Some Issues for Discussion
and for possible inclusion in the Statement of GAREC-2014, if participants agree

Submitted as an input to Discussions at GAREC-2014, Huntsville, AL,
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1. Public Service (in particular Emergency Communications) as a Public Relations (PR) Tool for the Amateur Service

ARRL reported to the International Meeting during the 2014 HamRadio in Friedrichshafen, Germany, about their efforts to raise awareness for the role of telecommunications in emergency situations among young people interested in volunteering for public service. Communications are an indispensable tool for the work of all providers of emergency response (and for their own safety). A possibility to serve in this field might be attractive also for volunteers who have not found their specific task (paramedic, logistics etc.) so far.

Examples in several countries show, that at the same time the co-operation with established volunteer rescue services or/and institutional providers of such can help to solve potential problems such as the status of volunteers. In several cases such issues prevented the full use of Amateur Radio as an integrated element of disaster response or discouraged the establishment of the necessary preparedness structures and of the indispensable training mechanisms.

How can we further encourage this kind of a "win-win situation" for the Amateur Service and for the other indispensable volunteer services ?

2. Co-operation with potential "non-telecom" Providers of Support to Emergency Communications

An interesting idea was presented during HamRadio in Friedrichshafen: Co-operation between a local Ham Radio Group (in this case the DARC local group in a very hilly region) with the regional group of Caravan and Mobile-home owners. First exercises show, that, even with very little preparation on both sides, the establishment of ad-hoc communication links can be greatly facilitated. A Mobile-home that most of the time stands useless in the owner's garage can serve as an immediately available shelter for a VHF/UHF repeater on a hilltop or as a communications base wherever such is needed during an emergency situation. Such an arrangement makes the telecom volunteers independent of any external logistics (which are overburdened already by the emergency situation).

An other interesting approach in this direction has been taken by TRAC, the IARU Member Society in Turkey: Co-operation with an educational establishment (Technical University), which is now establishing an academic curriculum on emergency communications that will include the Amateur Radio License as one of the elements for successful completion.

How can we expand the range of potential partners further ?

3. Strengthening the Links among the 3 IARU Regional Coordinators for Emergency Communications and with the national coordinators

In practically all emergency operations over the past years, national and regional links were what was needed most. The Amateur Service is traditionally proud of its capabilities to communicate globally, but this is not really the prime argument unless one imagines a communication disruption on a global scale (such as a massive Solar Eruption or a man-made collapse of all public and private global networks). The role of the national and regional coordinators is therefore most essential, and efforts should be made to ensure a continuous exchange of information and of lessons learned.

A suggestion to establish an appropriate mechanism, such as an annual meeting of the regional coordinators, is on the agenda of the 2014 IARU Administrative Council Meeting and support for this idea in the GAREC-2014 statement could help towards a realization of this idea.

"Regional GARECs" such as "EUREC" have been initiated; due to the fact that GAREC Conferences rotate between Regions they could be a valuable opportunity for networking.

We need proposals for regional activities !

4. The Amateur Service is a provider of Point-to-Point links (and not a "social network"

This aspect should be kept in mind when using our capabilities in respect to Emergency Communications as an argument in negotiations with regulatory authorities. Yes, for global communications we can interface with other (incl. global) networks, but we do not provide a tool for bypassing possible national administrative restrictions in respect to the Internet and to social media. We need to define our roles in public service accurately.

We are volunteers, working in support of those in need - what can we do to avoid misunderstandings ?

5. Systematic use of all available tools for the distribution of Information about Emergency Communication Operations

In this respect, ARRL gives a good example with regular info in their newsletter. From Regions I and III and from other national societies in Region II there seems to be far less such information !

How can we best use the many tools available today (such social networks) ?

6. Systematic Evaluation of Emergency Communications Operations and Provision of such Reports to IARU

Evaluation Reports can be one of the most effective tools for the promotion of the Amateur Service in the ITU, in particular in the ITU Development Sector (ITU-D) where IARU has the best opportunities to maintain visibility. Such activity in ITU-D (and recently also in the Regulatory Sector, ITU-T) is essential in support of the work in ITU-R, the Radiocommunication Sector, which decides about our band allocations.

If we can get such reports, they are very valuable material that can then be submitted either as contributions to conferences or through personal contacts within ITU. Format and language do not matter, we can always find a way to format such documents according to the standards required.

What can be done to improve such Information-Flow ?

7. The various Ways in which the Amateur Service can support Emergency and Disaster Response

Emergency Telecommunications are an important argument for the defence of the privileges we enjoy under international and national regulations. Support can go beyond the provision of infrastructure-independent links and interaction with networks not affected by a specific disaster situation, it can include assistance in the rehabilitation of disrupted networks (like in recent examples e.g. in Germany) or in support to private (enterprise) networks (like in concepts developed in Turkey). What other roles can be used as arguments ?

We need inputs !

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