

First Time in the Region Digital Aid Unveiled in Dubai

United Nations, Non-Governmental, Government and private sector organisations convene in Dubai for Humanitarian ICT Week.

DUBAI - 29th April 2015: From the various conflicts and natural disasters affecting different locations around the globe, to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa; the ability to communicate can make the outmost difference between life and death in emergencies, and technology can be a key enabler. On the side of Telecommunications Humanitarian Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Week, The Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications (WGET) Forum was opened in Dubai today, hosted by International Humanitarian City (IHC), convening representatives from the world's foremost organisations involved in enabling the delivery of digital communications as aid in disasters.

The public sessions of (ICT) are part of (WGET) Forum and brought together over 200 participants from national governments, United Nations entities, Non-Governmental Organisations, private sector and academia to explore the technologies, solutions and tools available - and being developed - that will enable delivery of Digital Aid.

“The UAE believes in the importance of this initiative, and in bringing together experts from around the world to discuss and seek solutions for a noble cause,” said HE Abdullah Al Shibani, Secretary General of the Executive Council and IHC Board Member during his opening remarks. “We pride ourselves on our humanitarian work and on our collaborative approach and international partnerships towards solving some of the world’s most pressing challenges. To see so many leaders in their fields gathered to work together towards such a noble aim brings me great pride, and I am glad that we can play our part in this endeavour.”

Thuraya and the WGET organizers have been working together over the past two years to host the WGET forum in Dubai, UAE. This is the first time this important international gathering is taking place in the Middle East; held in partnership with International Humanitarian City, and sponsored by Thuraya and Yahsat.

Samer Halawi, Chief Executive Officer at Thuraya said, “It is humbling to believe that our technology can save and improve lives. We want to do more working together with humanitarian organizations around the world. This is why I am really proud we have brought WGET to Dubai”.

Mr. Masood M. Sharif Mahmood, CEO of Yahsat said, “Yahsat is extremely proud to participate in this important event. Our sponsorship and participation demonstrate not only our commitment to global humanitarian assistance through corporate social responsibility, but also the innovative and dynamic ways satellite technology can be applied to make people’s lives better in their most challenging hours. We believe our reliable satellite connectivity can support humanitarian work and are eager to partner more closely with the international organisations leading disaster relief and recovery.”

“The nature of emergency operations is constantly evolving and IT is shaping the future of humanitarian assistance,” says Jakob Kern, Chair of the ETC and Chief Information Officer of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). “Our focus now is enabling Digital

Aid. Where yesterday we were providing vaccinations, food or shelter, tomorrow we will also be providing digital solutions enabling people affected by disasters to lead the recovery of their own communities and countries.”

“Digital aid, which will consist of 40 percent of future aid, is transforming the humanitarian system by allowing it to be more accountable to communities affected by crises,” says Gwi Yeop-Son, Corporate Division Director for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). “This transformation will be driven by data and the connectivity required to support payment systems and communications with affected people.”

At the beginning of the week, decision-makers from members of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster - a global network of organisations involved in the ICT response to disasters - will review the technology response in current disaster operations at the ETC Plenary Meeting, and continue advancement of ‘ETC2020’ - the progressive strategy that will enable delivery of Digital Aid. ETC Partners’ Day will leverage the member network by enabling their partners to contribute and support the ETC 2020 Strategy. In all, Humanitarian ICT Week comprises three events; the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) Plenary meeting from April 26th to the 27th; ETC Partners’ Day on April 28th and the Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications (WGET) Forum on April 29th and 30th.

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About the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) is a global network of humanitarian, government, and private sector organizations that work together to provide shared information and communications technology services in emergencies. Members exchange information and expertise and provide ICT personnel, equipment and solutions to assist humanitarian workers in their life-saving operations. The World Food Programme (WFP) is global lead of the ETC.

The ETC2020 strategy will see the network evolve from being primarily a service provider, to broker, facilitator and convenor of technology in emergency response. By 2020, the ETC will create an emergency response environment that provides humanitarians, citizens and governments with a seamless, resilient and principled communications experience.

www.ETCluster.org

About the Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications (WGET) ICT Humanitarian Forum

The Working Group for Emergency Telecommunications (WGET) was established in 1996 as a technical forum promoting collaboration on interagency telecommunications issues. It is intended to support the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC).

The WGET is an open forum at which those involved in disaster response and telecommunications - UN, NGOs, private sector and government representatives among

others - discuss recent experiences, consider new technologies and build partnerships that will ensure a better response in future crises. Key issues on this year's agenda include providing telecommunications support to affected communities, the challenges of data security, mobile money in disasters and how the network age is changing disaster response.

www.WGETforum.org

About the International Humanitarian City (IHC)

The IHC has been operating from Dubai since HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai established it in 2003 and has grown to become the world's largest and busiest logistics hub for humanitarian aid with nine UN agencies and nearly 60 NGOs and commercial entities as members. It has helped deliver aid in some of the worst humanitarian crises of the past decade, including the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, the recurring drought in the Horn of Africa, civil unrest in Afghanistan and Darfur, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, 2011 unrest in North Africa, and latest aid response to Syrian refugees, Huda storm and Cyclone Pam.

www.ihc.ae

About Al Yah Satellite Communications Company PrJSC, "Yahsat"

Yahsat provides multipurpose satellite solutions (government and commercial) for broadband, broadcast, government, and communications use across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe in addition to Central and South West Asia. Based in Abu Dhabi, UAE, and wholly owned by Mubadala Development Company PJSC, the investment vehicle of the Government of Abu Dhabi, Yahsat is the first company in the Middle East and Africa to offer multi-purpose satellite services.

Yahsat's first satellite Y1A was successfully launched in April 2011, and the company's second satellite Y1B was successfully launched in April 2012. Yahsat has announced the manufacturing of its third satellite, Al Yah 3, planned for launch in Q4 2016, extending their commercial Ka-band coverage across additional markets in Africa, which will reach over 60% of the population, as well as its first entry in to Brazil, where it will cover over 95% of the population.

www.yahsat.ae or www.mubadala.ae

About Thuraya Telecommunications Company

Thuraya Telecommunications Company is an industry leading MSS operator and a global telecommunication provider offering innovative communications solutions to a variety of sectors including energy, broadcast media, maritime, military and humanitarian NGO. Thuraya's superior network enables clear communications and uninterrupted coverage across two thirds of the globe by satellite and across the whole planet through its unique GSM roaming capabilities.

The company's diverse range of technologically superior and highly reliable mobile satellite handsets and broadband devices provide ease of use, value, quality and

efficiency. Thuraya remains committed to serving humanity through delivering the essential tools for optimal connectivity, never leaving anyone out of reach.

www.thuraya.com