

TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN THE EVENT OF DISASTERS AND/OR CATASTROPHES

The XXII Meeting of the Permanent Consultative Committee I: Telecommunications/Information and Communications Technologies (PCC.I),

CONSIDERING:

- a) That, disasters and catastrophes cause irreparable losses to citizens and deteriorate the economies of countries and largely hit the poorest and most vulnerable sectors, which have more difficulty to access basic information and communication infrastructure that is essential to transmit vital alert messages;
- b) That a substantial increase in both the frequency and the intensity of such events has been observed, as shown by the recent occurrences in Haiti, Chile, United States of America, Costa Rica and Argentina, among others;
- c) That, in order to mitigate the effects of these events, it is of utmost importance to transmit reliable information prior, during and post occurrence of a natural disaster;
- d) That, in this regard, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has prepared a series of Recommendations on call priority plans in order to guarantee that relief crews count on communication lines when needed, both through traditional communication and next generation networks;
- e) That, besides these Recommendations establishing call priority plans, in the event of disasters it is equally important to transmit alert messages to users; therefore, it is vital to outline rules ensuring that these alert messages are transmitted on time and error-free from source to users, regardless of how they are received,

BEARING IN MIND:

- a) That the ITU Development Sector (ITU-D):
 - Considers that emergency telecommunications are an integral part of its development plan and as a result, considerable effort has been made to integrate catastrophe management to the telecommunication and information and communication technologies projects and activities which entails development of infrastructure and creation of suitable political, legal and regulatory framework.
 - As soon as a catastrophe occurs, the ITU makes equipment available so that temporary telecommunication/ICT solutions are deployed to provide basic telecommunication services and satellite telemedicine applications. A decisive factor in catastrophe management is restoration and reconstruction of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure.
 - After assisting in relief efforts, the ITU conducts a field assessment of the affected countries in order to determine the extent of damage to the network through geographic information systems.
 - On the basis of its conclusions, both the ITU and the country in question undertake infrastructure restoration actions and ensure that disaster-resistant functions are integrated to

¹ CCP.I-TIC/doc.2988/13 rev.2

the network and its vulnerability is reduced in the event of occurrence of another disaster in the future;

b) That the ITU-T established the Focus Group on Disaster Relief Systems, Network Resilience and Recovery (FG-DR&NRR) aiming at

- Identifying requirements for disaster relief and network resilience and familiarize the ITU-T and standardization communities with those requirements;
- Identifying existing standards and existing work that are related to the requirements mentioned above;
- Identifying any additional standards that may need to be developed and identifying future work items for specific ITU-T Study groups and related actions;

c) That, in addition, CITELE has promoted the work of the Rapporteurship on “use of telecommunications in the prevention and mitigation of catastrophes and disasters”,

RECOMMENDS:

1. That the competent agencies of the Administrations prepare, jointly with telecommunication service providers, special contingency procedures covering the whole service area, especially those vulnerable to either environmental or man-made disasters, in order to minimize service cut-off during catastrophes.

2. That Administrations work jointly within the framework of CITELE to create an emergency protocol in the event of natural or man-made disasters.

INSTRUCTS THE SECRETARIAT OF CITELE:

1. To gather in one same document, to the extent of its possibilities, the information provided by Member States on initiatives regarding how to proceed in the event of natural or man-made disasters for their study and analysis.

2. To contact the Department of Sustainable Development of the OAS in order to determine the possibility to work on a joint project to provide support in the creation of an emergency protocol.