NOTE FOR THE FILE

Note on the USG's meeting with Mr. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary-General, International Telecommunications Union

16 March 2010 – 1630 hours

Present:

Mr. John Holmes   USG/ERC
Mr. Hamadoun Touré   Secretary-General, ITU
Mr. Gary Fowlie   Head – ITU Liaison Office, New York
Mr. Mario Maniewicz   Chief, Policies and Strategies Department
Ms. Patricia Benoit-Guyot   Chief of Protocol, ITU
Ms. Beatrice Pluchon   Policy and External Affairs Officer, ITU
Mr. Axel Bisschop   Chief of Programme, CERF Secretariat
Mr. Oliver Lacey-Hall   Chief, Communications Services Section, OCHA

Summary of Discussions:

1.   Mr. Touré opened the meeting by informing the USG that the ITU was establishing a small liaison office in New York, which would be headed by Mr. Gary Fowlie (also present at the meeting).

2.   Mr. Touré noted that the ITU had provided considerable support to Haiti through deployment of satellite terminals and other equipment, but was informed that OCHA had not been fully aware of the deployment of these assets. The USG confirmed that this was the case and suggested that there was a pressing need to resolve how humanitarian coordination structures could best incorporate the work of the ITU. An explanation was provided on the way in which humanitarian response was structured and specifically the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster. The USG also raised concerns over the fact that the ITU Framework for Cooperation in Emergencies did not appear to be linked to existing humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

3.   ITU understood the importance of enhancing coordination and noted its membership of the IASC sub-Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications in this regard, but felt that it should have a wider role given its mandate. It was agreed that the matter of coordination between the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster and ITU should be taken up and resolved as rapidly as possible.

4.   The USG confirmed that the ITU request for funds from the CERF for the Chile earthquake response would be approved imminently. He noted that Chile was a special case and that the approval of the request was somewhat exceptional. Mr. Touré expressed

appreciation for CERF funds and trusted that ITU would be able to use this opportunity to demonstrate the value it could add to humanitarian response operations.

5.   The USG requested support from the ITU in three areas:

(a) Support to OCHA in addressing regulatory barriers with local authorities, and facilitating the provision of local authorizations for licensing and frequencies to be used for multiple systems, such as GSM. Mr. Touré confirmed that ITU would be pleased to assist in this context, as had already been done in the past.

(b) Technical assistance to OCHA in implementing the geographic country code (+888) as assigned by ITU to be used by the UN in disasters. Mr. Touré noted that progress was being made on this front and undertook to work closely with OCHA in taking the process forward.

(c) Support to OCHA in emergency preparedness activities by collecting information from Member States about national emergency telecommunications plans, focal points and capacities. Mr. Touré noted that such assistance had been provided and that ITU would share this information and, where needed, could be relied upon to act as a broker between Member States and the humanitarian system.

Actions to be taken

1.   Oliver Lacey-Hall to meet with Gary Fowlie to more clearly define the issues related to humanitarian coordination and reach agreement on how to proceed.

2.   Cherif Ghaly to continue discussions with ITU on issues raised under 5 (a) – (c) of this note with ITU counterparts in Geneva.

[Oliver Lacey-Hall]
[16 March 2010]

Copies:
Pat Banks
Steve O'Malley
Axel Bisschop
Oliver Lacey-Hall
Lambert Hogenhout
Cherif Ghaly