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(ITU) للاتصالات الدولي الاتحاد في والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم أجراه الضوئي بالمسح تصوير نتاج (PDF) الإلكترونية النسخة هذه والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم في المتوفرة الوثائق ضمن أصلية ورقية وثيقة من نقلاً.

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Настоящий электронный вариант (PDF) был подготовлен в библиотечно-архивной службе Международного союза электросвязи путем сканирования исходного документа в бумажной форме из библиотечно-архивной службы МСЭ.

World Telecommunication Day 1997: a success story

This year in Geneva, the World Telecommunication Day, organized on the theme "Telecommunications and Humanitarian Assistance", highlighted ways in which telecommunications can help international aid agencies in their work. Indeed, international aid agencies, which have traditionally often struggled to make do with insufficient resources, are now pushed to their limits, and new tools and ways of working are being sought. Telecommunications can do much to improve and speed up the delivery of aid and reduce the suffering of victims.

Therefore, the task to make this theme visible and comprehensible was not a difficult one. For a presentation of the role of telecommunications at the service of humanitarian assistance, the "Place des Nations" was the obvious choice — it is located right between the ITU tower and the United Nations (UN) offices and surrounded by the headquarters of many other partners in humanitarian assistance, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The temporary tent, in which a wide variety of communication links from different operators were installed, enhanced the impression of an emergency operation; such tents are commonly used for the storage and distribution of relief goods in humanitarian operations. The illusion was almost perfect, with the fortunate exception that the hectic activity did not take place in the inevitably tragic circumstances at the site of an emergency. Even the weather played its part — the preview for the delegates of the Preparatory Meeting of the World Radiocommunication

Conference took place during a heavy thunderstorm.

As the oldest symbol of telecommunications and peace, carrier pigeons with a message from Pekka Tarjanne, ITU Secretary-General, took off during the opening ceremony. Then, however, today's technology took over with video conference links to a similar emergency telecommunications centre in Dallas (Texas) and with satellite terminals and HF (shortwave) radio stations connecting the World Telecom-



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munication Day 1997 centre with counterparts in different parts of the world.

The VHF operators demonstrated "walkie-talkies", the hand-held VHF transceivers which are

an indispensable element of the safety and security of individual relief workers. The wide range of land-mobile satellite terminals gives not only access to all public telephone, telefax and telex networks from even the most remote location, but allows the transmission of digital images and connection to the Internet. Radio amateurs from all over the world, a mainstay of emergency telecommunications, contacted the station in the World Telecommunication Day 1997 centre and relayed the official messages from the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU).

Telecommunication is, however, only the carrier of the information. To be of use to the decision-makers in the field and at headquarters, information needs to be analysed and processed. The functioning of *ReliefWeb*, the major information management tool in international humanitarian assistance, was demonstrated at the Internet stand, which also provided access to other virtual information resources and provided visitors with real time information such as on the dramatic events in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo).

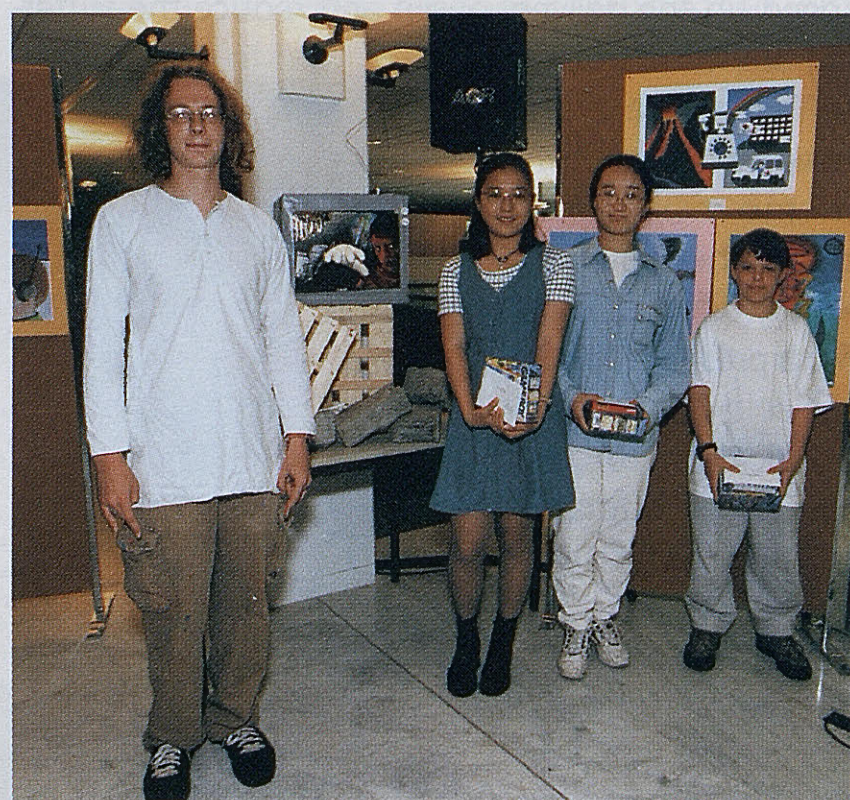
The importance of telecommunications for the work of all partners in humanitarian assistance, the international and national, governmental and non-governmental organizations, could hardly have been shown better. Thanks to the enthusiasm and spontaneous support of all those involved, from the ITU and the United Nations as well as from the Geneva authorities and the suppliers of equipment and services such as *Rohde & Schwarz*, *Inmarsat*, *Swiss Telecom PTT* as well as other sponsors, World Telecommunication Day 1997 has been an important milestone on the way to what is most needed today: the removal of regulatory barriers which all too often still hinder the optimum use of telecommunications for the prevention and alleviation of human suffering caused by disasters.

A draft of the Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations is ready for submission to an intergovernmental conference. A high level of awareness for the need of such a legal instrument has been created through the many forums

which discussed emergency telecommunications over the past three years, and most of all through World Telecommunication Day 1997. The conference should take place not later than the summer of 1998, a host country is presently being sought for this.

Youth participation

Within the framework of the World Telecommunication Day 1997 celebrations, the authorities of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, in collaboration with the International School of Geneva, organized a children's drawing competition. Many young artists aged between 12 and



The winners of the children's drawing competition, from left to right: Gregory Nay, Lu Han, Pei Wu and Pascal Bouchard-Trudel

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17 years participated in this event and presented high-quality entries.

The winners were announced at the World Telecommunication Day official inauguration on 17 May and received prizes from Mr Tarjanne.

- First prize: Gregory Nay (17).
- Second prize: Lu Han (14).
- Third prize (of equal merit): Pei Wu (14) and Pascal Bouchard-Trudel (12). ■