

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
60th MEETING**

**21-22 March 2005
WFP Rome**

IASC Sub-Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications

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WFP has perceived concern among some IASC members regarding the work of the Sub Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications (WGET)¹. We believe that this may be linked to the technical nature of the work of the group and the difficulty our non-technical colleagues have in this area. As we feel that the work of the group provides a great deal of benefit to the humanitarian community, we felt it was important to state these benefits clearly for IASC members.

Firstly we would like to differentiate between the work of the WGET and that of another inter-agency telecommunications body, namely the Inter-Agency Telecommunication Advisory Group (ITAG). The ITAG is an exclusively UN body, that coordinates the UN's telecommunications infrastructural development, including standardization issues, for system-wide, long-term, operation and interoperability. The WGET, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the telecommunications challenges (security and data communications) in emergency operations, essentially the first three to six months of a field operation.

In addition, the IASC members will appreciate the critical role that the WGET plays in facilitating the coordination and establishment of situation-specific information and communications technology (ICT) support for humanitarian common services and coordination of the responsibility for facilitating these services amongst the agencies. Furthermore, the WGET is essential to ensuring the inclusion of other, non-UN bodies, e.g. Red Cross, IOM, NGOs and IPs, in the planning and implementation of humanitarian common services.

Finally, we would like the IASC members to note the important role that the WGET plays in liaising, in the technical arena, with the private sector. Recent examples of which have been the enhanced cellular telephone services that were made available through GSM network deployments in Afghanistan and other places, thanks to the interfacing capability of the WGET with private sector contributors. As well as the progress in standardising selective calling systems across HF radio manufacturers to ensure compatibility and cost competitiveness.

In conclusion, we request that the IASC recognise that the work of the group is precisely that required to support the humanitarian agencies, and that this IASC

¹ WFP has shared this note with the members of WGET during its plenary meeting of 22-23 February 2005. The statement was endorsed by all the members.

Fourth Information Note on agenda item: AOB

subsidiary body is providing integral support to all of our work. We hope this short note is helpful for the IASC members and will allow our future discussions on the WGET's work to be beneficial for all concerned.

Prepared by: WFP, February 2005