish clear lines of responsibility for the leadership of disaster risk management at the national level to ensure actions implemented and that there is accountability and predictability
2. Develop and adopt an ICT (to include telecommunications) policy and regulatory framework that recognizes the importance of building and maintaining strong national and regional emergency telecommunications
3. Implement the Common Alerting Protocol, ITU Standard, for emergency alerting
4. Include provisions in the regulatory framework for the private sector to make available its telecommunications infrastructure and services during emergency situations and facilitate and disseminate vital information when needed
5. Develop, adopt and regularly review their emergency telecommunications plans
6. Open relevant public sector databases in support of all phases of the disaster risk management cycle, respecting standard exclusions such as relate to national security, data protection and privacy as prescribed by the international open data charter

7. Ratify the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations and incorporate its provisions into relevant national telecommunications/ICT legislation and regulations
8. Set aside adequate budgetary allocations to finance the emergency operation centres and actions as well as the standby fund for ICT support in times of disasters.
9. Strengthen the supporting role of Arab National Societies of Red Crescent and Red Cross in humanitarian action.
10. Involve customs authorities and Standardization and Meteorological organizations in disaster risk reduction and management
11. Collaborate to enhance ICTs connectivity when disaster strike and provide affordable connectivity rates

We, the organizers encourage telecommunication operators and infrastructure providers to:

1. Play their role in disaster risk reduction and work in partnership with different stakeholders and other disaster functionaries to reduce risk through, among other things, the application of technologies, data, skills, other capacities and strategies for disaster management
2. Open relevant databases in support of all phases of the disaster risk management cycle, respecting standard exclusions such as relate to national security, data protection and privacy as prescribed by the international open data charter
3. Assure the establishment of business continuity plans to prevent financial losses and to recover fast when disaster strike to serve the end population