

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
IASC WEEKLY MEETING

Summary Note

3 October 2007
Geneva

Review of UNOSAT Rapid Mapping Support Service

Mr. Francesco Pisano (Head, Institutional Affairs, UNOSAT) and Mr. Einar Bjorgo (Head, Rapid Mapping, Applications and User Relations, UNOSAT) briefed participants on UNOSAT's Rapid Mapping Support service and its activities during the period 2006-2007. The objective of this special IASC weekly meeting was to review lessons learned, inform agencies of new developments, and discuss ideas for the improvement of this service.

UNOSAT's Rapid Mapping is a support service available 24/7 to the humanitarian community in response to natural disasters and complex emergencies. Typically requested by agencies such as OCHA, WFP, UNEP and others, it has been activated 95 times since 2003 (37 times in 2007), and has so far directly supported all UNDAC missions in 2007, as well as 7 out of 11 UNDAC missions in 2006. The instances in which rapid mapping was used included a majority of flood situations (45%), but generally covered all types of emergencies. Speaking about the process of acquisition of the data used by UNOSAT to produce their maps, the presenters pointed out that in the majority of cases, data was acquired and processed directly by UNOSAT, while the International Space Charter was also an important data source that was activated in major disasters and had been used by the UN in 12 out of the 37 UNOSAT rapid mapping activations during the period concerned.

After having presented some examples of the products developed by UNOSAT in the last two years in different types of emergencies, the presenters explained that the distribution of these products was usually done at several levels. By using means such as Virtual OSOCC/GDACS, HICs, GeoNetwork, ReliefWeb and others, the products are not only distributed to agencies directly, but to a wide array of humanitarian actors, both at HQ as well as in the field. Finally, the presenters pointed out that UNOSAT services were continuously being improved, so as to increase the speed of turnaround, detail of imagery, software, as well as field support and regional presence.

Participants unanimously thanked the presenters and expressed great appreciation for the valuable services provided by UNOSAT. Responding to a question on UNOSAT's current involvement in inter-agency mechanisms, the representatives pointed out that they actively participated in the IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning, the Inter-Agency Information Management Working Group, as well as in two cluster working groups and other fora, such as UNGIWG. During the discussion, the presenters as well as participants pointed out that the current system of signing bilateral MoUs between UNOSAT and each particular agency could be improved. It was therefore agreed that UNOSAT should seek guidelines and endorsement from the IASC Working Group with the assistance of the IASC Secretariat.

Note: the Power Point presentation made at the meeting can be downloaded from the following website: www.unosat.org/shared/IASC/UNOSAT_IASC_3Oct_2007.ppt