

**THE TAMPERE CONVENTION**  
**on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources**  
**for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations**  
**What this international treaty means for Emergency Communications provided by the Amateur Radio Service**

In June 1998, the First Intergovernmental Conference on Emergency Telecommunications (ICET-98) in Tampere, Finland, and unanimously adopted the *Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations*. Following the ratification of initial, non-binding signatures or the direct accession to this international treaty by the necessary number of 30 States, this international treaty entered into force on 8 January 2005.

The Tampere Convention provides the framework for the un-hindered use of all available and appropriate means of telecommunications in the service of international humanitarian assistance. States party to the Convention have agreed to remove regulatory barriers such as licensing requirements and import restrictions and to waive related fees to the greatest extent possible. While only States can be parties to the treaty, it benefits all partners in international humanitarian assistance, including non-state parties such as non-governmental organizations (NGO) and even private sector enterprises.

The Tampere Convention therefore also covers the provision of emergency assistance by the Amateur Radio Service. It does not overrule national regulations, but the countries that are parties to the Convention have made the necessary arrangements to facilitate the import and use of telecommunications equipment in case of disasters. In practice this means, that operation in a disaster affected country still remains subject to the applicable national and international regulations, such as frequency and call sign allocations, but that import and use radio equipment will be authorized without additional restrictions or time consuming procedures.

The Tampere Convention is a useful tool also in all cases where a country receiving international assistance is not yet party to the Convention. bi-lateral agreements which are being concluded between the State(s) or international organisation(s) providing disaster relief and the receiving State usually refer to this treaty when defining the rules for the use of telecommunications by organizations from outside the country. In all cases, where amateur radio operators intend to participate in such operations in another country they should therefore refer to the Tampere Convention when offering such assistance; this applies for the travel of operators to a country affected by a disaster as well as for the offer of a donation of equipment to amateurs in such a country.

### **The Purpose and Principles of the Tampere Convention**

The Tampere Convention is the result of a long process, initiated by the First Conference on Emergency Telecommunications in Tampere, Finland, 1991, followed including discussions in and decisions by international Conferences of the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations. The partners in international humanitarian assistance, among them also the IARU, participated in the work of the Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications (WGET), convened by the United Nations, and legal experts drafted the text for adoption by the Intergovernmental Conference in Tampere in 1998.

- The Convention has the purpose to expedite and facilitate the use of emergency telecommunications within the framework of international humanitarian assistance. Such telecommunication assistance can be provided as a direct assistance, provided to national institutions and / or a location or region affected by a disaster, and / or as part or in support of other disaster mitigation and relief activities.
- The Convention defines the status of the personnel of the various partners in international humanitarian assistance, including that of government entities, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other non-state entities, and defines their privileges and immunities.
- The Convention fully protects the interests of the States requesting and receiving assistance. The host government retains the right to supervise the assistance.

- The Convention foresees the establishment of bilateral agreements between the provider(s) of assistance and the State requesting/receiving such assistance. Standard frameworks for such agreements will be developed by the WGET. To avoid delay in the delivery of assistance, "best practices" will be codified into common implementing language. The use of such model agreements, which will be made available in hard copy and electronic format, will allow the immediate application of the Tampere Convention in any sudden impact disaster

### **The Contents Tampere Convention**

As an international legal document, deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Tampere Convention has to follow a standard format. The document therefore contains 17 articles, of which 7 (Articles 2-9) contain the substance of the treaty, while the others contain the references to related documents and the required standard provisions.

- The Preamble of the Convention notes the essential role of telecommunications in humanitarian assistance and the need for its facilitation, and recalls the major legal instruments, such as respective Resolutions of United Nations and of the International Telecommunications Union, which prepared the way for the Tampere Convention.
- Article 1 defines the terms used in the Convention. Of particular significance are the definitions of non-governmental organizations and non-State entities, as the Tampere Convention is the first treaty of its kind, which attributes privileges and immunities to their personnel.
- Article 2 describes the operational coordination, to be carried out by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator in cooperation with the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union.
- Article 3 defines the overall framework for the cooperation among States Parties and all partners in international humanitarian assistance, including non-State entities.
- Article 4 describes the procedures for request and provision of telecommunications assistance, specifically recognizing the right of a State Party to direct, control and coordinate assistance provided under this Convention within its territory.
- Article 5 defines the privileges, immunities and facilities to be provided by the Requesting State Party, again emphasizing that nothing in this Article shall prejudice rights and obligations pursuant to international agreements or international law.
- Articles 6, 7 and 8 define specific elements and aspects of the provision of telecommunication assistance, such as Termination of Assistance, Payment or Reimbursement of Costs or Fees, and establishment of a Telecommunications Assistance Inventory.
- Article 9 can be considered as the core element of the Tampere Convention, as the Removal of Regulatory Barriers has been the primary aim of the work towards this treaty since 1990.
- The remaining Articles, 10 to 17, contain the standard provisions concerning the relationship between the Convention's and other international agreements, as well as dispute settlement, entry into force, amendments, reservations, and denunciation. They state that the Secretary-General of the United Nations is the depositary of the Convention and that the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts of the Convention are equally authentic.

### **Supporting the Tampere Convention**

The national IARU member societies can play an key role in the promotion of the Convention. In countries which are not yet parties to the treaty, they should use their contacts with the national telecommunication administrations to encourage their government's accession to the Convention. In countries which already are parties to the Convention, they should make sure, that its content is fully reflected in the national laws governing telecommunications and in particular the Amateur Radio Service. Guidelines for governments for the procedure of accession to the Convention are available on this web site.

In doing so, national amateur societies will facilitate their own work and that of international partners when it comes to use Amateur Radio for the most noble of tasks of this service: The prevention, and where such is not possible, the alleviation of the human suffering caused by disasters. F/HB9AQS  
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