



Photo: Yoshi Shimizu/International Federation

## Regulation of Emergency Telecommunications

... Getting on the same wavelength

Effective telecommunications are essential for relief workers in times of disaster. Without them, information about the disaster cannot be exchanged, relief cannot be coordinated and lives can be lost.

Optimal legal and regulatory frameworks can facilitate the urgent needs of relief operations, particularly those involving international assistance, by addressing customs restrictions on the entry of telecommunications equipment, granting privileged access to cellular, radio and other communications networks, and especially by providing clear procedures and lines of authority for disaster situations.

## The Tampere Convention

... Making the connection

The Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations of 1998 is the first global treaty to comprehensively address regulatory issues related to telecommunications in disaster relief operations.

The Convention entered into force on 8 January 2005 and currently has 32 state parties (see box at right) and an additional 37 signatories. It is open to accession by all members of the United Nations or of the International Telecommunication Union. For more information on its provisions, please turn the page.

### Parties as of 1 November 2005

Barbados	Morocco
Bulgaria	Netherlands
Canada	Nicaragua
Cyprus	Oman
Czech Republic	Panama
Denmark	Peru
Dominica	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
El Salvador	Slovakia
Finland	Sri Lanka
Guinea	Sweden
Hungary	Switzerland
India	Tonga
Kenya	Uganda
Kuwait	United Kingdom
Liberia	Venezuela
Liechtenstein	
Lithuania	

## How the Tampere Convention Works

The Tampere Convention addresses the efforts of states, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, private enterprises and other actors to provide telecommunications-related assistance in the case of disaster.

Among its cardinal points:

- **Respect for State Sovereignty:** Recipient states retain full control over the initiation and termination of telecommunications assistance, with the power to reject all or part of any offer of assistance.
- **Removing Barriers to the Entry and Use of Telecommunications Equipment:** Recipient states agree to remove import or export restrictions, restrictions on use of particular types of equipment or radio-frequency spectrums, waive licensing requirements and fees and, if possible, provide local facilities and services for effective administration.
- **Privileges and Immunities of Relief Personnel:** Recipient states agree, to the extent permitted by national law, to grant relief personnel providing telecommunications assistance with functional immunities from judicial process and exemption from taxes and duties.

## Other Important International Standards

- **Resolution 10 of the World Radiocommunication Conference, 2000**, urging governments to assign to the Red Cross and Red Crescent the minimum number of working frequencies, particularly on HF and VHF radio networks, during their humanitarian operations.
- **Resolution VI of the 23rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 1977**, recommending that:  
  
“potential recipient governments take advance measures to authorise recognised relief agency personnel to have access to all available telex, cable, wire, telephone and radio facilities, as disaster relief circumstances require, for their internal and external communications.”  
  
(Recommendation M)
- **Resolution 7 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference, 1994**, urging governments to take all practical steps for facilitating the rapid deployment and the effective use of telecommunication equipment for disaster mitigation and relief operations.

“States that have not yet done so are encouraged to consider acceding to and implementing the Tampere Convention . . . [as well as] the relevant resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the International Telecommunications Union, and the United Nations[.]”

*Final Goal 3.2.5, 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (2003)*