
COMMITTEE 4

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UN World Food Programme position on the WRC-07 Agenda

1. Introduction

The UN World Food Programme is the United Nations frontline agency in the fight against global hunger. Operations aim to:

- (i) Save lives in refugee crises and other emergencies
- (ii) Improve nutrition and quality of life of world's most vulnerable people at critical times in their lives
- (iii) Enable development by (a) helping people build assets that benefit them directly; (b) promoting the self-reliance of poor people and communities

2. General Comments

The UN WFP relies on communication tools when delivering food to the hungry. Most often in the places where hunger strikes, local communications are at best primitive or at worst non-existent.

Food crises are a main threat to achieving the Millennium Development Goals that 192 UN member states have agreed to try and achieve by the year 2015. A fundamental factor is the lack of institutional capacity and infrastructure to generate and share reliable information.

WFP has developed its own Worldwide VSAT based WAN to make sure that this lack of communications does not interfere with the institution's ability to deliver food to those most in need. This WAN allows its aid workers to communicate with field offices and Headquarters and effectively manage the movement, delivery and monitoring of critical food aid.

3. UN WFP position on Agenda Item 1.4

Today most, if not all of WFP's offices, are connected by a VSAT network (satellite technology) called FoodSat, which, due to climatic conditions, relies on downlink transmission in the frequency range known as 'C-Band' using all parts of the 3400-4200 MHz band as needed.

WFP operates in 81 countries all over the developing world and FoodSat is its "Communications Backbone" connecting nearly all operational sites and the UN network. Although WFP is active the world over, priority in terms of hunger remains first and foremost Africa, then Asia and then Central & Latin America.

The FoodSat satellite-based system provides reliable, cost-effective voice and real-time data connections transporting e-mail, ERP access and food commodity and beneficiary tracking systems. It is now in use in 200 WFP offices worldwide. Its responsiveness and reliability have made it the only viable communications choice for crises ranging from Afghanistan and Iraq war related food emergencies to the Tsunami natural disaster and famine-threatened Ethiopia.

FoodSat was established in 2003, and as a follow on to this success WFP is chairing a co-operative effort between UN agencies to harmonise their C Band VSAT networks (some 500 outstations) to a UN standard. This standard which will start to be implemented in Jan 2008 is also C Band based. The agencies involved in the project with WFP are UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, OCHA, UNDPKO, UNHCR & UNESCO

It has been extensively demonstrated that sharing this band with terrestrial systems of the so-called 'IMT' family would be detrimental to satellite communications to the point that communications could be completely cut off. This is primarily because the 3400-4200MHz band is used for the downlink from the Satellite to the earthstations which is the part of the system most prone to terrestrial based interference due to the interference being received at the point where the desired signal is weakest. It has been recorded that Interference with satellite signals has actually occurred in some countries of those regions where national administrations have enabled Broadband Wireless Access or Wimax to transmit into the C-band.

With the weakness of the regulatory structures in many developing countries the imposition of exclusion zones around earthstations is unlikely to be able to be adequately monitored and enforced due to lack of resources. Further, given the distances required for effective exclusion zones this idea is considered by WFP to be impractical and would in practice be ineffective.

UN WFP cannot conceive that as an internationally recognized institution that delivers food to the hungry poor, its existing communications infrastructure might be put at risk by as yet unproven and possibly hyped up new commercial ventures that exist in only a few

countries. Furthermore, as described above, many other UN organizations operating in the field of humanitarian aid and development and non-governmental organizations such as TSF (Telecom Sans Frontiers), Oxfam, World Vision, and many others also rely on C-Band satellite technology to deliver in crisis areas which sadly exist in ALL continents.

UN WFP therefore vehemently opposes any worldwide authorization to implement IMT in the band 3400-4200 MHz that is so essential to the humanitarian aid community and specifically to its own operations in the delivery of food to the world's hungry poor.
