

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WEEKLY MEETING

Summary Notes

22 February 2006
Geneva

I Remote Sensing in Emergency Response and Early Information

Mr. Einar Bjorgo (UNITAR), Head of Unit, UNOSAT

Mr. Bjorgo introduced UNOSAT and briefed on the use of remote sensing (satellite imagery and aerial photography) to assist humanitarian relief operations and to improve early warning and contingency planning.

UNOSAT is the UN's Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Operational Satellite Applications Programme. It provides satellite imagery and Geographic Information System (GIS) services to the UN, governments, international organizations and NGOs in support of early warning, crisis response, sustainable recovery, vulnerability reduction and local capacity building covering the full disaster cycle.

Satellite imagery and aerial photography is being used as a complementary tool for assessments in support of for instance UNDAC teams. The satellite imagery can provide detailed maps over affected areas (pre- and post-disaster imagery), where assess by road or air is difficult or restricted for security reasons. Even in cloudy conditions the satellites can provide imagery using radar technology. The use of the maps can assist in detection and location of population groups and logistical access as well determining extent of any given damage. Furthermore the satellite imagery can be used to determine rainfall estimates, rainfall satisfaction indexes and wide area coverage of day and night temperature.

More details about UNOSAT can be acquired on www.unosat.org or by writing to info@unosat.org.

In the discussion following the briefing, Mr. Bjorgo clarified that the satellites used are strictly commercial satellites of (of which 13 are used routinely). However, most of the imagery for disaster situations is provided for free. In terms of restrictions of satellite imagery, Mr. Bjorgo informed that apart from limitation over Israel the world is covered by the so-called open sky policy, meaning that one can acquire satellite imagery everywhere. In areas of political or military sensitivity UNOSAT follows the UN guidelines on circulation of information

II Bolivia - Floods - Actions by OCHA

Mr. Ricardo Mena (OCHA), Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Coordination and Response Division, Europe, Central Asia, Latin America and Caribbean Section

In January, intensive rainfall caused severe floods in several parts of Bolivia. Causing serious damage to houses, crops, roads and other basic infrastructure. It is estimated that the floods have affected over 12,000 families.

The initial response was at the local level. Currently, assistance is being managed at the departmental level (Prefecture), with assistance from both the national and the international level. A response plan has been put in place under the coordination of the Prefecture and includes representatives of the UN system and NGOs.

The National Directorate of Civil Defence has been distributing food and non-food items such as clothes, kitchen sets and tents to the affected population. WFP (using food stocks available in the country), UNICEF, WHO have been providing aid.

The four-member UNDAC team deployed to Santa Cruz (western department) has set up an On-site Operations Coordination Center (OSOCC) within the local Emergency Operations Center. Sectoral coordination meetings have been established and are taking place regularly. OCHA remains in close contact with the office of the UN Resident Coordinator.

According to the authorities, priority needs in Santa Cruz at this stage are financing the retaining and re-channelling of the river's flow; rehabilitating cultivated areas and providing agricultural tools and supplies to reactivate the local economy; and repairing damaged secondary roads.

In the discussion following the briefing, Mr. Mena informed that the cluster approach has been introduced in Bolivia in response to the floods, upon initiative taken by UNICEF.

III Philippines - Landslide - Humanitarian Response

Ms. Megan Gilgan (OCHA), Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Coordination and Response Division, Asia and Pacific Section

On 17 February 2006, two landslides hit the village of Guinsaigon (estimated population 1,400) in the Southern Leyte Province of the Philippines. The Philippine authorities estimates that the landslide is 4 m deep and covers about 3 km² and reports 85 fatalities, 19 injured and 415 survivors. 981 people are still missing.

Six evacuation centres have been established to house approximately 2,100 people including the former residents of Guinsaigon and those from two neighbouring villages that were partially affected by the landslides. Pre-emptive evacuations of other municipalities of Southern Leyte where geo-hazard assessments indicated a high risk of additional landslides have taken place.

Three UNDAC team members are working with the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council based in the town of St. Bernard close to the affected area supporting assessments, strengthening of logistics systems and coordination with the multiple civilian and military actors that have responded to the disaster. The remaining three UNDAC team members are working in Manila in support of national coordination structures and the UN Country team (UNCT).

In response to a request from the President of the Philippines to improve preparedness and early warning for other similar disasters, the UNDP has formulated an MoU with six Government agencies to provide funding for the immediate deployment of 20 geo-science experts to implement rapid assessments of other vulnerable areas. The WHO is assisting the Department of Health in coordination with NGOs and mounting psychosocial services for the affected population. The UNCT, with the support of the UNDAC team leader, is developing contingency plans in view of the possibility of additional landslides and supports the Government in developing strategies for early recovery, enhanced preparedness and long term risk reduction.

Priority needs are food, clean water, and shelter material as well as health services including medical personnel. The Government of the Philippines welcomes international assistance but has not issued a formal request.

More information and details on the situation as well as the national and international response are available in the OCHA's Situation Reports posted on ReliefWeb and OCHA's website.

Following the briefing IFRC gave a short update on their efforts in response to the landslides underlining that the Philippine Red Cross is a very strong national society and constitutes an integrated part of the Government's disaster response. One concern, which was raised by IFRC and acknowledged by others, was the difficulty in coordinating and managing the large number of aid personnel and amount of relief material coming in to the relatively small affected area.

IV AOB: IASC Website and Calendar

Mr. Kersten Jauer (IASC Secretariat), Intern, IASC Secretariat

Mr. Jauer gave an update on various new aspects of the recently re-launched IASC Website, particularly that the site through its calendar feature offers a broad and easily accessible overview of meetings and events and that agencies can post their own events directly on the site.

Participants

	Name	Organization	Email
1	Mr. Paul Paredes-Portella	FAO	pparedes-portella@unog.ch
2	Mr. Jacob Korreborg	IASC Secretariat	korreborg@un.org
3	Ms. Marilena Viviani	IASC Secretariat	viviani@un.org
4	Ms. Lauren Conway	ICRC	lconway.gva@icrc.org
5	Mr. Robert Mister	IFRC	robert.mister@ifrc.org
6	Mr. Flemming Nielsen	IFRC	flemming.nielsen@ifrc.org
7	Mr. Adrian Ciancio	OCHA	ciancio@un.org
8	Ms. Carolina de Borbon	OCHA	deborbonparma@un.org
9	Ms. Megan Gilgan	OCHA	gilgan@un.org
10	Mr. Ricardo Mena	OCHA	menar@un.org
11	Ms. Delphine Pastorel	OCHA	postorel@un.org
12	Ms. Joana Miquel-Gelabert	OHCHR	jmiquel-gelabert@ohchr.org
13	Ms. Darka Topoli	OHCHR	dtopoli@ohchr.org
14	Mr. Kersten Jauer	Other	k.jauer@gmail.com
15	Ms. Mijke Hertoghs	UNEP	mijke.hertoghs@unep.ch
16	Mr. Mirko Forni	UNHABITAT	forni.unhabitat@unog.ch
17	Ms. Miriam Azar	UNICEF	miazar@unicef.org
18	Mr. Einar Bjorgo	UNITAR	einar.bjorgo@unosat.org
19	Ms. Yasmin Burton	UNRWA	yburton@unog.ch
20	Ms. Emilie Chazelle	UNRWA	gunwra@unog.org