

Swiss Mission to the United Nations New York, 10 July 2012

Report on High-Level Dialogue with UN Member States on the status of the UN Crisis Information Management Strategy (CiMS) using inter alia social media tools, crisis mapping and crowdsourcing

After [the successful two day retreat](#) on 11 and 12 June 2012 of the UN Crisis Information Management Advisory Group (CiMAG), consisting inter alia of **OCHA, DPKO, DFS, UNFP, UNHCR, WFP, UNDP, Global Pulse, UNOSAT, OHCHR, organized by the UN ASG Chief Information Technology Officer (UN CITO) and the ICT4Peace Foundation**, the **Swiss Ambassador to the UN, Paul Seger** hosted on 10 July 2012 a High-Level briefing luncheon for UN Member States. Participating countries were **Bangladesh, Chile, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Germany, Finland, Malaysia, Russia, Singapore**. From the CiMAG, representatives of **OCHA, DPKO, DFS and UNDP** were invited to participate.

The main purpose of the working lunch was to discuss the status of implementation of the [UN Crisis Information Management Strategy](#) and the results of the recent CiMAG retreat. UN ASG Dr. Soon-hong Choi and Dr. Daniel Stauffacher launched the discussion with a presentation that can be downloaded [here](#). The goal of the CiM strategy is to improve the collection and sharing of credible, accurate, complete and timely information both within and among the United Nations organisations and with other stake-holders, such as Member States, Humanitarian Organisations and Business, in order to / with the goal of protecting people, property, human dignity and the environment affected by crises. In particular, the cooperation with the newly emerging Volunteer and Technical (V & T) Community (Digital Humanitarian Network and Stand-by Task Force) of crisis mappers and crowd-sourcing platforms provides important new opportunities and challenges. The objective and philosophy of CiMS is to work toward a convergence in Crisis Information Management, while respecting the mandates of the individual organisations.

The CiM Strategy encompasses the following areas:

1. Data Architecture: Data that we need to collect and share for all countries, in particular, and as a priority for, disaster prone countries: e.g. roads, hospitals, damage caused, number and location of victims;
2. Technology Development: What ICT tools and platforms do we use?
3. Stakeholder Management: Who are the stake-holders in producing, sharing and receiving crisis information: United Nations, Governments, NGOs (including Volunteer and Technical Communities) and
4. Capacity Building and Training: Knowledge Management, Joint Development of CiM Training curricula for Crisis Information Management skill development.

Mary Keller, OCHA, reported on the progress made in the field of data architecture in more detail including the level of implementation of the Core Operational Data Sets (CODs) and FODs for the most crisis prone countries (<http://cod.humanitarianresponse.info>). She also reported on the experience with the enhanced cooperation with the Volunteer and Technical (V & T) Community (e.g. SBTF in the case of Libya), including the Digital Humanitarian Network. Dr. Daniel Stauffacher reported inter alia on the hosting of the 3rd International Conference of Crisis Mappers (ICCM 2011) in Geneva and the connected on-going work of the Community of Interest (COI) and the successful testing of the Crisis Information Management Training Pilot Course at CCCPA in Cairo, jointly organized by Folke Bernadotte, ZIF, CMC, CMI, APSTA and ICT4Peace in October 2011. OCHA and DPKO showed interest in joining the development of this course. The ultimate goal of this effort is to be able to train a larger number of Crisis Information

Managers in the field and at HQ, who will also be capable of collecting, analysing and sharing large amounts of data including information coming from the V & T community, (Crisis Mappers and Social Media), in addition to the data produced by traditional media and UN situation reports etc.

Dr. Soon-Hong Choi subsequently reported on the results of the CiMAG retreat as follows: CiMAG members agreed to continue working on the convergence within CiMS and the UN and with the crisis mapping community on data architecture, technology development, stakeholder management and capacity building. The next retreat/meeting will be held in the second half of 2013. It was decided to develop a high-level approach for how the four pillars of CiM could be applied, with appropriate data mobilisation and web visualisation, to the situations in selected counties in crisis, by the CiMAG as a joint endeavour. It was suggested that a repository of CiM platforms should be built, that can be accessed via the web to help CiM members identify platforms and systems useful in a crisis based on previous deployments, use cases and capabilities.

Throughout the luncheon a very lively, engaged and interactive dialogue took place among the participating representatives of Governments and UN organizations. In general the efforts to work incrementally towards a convergence in crisis information management under the umbrella of CiMS and CiMAG were welcomed by the participants (some felt CiM would in such a way also contribute to the endeavours of “One UN” and better coordination within the UN and the international community in general). It was underlined that in times of crisis good information is essential for effective decision-making in real time and that feedback systems are needed in both directions between HQ and the field. Questions and solutions were discussed on how to analyse and validate the large amounts of data produced during crises by the crisis mapping and crowd-sourcing platforms, some coming even from victims. Ethical questions were also raised, such as the “do no harm” principles and the question of responsibility of those entities that generate and make available information, vis-à-vis the victims and those in need. Among many other points, the issues of business continuity and resilience of connectivity but also of CiM capabilities were raised. It was explained that the work of the UN regarding Global Pulse and CiMS were complementary, and the data produced by Global Pulse would be part of the CiMS data architecture.

Ambassador Paul Seger thanked all the participants for the excellent presentations and discussion. He concluded that crisis information management plays a vital role for the UN to carry out its tasks, and that CiMS and the CiMAG are useful platforms to advance and improve the functioning of CiM. However considerable work remains to be done. Switzerland has been supporting these efforts in the past and will continue to do so in the future. He welcomed other Governments and partners to join forces and announced that he would be happy to host such a luncheon again next year.

Daniel Stauffacher, 14 July 2012