

Wrap-up of the TESS Request for Technology Solutions (RTS)

13 October 2019

Since May 2018, the **TESS (Telecoms Security Standards) project** under projects Streams 1 & 2 has collaboratively worked with United Nations (UN) and NGO partners, the public and private sector as well as individuals, to standardize the *currently used* technologies and procedures for the UN/NGO security communication system (SCS).

A year on - in May 2019 - TESS kicked off Stream 3 embarking on a journey to define the **future standards** of UN/NGO security communications across three layers – connectivity, application, and procedures. TESS Stream 3 aims to define a future UN/NGO SCS standard that is technology-based but vendor independent.

TESS Stream 3 started with the launch of a “Request for Bright Ideas” (RFBI) in May 2019 to crowdsource ideas to invigorate the project and validate the TESS use cases.

Building on the RFBI, in August 2019, the TESS “**Request for Technology Solutions**” (RTS) was launched - moving beyond *ideas* towards concrete solutions. The RTS called for contributors to propose technology solutions with the potential to fulfil the connectivity layer requirements of the future UN/NGO security communications system.

The TESS Inter-Agency (IA) Steering Group, made up of stakeholders representing UN Agencies and NGOs, selected **20 RTS submissions** to pitch their proposed technology solutions over 3-days from 16-18 September 2019.

The TESS IA Steering Group convened in Rome to listen to the pitches, with each presenting group allocated a 40 minute slot to share their technology solution and field questions from the Steering Group. Each pitch had to address at least one of the TESS use cases.

All presenters joined remotely and delivered their **pitch to a closed audience** composed of Steering Group members. It was decided to conduct the pitches in closed sessions as a number of presentations included proprietary information. Presenters joined from various locations spanning different time zones - a special thank you to those who were online very early or late to present.

With the RTS focused on the connectivity layer, the presentations included a spread of technology solutions offering backhaul connectivity to the internet, and last-mile connectivity to end-users. Additionally, solutions included those that are commercially available, some that are actively rolling out, and others that are under development. Given TESS Stream 3 is looking to define a *future* standard, this variety was exactly what the Steering Group was looking to see through the RTS process.

At the conclusion of the 20 pitches, the Steering Group had a private discussion on the merits of the technologies presented and how we would like to move forward with the next phase. Four key directions were identified:

1. **Insider-briefings on last mile technologies** – the RTS pitches focused on three key last mile connectivity technologies, specifically: **a)** Wi-Fi (including meshed Wi-Fi), **b)** mobile telephony (including 4G/LTE), and **c)** mesh networks. To properly evaluate the merits of these technologies and the suitability for TESS Stream 3, insider-briefings on these technologies will be organised before the TESS teams decide whether to move to testing and validation. Deployment challenges pertaining to spectrum allocation are foreseen with some options which need to be fleshed further.
2. **Technology solutions in early roll-out / development stage** – further engagement required with selected solution providers to develop collaboration projects to understand the potential of promising yet early-stage technologies to fulfil TESS Stream 3 use cases.
3. **Testing** – initial testing to commence on some technologies that appear to meet the requirements of some TESS Stream 3 use cases. Further testing may also be arranged following “insider-briefings” referred to above.
4. **Policy and standards** – interaction with standard-setting and industry bodies, such as the ITU, GSM Association (GSMA), and 3GPP Initiative to discuss the evolution of humanitarian security communication systems and related regulatory settings.

Important note: if you submitted an RTS response and are not requested by the TESS project to participate in any of the above four directions outlined above, this does not prevent you from responding to any future requests for contributions or sharing information that will assist the TESS project. TESS Stream 3 aims to define a future UN/NGO SCS standard that is vendor-independent. Any procurement actions that may take place, will be launched once the future standard has been endorsed by relevant UN and NGO stakeholders.

What's next?

- The TESS Request for Technology Solutions (RTS) phase is now closed.
- The TESS Stream 3 testing period and further engagements mentioned above will take place from **November 2019 to April 2020**.
- In **June 2020** the full TESS Stream 3 proposal will be put to the IASMN for consideration.
- **Beyond June 2020**, we anticipate that a commercial procurement process will be conducted based on an endorsed standard.

Where do you get the details on the further steps?

We will broadcast every step via the TESS online community.

Questions?

If you have any questions, you can always contact us via TESS@wfp.org

About the TESS project:

TESS ('Telecoms Security Standards') is an interagency project, requested and initiated by the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) Technology Advisory Group (TAG) and the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), mandated by UNDSS (United Nations Department of Safety and Security).

TESS' goal is to make clear recommendations on the standardizations of future UN and NGO Security Communications Systems ("SCS") supporting staff safety and security. TESS works at the level of connectivity, applications and procedures.

The project's final aim is a new security telecommunications business model that is approved and supported by all stakeholders.

The project is a collaborate effort between UN agencies, funds and programmes, NGOs, the private sector, government entities and individual technical / operational / security specialists. TESS is facilitated by WFP (UN World Food Programme) on behalf of all stakeholders.

As TESS will only succeed with the involvement of all stakeholders, including the end-users of our systems, we have an active online community we closely involve in the progress of the project. If you want to join our community, just send an email to TESS@wfp.org with your name, organization and function, and we will include you.