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Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief

Submitted by the Bureau for approval

Summary

When facing a natural disaster, the first fifteen days are critical for effective relief measures. A good deal of guidance exists from various sources; this recommendation aims to consolidate this guidance to assist countries to either prepare relief plans for future disasters or to deal with a disaster once it has struck. This recommendation was prepared in close collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) and with significant contributions from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

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I. Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief

A. Introduction

1. This high-level policy recommendation advocates to governments the importance of building national capacity and capability to cope with a large influx of humanitarian relief. The sudden onset of a disaster often results in relief providers and national administrations being unclear about importation requirements and procedures for needed relief items. These items may include lifesaving relief goods for distribution to households and communities impacted by the disaster as well as specialty cargo such as medicines and medical equipment, telecommunications equipment and search and rescue animals and equipment. This uncertainty can add undue pressure to an already difficult post-disaster situation, leading to delays in getting relief goods and services to disaster affected people.

B. Purpose and scope

2. This policy recommendation supports governments by providing key considerations and practices for implementing preparedness measures for the facilitation of a large influx of humanitarian relief after a disaster. Specific attention is provided to the immediate emergency response phase of a sudden onset disaster scenario. For the purposes of this recommendation and as a high-level indicator, this has been defined as 0 - 15 days following a disaster. This recommendation focuses on the affected country leadership and coordination required as well as import, transit, and temporary admission scenarios for the movement of relief goods¹ and equipment² in response to a sudden-onset natural disaster.³ This recommendation is provided for situations when a country has made a request for international assistance or has accepted international assistance. This may occur in situations when a state of emergency has or has not been declared by the affected State.

C. Objectives

3. This recommendation recognizes cross-border regulatory agencies as key actors that need to be involved in disaster management preparedness and relief planning and implementation. There are many existing international conventions and non-binding instruments that require or recommend national administrators to adopt specific facilitation measures for disaster relief. The most recent and relevant international legal materials are detailed at Annex I. These guidelines extend beyond this current international legal framework to provide more specific technical guidance for cross-border regulatory agencies and describe what ideal measures for disaster relief border control can look like.

D. Benefits

4. There are numerous benefits to enhancing preparedness to receive a large influx of relief in the aftermath of a disaster. Through implementation of the relevant policies and practices in this recommendation and its accompanying Guidelines, governments can enable disaster relief to rapidly reach disaster-affected people and communities, leading to lives saved and minimized losses of livelihoods. With the severity and frequency of natural

¹ For the purposes of this recommendation and its accompanying Guidelines and Annexes, the term 'relief goods' means physical supplies intended to be provided to disaster-affected communities for their relief or initial recovery. These goods are to be provided free of charge, as a donated 'gift'.

² 'Relief equipment' refers to physical items, other than goods, that are necessary for disaster relief or initial recovery assistance.

³ This policy recommendation and associated Guidelines does not specifically consider complex, protracted or slow-onset crises.

disasters likely to increase as a result of climate change, the need for legal and institutional preparedness has never been greater.⁴

5. The measures recommended in this document will also support government efforts in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development targets, and particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 which prescribes the implementation of integrated policies that build resilience to disasters. Enabling efficient and effective facilitation measures for disaster preparedness and response will also increase the accountability of all stakeholders involved in managing disaster relief at border entry points.

E. Recommended practice

6. In the light of the above, and the need to preserve the well-being and livelihoods of people affected by disasters, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) at its twenty-seventh Plenary session on 19-20 April 2021 in Geneva, encourages national administrations to:

- (a) Develop preparedness plans and procedures to facilitate the cross-border movement of prioritized disaster relief goods and equipment using existing mechanisms to the extent possible to mitigate risks and ensure the smooth return to business as usual, based on current international standards and legal framework (see Annex I).
- (b) Align common preparedness measures for the cross-border movement of disaster relief goods and equipment across government authorities and key stakeholders while applying proportionate border-movement controls.
- (c) Support the reduction of administrative and financial burdens on the cross-border movement of disaster relief goods and equipment.

⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation* (2012). Report available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/managing-the-risks-of-extreme-events-and-disasters-to-advance-climate-change-adaptation/>.

II. Guidelines to Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief

A. Introduction

7. In a changing and increasingly complex world, governments are facing pronounced challenges such as an increasing incidence of natural disasters, threats to peace and security as well as disease and environmental incidents and accidents. When affected by disaster, government agencies are charged with the responsibility of ensuring timely importation of necessary relief goods as well as accurate application of tax exemptions for humanitarian responders, while at the same time mitigating risk by protecting their borders from dangerous or illegal traffic. The pressure at borders is further accentuated by the increasing number and diversity of national and international relief actors responding to large scale disasters. Enhancing preparedness to effectively manage international disaster relief requires an assessment of how laws, policies and procedures governing the movement of goods across national borders can be adapted to reduce processing times, prioritize needed relief, reduce costs and maximize efficiency, all while safeguarding legitimate regulatory objectives.

B. General principles and context

8. This section introduces some general principles that are important to set the context for more specific guidelines covered in the remaining sections. These principles echo existing international standards and legal frameworks (see Annex I) and include:

- It is first and foremost the responsibility of the government of the affected state to address the humanitarian needs caused by a disaster within its borders;
- Governments should provide specific types of legal facilities to eligible assisting actors so that they can do an effective job of responding to humanitarian needs;
- The administrative burden of the relief effort should be kept to a minimum;
- Administrative actions regarding the control of goods should endeavour to strike a balance between mitigating risks and meeting the urgent needs of disaster-affected people;
- Eligible assisting actors should have access to legal facilities on the condition of being committed to, and having ongoing compliance with, certain minimum standards;
- Administrations should adopt appropriate measures to strengthen their resilience and preparedness to face disaster situations; and
- Proactive advance planning and consultation with stakeholders is highly recommended to ensure that opportunities to reduce the administrative burden can be identified and implemented.

1. Exceptional circumstances in a post-disaster operating environment

9. These guidelines promote the strategic value of instilling resilience across border regulatory agencies and border entry points when dealing with a disaster that surpasses national capacity. The sudden mobilization and surge of humanitarian assistance offered by the international community may quickly create bottlenecks at border entry points that are critical hubs for large scale disaster response programs. Border entry points may receive up to ten times the usual amount of cargo to support disaster relief efforts. Relief goods are dispatched and shipped during all phases of the disaster cycle, including to pre-position in transit and high-risk countries before a disaster occurs. It is typically when national authorities have made an emergency declaration and requested international assistance that the need to prioritize the rapid importation of emergency relief items and equipment is greatest. These guidelines specifically focus on situations in which international assistance is requested or accepted.

10. Effective laws, policies and operating procedures are necessary for cross-border regulatory agencies to efficiently receive the sudden influx of cross-border disaster relief shipments, especially considering they may be operating with reduced capacity in the cases where infrastructure, personnel and IT systems have been affected by a disaster.

11. Failing to prepare ahead to minimize the risk of blockages and congestion at entry points is likely to negatively affect the fast reception and delivery of needed humanitarian assistance as well as regular cross-border operations and trade, disrupting business and population not initially affected directly by the disaster.

12. A proactive and inclusive approach to preparing to work under exceptional disaster response conditions is required so all cross-border regulatory agencies can effectively work with each other to ensure relief reaches disaster-affected people while maintaining necessary national controls. Using learning extracted from previous disaster events, preparedness should focus not only on the visible national cross-border agencies but also consider the whole system of national legal and regulatory frameworks across government agencies. To facilitate this, pragmatism is a key principle embedded in institutional disaster resilience. The most effective strategies to support the immediate response to a disaster will probably not depend on a fully operational technical environment or automated information systems such as electricity, telecommunications, office buildings and transport infrastructure which may be impacted. Instead, low-tech mechanisms and processes, prepared in advance through strong collaborative efforts and able to be activated quickly, are required.

2. Key stakeholders

13. There are numerous stakeholders that participate in the international trading system, as described in the UN/CEFACT International Supply Chain Reference Model (ISCRM).⁵ During the initial stage following a disaster, there are generally five types of actors important to consider in the cross-border movement of disaster relief among whom coordination is likely to be required:

- Beneficiaries;
- Eligible assisting actors providing goods and equipment;
- Eligible assisting actors providing services, technical advice and other assistance;
- Governmental regulatory agencies; and
- Private sector economic operators that provide support.

14. Annex II provides descriptions of these actors and their respective roles.

3. Common disaster relief goods

15. Disaster relief goods are intended to be provided to disaster-affected communities for their relief or initial recovery.⁶ Some states also have additional rules for which specific items are classified as relief items during a disaster response. Several international organizations and United Nations entities who frequently provide disaster relief have developed relief goods catalogues and detailed specifications.⁷

⁵ UN/CEFACT, *International Supply Chain Reference Model (ISCRM)*, 2003 available at <http://tfig.unece.org/contents/ISCRM.htm>.

⁶ International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, *Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (Geneva, 2007)*, available at <https://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/idrl/idrl-guidelines/>.

⁷ For examples, refer to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Standard Products Catalogue; the World Health Organization's Essential Medicines and Health Products publications <https://www.who.int/medicines/publications/en/>; United Nations Children's Fund Supply Catalogue, available at <https://supply.unicef.org/>; and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Core Relief Item Catalogue (2012), available at <https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/45957/Core+Relief+Items+Catalogue/f323c300-83e8-4238-960b-8701fccca5e0>.

16. Annex III lists typical example types of relief goods and equipment imported during the initial phases of a disaster response, including kits commonly distributed to households.

4. Types of disasters

17. A disaster is defined as a “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.”⁸

18. Although all types of large-scale disasters lead to loss of life and major disruptions, there are nuances in disaster preparedness and response depending on the disaster type (natural, conflict, population-movement, etc.). These guidelines focus specifically on sudden-onset natural disasters defined as:

- **Disasters connected to natural phenomena and health crises in non-conflict settings:** Crises in which natural processes (geological, hydrological, meteorological or biological) play a significant part in increasing mortality, disease morbidity and damage to livelihoods, and where these effects are not compounded by war or widespread armed violence⁹
- **Sudden onset:** Catastrophic, rapid-onset events like tropical storms, earthquakes and tsunamis

5. Disaster response phases

19. A large-scale natural disaster can very quickly surpass the response capacity of any one country. Following the request for or acceptance of international assistance by an affected government, eligible assisting actors can rapidly dispatch large quantities of relief to support response efforts.

20. Each disaster is a unique event and disaster response requires careful strategic assessment and planning. The common stages of disaster response do not follow a neatly defined course or timeline, however there are several phases that commonly unfold and can inform preparedness and response measures.

21. Typical disaster response phases and likely cross-border movement scenarios are described below:

- **Early warning and early action:** Monitoring provides early warning of emerging risks which, in turn, allows for early action, such as tailoring contingency plans and, where possible taking action that could mitigate the impact of the emerging risk. Relief organizations present in the country or region may start to evaluate and pre-position existing disaster relief supplies close to areas expected to be affected. Potential eligible assisting actors may start to apply for duty and tax exemptions for some possible relief supplies. Early warning can at times lead to a price surge from suppliers and service providers attempting to capitalize on the increase in predicted demand.
- **Disaster impact:** Although not a formal disaster phase, this is the period in which the disaster is occurring and immediate information about the disaster impact is gathered. This period may last up to 48 hours or longer. It is usually the period in which people must seek safety and carefully monitor and assess incoming information from a variety of sources and share information about initial damage assessments such as the operational status of air and seaports and major road closures.
- **Disaster relief:** The relief phase represents the immediate, lifesaving response activities undertaken after a disaster. This phase can last for hours, days or even

⁸ United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction* (A/71/644), 2016, page 13, available from: https://www.preventionweb.net/files/50683_oiewgreportenglish.pdf

⁹ ALNAP, *The State of the Humanitarian System Report 2018 Edition*, available from: <https://www.alnap.org/our-topics/the-state-of-the-humanitarian-system>

weeks, depending on the situation. These guidelines use an indicative timeframe of the first fifteen days after initial impact or declaration of disaster. This period requires rapid response actions to prevent the loss of life from first responders such as search and rescue teams. Affected areas can suffer from power grid failure, fuel shortages, road, water and other infrastructure damage. Disaster response agencies usually conduct and communicate rapid needs assessments under the coordination of the affected country as well as develop strategies to physically access impacted areas. It is usually during this phase, that the government of the disaster-affected state may decide to request or accept international assistance based on the needs identified and national capacity to fulfil those needs.¹⁰ The agency responsible for disaster response should issue a preliminary list of goods, equipment and services needed that can be communicated to all relevant cross-border regulatory agencies to facilitate rapid importation of international donations and other support provided by international eligible assisting actors. Support from eligible assisting actors may be provided as financial contribution, physical goods and equipment or surge personnel. Emergency coordination centres, telecommunications hubs, and additional airport reception centres are usually set up during this stage as required. Frequently, requested and unrequested donated goods and other types of assistance are received by the impacted state and need to be managed at border entry points. Expedited procedures are critical to avoid bottlenecks or to avoid low priority relief items being processed first.

- **Recovery:** When the initial onset and the shock of the disaster has abated and temporary measures have met immediate needs, a more stable period of transition can begin. Some employment activities may resume and children may go back to school. During medium to long-term recovery, the work of building more permanent physical structures and rehabilitation of infrastructure begins, along with restoration of social structures. Border points may usually return to using regular processes during this phase.
- **Preparedness:** Preparedness involves the ongoing practice of systemic analysis and assessment of readiness to respond to potential disasters. During this phase, regulatory agencies and stakeholders should take actions to reduce the potential impact of disasters such as ensuring necessary regulatory and legal frameworks are in place, making contingency plans, practicing scenarios that regularly test equipment and procedures and implementing lessons from past experiences.

C. Guidelines to facilitate disaster relief

1. Immediate response priorities

22. The below section details procedures that can be used immediately after a sudden-onset natural disaster to effectively facilitate the cross-border movement of disaster relief goods and equipment. The aim of the recommended practices is to ensure cross-border regulatory agencies can rapidly apply predictable and pragmatic controls following a large-scale natural disaster.

23. Ideally, countries will have existing laws which facilitate the rapid cross-border movement of disaster relief and equipment.¹¹ Where this is not the case, governments may

¹⁰ For further information about the request for international assistance process refer to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, *Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance* (2007), available from: <https://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/idrl/idrl-guidelines/>

¹¹ To review and strengthen the relevant national laws, refer to International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2007 *Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL Guidelines)*, available at www.ifrc.org/what-we-do/disaster-law/about-disaster-law/international-disaster-response-laws-rules-and-principles/idrl-guidelines/; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2017, *Checklist on the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL Checklist)*, available at <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp->

issue an emergency decree in the days following a large-scale disaster which may include measures to facilitate rapid cross-border movement of disaster relief and equipment. A model emergency decree has been developed by the UN OCHA and International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to provide specific rules for managing international assistance. This can be used and adapted as required to provide the necessary legal foundation for the procedures that follow.¹²

1.1 Airport management

24. Airport operations are a critical part of the initial disaster relief effort. Airport authorities and managing operators can take a key leadership role in ensuring good coordination of aviation and humanitarian stakeholders. Considering that natural disasters often have direct impact on airport infrastructure and operations, airport authorities should undertake disaster preparedness planning and regular exercises.¹³ Airport authorities and managing operators are encouraged to ensure that:

- Comprehensive communications and coordination mechanisms are able to be activated immediately following a large-scale natural disaster;
- Key information about the operational status of airports is able to be disseminated rapidly;
- Air traffic control, security, safety and other critical functions are able to continue in immediate-response and post-disaster operating conditions (including consideration of staffing needs, fallback processes and equipment in case of infrastructure damage);
- Partnerships and other surge-type arrangements are in place to support the post-disaster functioning of airports, such as arrangements for staff from other airports to work temporarily in affected airports to meet anticipated demand.

1.2 One-Stop Shop and Coordinated Border Management

25. As defined in UN/CEFACT *Technical Note: Terminology for Single Window and other ePlatforms*, a One-Stop Shop is “a physical location where multiple agencies have representative offices. An economic operator can perform all of their procedures (paper or electronic) within the same physical location. A One-Stop Shop, in this context, does not refer to the technical solution which allows one to process all information concerning a transaction; it refers to the physical location where multiple procedures can be fulfilled, allowing traders to avoid time-consuming travel from one office to another.”¹⁴ Implementing a One-Stop Shop can facilitate the arrival of goods during the disaster relief stage, especially if it is combined with Coordinated Border Management (CBM). CBM refers to “a cooperative approach by border control agencies (both at the national and international level)

[content/uploads/sites/5/2017/12/IDRL-Checklist-EN-LR.pdf](https://www.unece.org/cefact/TechnicalNotes/IDRL-Checklist-EN-LR.pdf) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) 2011, *Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL Model Act)*, available at [www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/88609/Pilot%20Model%20Act%20on%20IDRL%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/88609/Pilot%20Model%20Act%20on%20IDRL%20(English).pdf)

¹² International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2011, *Model Emergency Decree for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRC Model Emergency Decree)*, available at https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/12/Model-Decree_EN-LR.pdf

¹³ For an example of disaster preparedness planning undertaken by airports, refer to Deutsche Post DHL Group’s *Get Airports Ready for Disaster (GARD)* program website: <https://www.dpdhl.com/en/sustainability/society-and-engagement/disaster-management/disaster-preparedness.html>

¹⁴ UN/CEFACT, *Technical Note: Terminology for Single Window and other ePlatforms, Version 1* (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/10), p. 10. Available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/GuidanceMaterials/WhitePapers/WP-TechNoteSWTerminology_Eng.pdf.

in the context of seeking greater efficiencies when managing trade flows, while maintaining a balance with compliance requirements.”¹⁵

26. One-Stop Shop mechanisms should include all governmental regulatory agencies involved in the cross-border movement of disaster relief items. It should also include other governmental regulatory agencies involved in approving international personnel to enter the country and in approving assisting actors to register as eligible actors able to benefit from expedited government processes. The agreed procedures to be implemented by One-Stop Shops should be kept as simple and predictable as possible. The typical types of disaster relief items in Annex III will help governments identify which authorities may need to be included.

27. In the immediate days following a large, sudden-onset natural disaster, government offices may remain closed (particularly if the capital is affected), so it is important that agreements for activating One-Stop Shop and CBM procedures are agreed in advance to avoid delays. This can be achieved through a law, policy or plan, which establishes a One-Stop Shop, including its membership, functions and operating procedures. If a One-Stop Shop arrangement does not pre-exist the disaster, it is recommended to quickly put one in place as soon as there is a request for international assistance or acceptance of international assistance.

28. The location(s) of One-Stop Shops should be considered carefully. Ideally, they will be located at key national air, maritime and road entry points; border entry points closest to the disaster affected sites; and/or key disaster response hubs for eligible assisting actors and/or staging area locations. One-Stop Shops may co-locate with government Emergency Operations Centres to encourage easy information flows and should ideally have access to internet, telephone, electricity and other communications services through stand-alone equipment such as electric generator in case networks are disrupted. It is recommended that One-Stop Shops are supported with enough staff which may include re-deploying staff from other locations or duties. The contact details of One-Stop Shops should be shared with eligible assisting actors as soon as available so that pre-arrival notifications for disaster relief items can be submitted and immediate or conditional release granted where possible. Publishing likely locations, contact details and availability of IT systems for One-Stop Shops as a preparedness activity before a disaster occurs is highly recommended. In some instances, a One-Stop Shop mechanisms may be fully established in a neighbouring country.

29. One-Stop Shops can also support other services during the disaster relief phases including:

- Act as a contact point for the main stakeholders involved in disaster relief;
- Handle requests for approval or registration of eligible assisting actors so that they can become eligible to receive support from governments for the prioritization of goods, equipment and personnel;
- Facilitate the handover of relief goods from non-registered assisting actors to registered eligible assisting actors, if required; and
- Share contact details for Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs) or other similar authorized operator programs and other logistics and customs agent services.

30. In addition, for disaster relief entering through neighbouring countries, it may be beneficial to implement a One-Stop Border Post. This is a facility in which “the traffic crossing the border need only to stop at one border post. In the One-Stop Border Post the officials of neighbouring countries work together in the same premises at the border.”¹⁶

31. Excellence in Coordinated Border Management is key to achieving a balance between adequate control and facilitating the rapid delivery of disaster relief. Examples of operational coordination include (but are not limited to):

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, page 11.

- Aligned practices and work such as joint shipment inspections and checks (when these must occur) or allowing one governmental regulatory agency to conduct checks and registrations on behalf of another;
- Combined information, data collection systems, document submission procedures and intelligence sharing;
- Shared resources such as equipment and facilities; and
- Coordination bodies such as working groups and inter-agency meetings.

32. Operational coordination for disaster relief must be supported by strategic, technical and regulatory coordination as well as appropriate legislation. Key scenarios for operational coordination that will require support and enabling instruments to be in place, include the following:

- Coordination of duty, tariff, tax and other fee exemptions and waivers
 - Regulations and procedures must be clearly communicated and implemented for eligible assisting actors to apply for exemptions and waivers from duties, taxes, tariffs and other fees. These processes should be consistently applied across all different border entry points and should extend to demurrage, airport taxes, customs duties, value added tax and other costs as per national arrangements. Eligible assisting actors will also require information if waivers and exemptions for taxes and duties and reduced fees for other charges apply for specific timeframes (such as during emergency declaration periods), to approved organizations and/or for particular goods and equipment. All relevant cross-border regulatory agencies need to be involved in these decisions and in consistent communications to stakeholders.
- Coordination of licensing
 - When licences are required and cannot be waived, utilization of provisional or annual licences may help to expedite processes. For example, required licences may include import licences for particular goods, operational licences for certain equipment such as telecommunications, or licences for particular activities such as for personnel to drive certain vehicles or provide certain services such as medical services. Acceptance of global licences or permits is recommended and licence requirements for disaster relief should be kept to an absolute minimum. Cooperation and coordination between governmental regulatory agencies should be used to simplify procedures and reduce requirements wherever possible.
- Coordination of temporary admissions
 - Some disaster relief goods and equipment may require temporary admission only. These include non-consumable items such as medical equipment, generators, vehicles and search and rescue animals. The usage of ATA Carnets to expedite temporary admissions processes is encouraged, where applicable. Such processes should be clearly communicated to eligible assisting actors along with timelines, the extension process and the process for return shipping of the goods and equipment (re-export) that have been brought into the affected country under a temporary admission procedure.
- Coordination for specialized relief equipment
 - A range of specialized disaster relief items and equipment may be critically needed following a sudden-onset natural disaster. Coordination mechanisms and protocols to expedite the import of such supplies and equipment are recommended. The following are some examples:

- For **telecommunications equipment** the Tampere Convention¹⁷ specifically aims to reduce regulatory barriers and guarantee the necessary privileges, immunities and facilities for relief personnel and organizations providing telecommunications assistance. To implement the convention, an advance list of telecommunications resources that are likely to be required and plans for their use should be developed along with the creation of partnerships among telecommunication actors.¹⁸
- **Medical supplies, equipment and devices** require specific prioritization during importation processes. Adherence to cold chain conditions, expiry dates, labelling requirements and avoidance of prohibited, counterfeit and substandard items are essential but can complicate rapid cross-border facilitation requiring special attention. Often, sensitive medical supplies will be clearly marked by eligible assisting actors to help physical identification and prioritization. Waivers and exemptions from inspections, licences and import permits for eligible or registered assisting actors based on appropriate risk management should be applied wherever possible. Eligible assisting actors should also be advised if particular border entry points have the necessary equipment and storage facilities for the handling of medical supplies and equipment. Cross-border regulatory agencies should also be prepared to process medical items in kits, such as surgical kits, cholera kits, etc. and detailed kit contents lists should be available from eligible assisting actors. All imported medicines should be approved and appropriately labelled for use within the affected State.
- **Transport assets, equipment and vehicles** may be needed for relief operations and will require coordination among regulatory agencies to rapidly facilitate exemptions or waivers for any duty, tariff, tax, other fees and registration/licensing requirements which will need to be permitted under pre-existing legislation or an emergency decree. Acceptance of international insurance and licence arrangements are encouraged. Assets could include vehicles, helicopters, forklifts, drones, etc. Use of temporary importation and registration procedures to quickly enable their use and operation in the affected country during the disaster relief phase is encouraged.
- **Search and rescue equipment and animals** may require specific coordination and legal facilities among regulatory agencies to provide rapid importation.¹⁹
- **Emergency food** rations and supplies may also be needed by disaster affected communities and cross-border regulatory agencies should consider mechanisms to facilitate rapid importation of such food supplies.

¹⁷ *Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunications Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations*, Tampere, 18 June 1998 (United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 2296, p. 5). Available at https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXV-4&chapter=25

¹⁸ For guidance on how to develop a national emergency telecommunication plan, refer to the International Telecommunication Union, *ITU Guidelines for national emergency telecommunication plans* (2019). Available at https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Emergency-Telecommunications/Documents/2019/NETP_Global_guideline.pdf

¹⁹ For more information, see the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) *Guidelines and Methodology* (2012). Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/our-work/coordination/international-search-and-rescue-advisory-group-insarag>

33. It is important to ensure that coordination is not limited to main border entry points but is also able to be implemented reliably and consistently at all border entry points.

1.3 *Paper-based and other fallback procedures*

34. Flexibility and adaptability are required for cross-border regulatory agencies to facilitate disaster relief movements in a post-disaster operating environment. While electronic and automated processes can provide significant advantages, electricity and telecommunications may be disrupted following a disaster. Even if government agencies have contingency plans for electricity supply via generator and network-independent telecommunication systems, eligible assisting actors in the disaster affected State and other stakeholders may not. Administrations shall hence plan for and activate fallback procedures to ensure that any necessary cross-border regulations and control procedures that cannot be waived or exempted for disaster relief shipments can be simplified and easily followed in the post-disaster operating environment.

35. Recommended fallback procedures include the following:

- Allowing registered eligible assisting actors and authorized operators to keep appropriate records of imports and exports until electricity and telecommunication services and the capabilities of cross-border regulatory agencies are restored;
- Accepting paper-based documents and forms;
- Printing hardcopies of any required forms before a disaster so that they are readily available post-disaster;
- Accepting documents that adhere to international standards (such as standard shipping documents, commercial invoices, etc.) that do not require adaption or reformatting to meet country-specific requirements;
- Accepting documents in untranslated or unofficial translated form;
- Accepting copies, rather than original documents; and
- Coordinating and partnering with neighbouring countries to provide remote temporary assistance.

36. The use of separate control lanes for shipments identified as disaster relief will also help ensure that fallback procedures are limited only to disaster relief shipments. Use of such procedures can also be restricted to registered eligible assisting actors to minimize risk.

37. Fallback procedures should be reviewed regularly to ensure there are robust methods in place for the exchange and storage of cross-border regulatory agency information when usual systems are not operating.

1.4 *Identification and prioritization of needed disaster relief items*

38. To prevent bottlenecks at border entry points, cross-border regulatory agencies must have a plan in place to clearly identify and prioritize the most urgent requested disaster relief shipments and separately manage any other unrequested, low-priority goods. Typically, disaster relief goods will be labelled 'Humanitarian Aid – Not for Sale – Relief Goods' printed physically on packaging and declared on documents such as packing list, gift certificate or proforma invoice. Disaster relief goods should also be labelled with the item contents and any applicable expiry dates. However, with more diversity of eligible assisting actors and large volumes of disaster relief goods likely to arrive following a large-scale natural disaster, this labelling may not be sufficient to adequately identify and prioritize the most urgent items. Other systems that can be used jointly for identifying and prioritizing disaster relief goods and equipment include the following:

- Prioritize relief consignments by using tariff codes to identify priority relief items
 - Upon request or acceptance of international assistance, the governmental agency responsible for disaster response should issue a preliminary list of priority goods, equipment and services needed, based on initial rapid needs

assessments.²⁰ The items on the list can be quickly selected from a list of acceptable items developed before a disaster occurs, as described in section C2 below. The list should be communicated to all relevant cross-border regulatory agencies and eligible assisting actors providing goods and equipment.²¹ The list should be used to prioritize, but not exclude, needed disaster relief items and equipment and should be developed in consultation with all first-responder agencies.

- Items and equipment included on the list can be mapped against national tariff code classifications. Publishing a list of the correct national tariff codes for the items and equipment on the list will help ensure priority goods and equipment can be easily recognized through customs declarations.
- Nearly 212 economies currently apply the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (also known as the HS).²² The HS chapters 98 and 99 can be used to set additional national provisions. States may wish to make use of chapters 98 and 99 to further distinguish disaster relief items for easy identification, prioritization and tracking.
- Identify priority relief consignments using customs procedure codes
 - Alternatively, dedicated national customs procedure codes can be created and assigned to disaster relief consignments. The codes may be released specifically for a disaster response with a predetermined applicable timeframe dependent on the scale of the emergency. However, this process may be more difficult to administer than the use of national tariff codes and may only be applied on a consignment basis.

1.5 *Acceptance of pre-arrival information and pre-arrival processing*

39. To quickly process relief shipments, the pre-arrival processing and risk management of disaster relief consignments based on advance electronic information and documents followed by immediate release upon arrival is highly recommended. Disaster relief consignments assessed as low risk should be released immediately upon arrival whenever possible. In cases where existing legislation does not allow for pre-arrival processes, an emergency decree can be used to establish this.

40. Cross-border regulatory agencies should review and specify a reduced list of information requirements to process and provide immediate release for disaster relief goods and equipment, taking into consideration different commodity types. The required information to be submitted should be simplified and aligned with international standards to reduce differences in information requirements among sending, receiving and transit countries. It is recommended to publish the information requirements publicly for easy reference.

41. In cases where the national legislation requires mandatory submission of pre-arrival/pre-departure information with certain time limits (i.e. a minimum of 5 days in advance), these requirements should be waived or reduced for disaster relief consignments in recognition of the urgent nature of these movements.

42. Where immediate release cannot be granted, conditional release is encouraged (also known as subsequent clearance). Under conditional release, final classification of goods,

²⁰ This priority list should be revised depending on shifting needs and as a relief operation progresses through relief and recovery phases.

²¹ Further information available from World Customs Organization, 2020, *How to establish and utilize essential goods lists during a disaster*, available from <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/may/how-to-establish-and-utilize-essential-goods-lists-during-a-disaster.aspx>

²² The HS is a multipurpose international product nomenclature developed by the World Customs Organization. It comprises about 5,000 commodity groups, each identified by a six-digit code, arranged in a legal and logical structure and is supported by well-defined rules to achieve uniform classification. Refer to World Customs Organization, *What is the Harmonized System*, available from <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/nomenclature/overview/what-is-the-harmonized-system.aspx>

assessment of value, tax exemptions and other transactions can occur after the goods are physically released for use in disaster relief operations.

1.6 Emergency registration process for eligible assisting actors

43. While many international and domestic eligible assisting actors will have established relationships and programs in high disaster risk countries and will likely already be registered as a legal entity and approved to operate and import goods to the affected country, it is highly recommended that a fast-tracked registration process be put in place for new international and domestic eligible assisting actors. This is especially important for green lane, expedited cross-border movement processes to be applied to registered, eligible assisting actors from which the affected State has accepted assistance. The activation of such processes should be linked to the request or acceptance of international assistance.

44. The emergency registration process should be straightforward and simple but still contain appropriate checks required by the affected State to manage the disaster relief operation appropriately. Many governmental agencies may be closed or working with a highly limited number of staff due to disaster impacts, so emergency registration processes should also avoid the involvement of multiple agencies or high-level government approval that may be difficult to obtain in the post-disaster operating environment. The registration may be limited to certain geographic areas or periods of time (such as restricted to a period of disaster or state of emergency declaration). The application process for registration should also be able to be completed at any established One-Stop Shop.

45. New eligible assisting actors may also work through partnerships (such as implementing partnerships) with other already registered and approved eligible assisting actors, instead of needing to register to provide requested or accepted assistance. However, working through other actors should not be a mandatory requirement.

46. States should establish criteria for the basis of decisions regarding the acceptance or rejection of registration applications by international eligible assisting actors and communicate these decisions clearly.

2. Other mechanisms to improve cross-border movement of disaster relief goods and equipment

47. This section details other recommendations to improve cross-border facilitation measures for disaster relief goods and equipment that are equally important but may not be considered immediate priorities during the initial disaster relief phase. The activities in this section generally require more pre-planning and consideration.

2.1 Prepare list of acceptable disaster relief items and equipment

48. Each disaster will result in variations to the goods, equipment and services needed based on initial impact assessments and needs. It is recommended that States consider developing a list of acceptable relief items and equipment that are likely to be needed and determine whether they can be easily sourced in large quantities from manufacturers within the country or whether support from international eligible assisting actors is likely to be required. The typical types of disaster relief items and equipment, listed in Annex III, along with references to disaster relief item catalogues can provide guidance. These have been compiled by several international organizations and United Nations entities.²³ Consideration should be given to community preferences for items to be distributed to households and any compatibility requirements for equipment.

49. Preparing a list of acceptable disaster relief items and equipment in advance of a disaster will help ensure eligible assisting actors provide appropriate support, and will also help reduce the arrival of large quantities of inappropriate, unrequested donations. The list prepared should be broad enough to contain items and equipment that may be needed

²³ For examples, refer to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Standard Products Catalogue; the World Health Organization's Essential Medicines and Health Products publications; the United Nations Children's Fund Supply Catalogue; and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Core Relief Item Catalogue, 2012.

following a variety of disaster types and disaster scenarios, guided by the risk profile of the country. Multiple lists for each major disaster hazard could be created. Additionally, the list may define likely needs during disaster relief and recovery phases (although recovery needs are often more difficult to predict). While considering the local context and community preferences gathered from past disasters, the list should also align with common international relief item specifications and existing regional stockpiles, wherever possible, to facilitate rapid sourcing and supply chain management. Selecting disaster relief items and equipment that do not align with existing regional stockpiles held by eligible assisting actors may significantly slow the sourcing and delivery of relief items and equipment.

50. If a list of acceptable disaster relief items and equipment is prepared in advance of a disaster, then the governmental agency responsible for disaster response can quickly select the needed items and equipment on the list following a particular disaster event based on the initial needs assessment. Preparing the acceptable relief items and equipment list ahead of time should expedite this process. Associated national tariff codes or customs procedure codes can also be mapped in advanced.

51. It is important that the list is developed referencing applicable international standards²⁴ and that all government agencies, international and domestic eligible assisting actors and local stakeholders are consulted to ensure that it is inclusive of all needs. The list should also be made available to international and domestic eligible assisting actors and other stakeholders to aid their preparations. The list should also be flexible to adaptation to accommodate developing technology, emerging good practices and evolving community preferences and needs for disaster relief items and equipment.

2.2 *Develop unrequested donation plan*

52. The influx of unrequested donated goods following a disaster is a common occurrence. The reasons for receiving unrequested donations are many and varied and include spontaneous donations from well-meaning international businesses and individuals, including diaspora citizens living overseas, businesses dumping expired, near-to-expired and/or unusable stocks, donations in excess of that needed, donations not suitable to the context that cannot be used, etc. Unrequested donations are often goods not conforming to common relief item specifications, often arrive with incomplete paperwork, unsuitable packaging and lack a clearly identified consignee.²⁵

53. These unrequested goods can overwhelm points of entry causing bottlenecks and preventing the priority disaster relief items and equipment from rapidly reaching those in need. Without a plan to manage unrequested donated goods, priority disaster relief items and equipment may be delayed. Good practices to help reduce and manage unrequested, low-priority donated goods include:

- Develop and implement a proactive communications plan and ‘key messages’ to request financial donations instead of donated goods;²⁶

²⁴ For examples see the SPHERE standards *What are humanitarian standards* webpage: <https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/>

²⁵ For more information about unrequested donations refer to Boulet-Desbureau, Pierre, *Unsolicited In-Kind Donations & Other Inappropriate Humanitarian Goods, Strategic Plan*, commissioned by OCHA 2013, available at https://emergency-log.weebly.com/uploads/2/5/2/4/25246358/ubd_report_eng_-_final_for_printing_2.pdf and the Australian Red Cross, *The Challenges of Unsolicited Bilateral Donations in Pacific Humanitarian Responses*, 2016, available from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/161220%20Report%20-%20Challenges%20of%20UBD%20in%20Pacific.pdf>

²⁶ For examples refer to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Typhoon Haiyan Guide to Giving* (2013), available from <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/programme-cycle/space/document/typhoon-haiyan-philippines-guide-giving>; and the Centre for International Disaster Information, *Best Practices Toolkit*, available from <https://www.cidi.org/how-to-help/toolkit/>.

- Work with key transporters, customs agents/brokers and other supporting private sector economic operators to develop a plan to reduce the arrival of unrequested donated goods;
- Do not provide priority facilitation services, exemptions or waivers for duties, taxes and other fees to unrequested donations;
- Identify additional storage areas for separating and temporary storage of unrequested donations for sorting and processing later; and
- Develop national protocols for the disposal of unrequested donations that cannot be used.²⁷

2.3 *Ensure accessible processes, procedures and contact points*

54. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, the operational environment can be highly pressurized and taxing on all stakeholders. One of the key challenges faced by all is access to information. Cross-border regulatory agencies must ensure they have protocols and systems in place to share information and provide updates easily and rapidly.

55. Overall coordination for the disaster will be the responsibility of the State and appointed national disaster management coordinating body, but other governmental agencies including cross-border regulatory agencies also need to establish focal points for clear communications and coordination.

56. It is important that cross-border regulatory agencies have contact lists of stakeholders, broadcast channels (such as email mailing lists), national Trade Information Portals and websites and other structured channels of engagement from the onset of a disaster.²⁸ For example, in the Mozambique cyclone response in 2019, several different text messaging groups were set up to ensure quick and smooth flow of information to relevant stakeholders. This was a simple mechanism that enabled communication at a critical moment of the response. One-Stop Shops can also assist greatly with sharing of necessary information between governmental agencies, eligible assisting actors and other stakeholders. Publishing clear procedures and simple visual diagrams that explain the roles of governmental regulatory agencies and who is responsible for what processes and procedures is considered good practice. National Trade Information Portals can be set up in advance with disaster relief page sections to share information rapidly, including correct procedures and relevant national tariff codes for priority relief items.²⁹ Sharing names, contact details and links to industry associations, customs brokers and other logistics service providers is also very helpful for eligible assisting actors, although eligible assisting actors should follow their own due diligence and services procurement procedures.

57. It is critical that communications, messages and clear procedures should be consistent between cross-border regulatory agencies and border entry points to avoid confusion. Eligible assisting actors also appreciate having access to dedicated contact points that can clearly explain procedures and answer questions.

2.4 *Compliance programs*

58. Many governments are utilizing rapid ‘green lane’ customs clearance processes for AEOs or other similar authorized operator programs.³⁰ AEOs are accredited organizations

²⁷ Refer to Boulet-Desbureau, Pierre, (Op Cit.) and the Logistics Cluster, *Position Paper for the Handling of Unsolicited Bilateral Donations* (2014), available at https://logcluster.org/sites/default/files/logistics_cluster_ubds_position_paper_151014.pdf

²⁸ States may also share information via the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) and the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC), available at <https://vosocc.unocha.org/>.

²⁹ World Trade Organization, *Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization*, Decision of 27 November 2014

³⁰ For a list of AEO and other Authorised Operator programs, refer to the World Customs Organization, *Compendium of authorized economic operator programmes*, 2020 Edition, available from <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/aeo-compendium.pdf?la=en>

that have been recognized as complying with supply chain security standards that reduce the risk of prohibited or restricted goods entering the country.³¹ Use of AEO or other similar authorized operator programs and associated Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) programs are encouraged. In countries where such programs exist before a disaster, eligible assisting actors can consider working with AEOs or other similar authorized operators to help speed the customs clearance processes. However, this can involve additional costs and should not be a mandatory requirement for international or domestic eligible assisting actors. There is an administrative burden and associated costs for eligible assisting actors to apply for AEO programs, so emergency registration processes that can be rapidly activated and completed during the disaster relief phase should also be available, as outlined in section C1.

2.5 *Pre-positioning of disaster relief items*

59. International and domestic eligible assisting actors and other first responder agencies may already have pre-positioned disaster relief supplies and equipment in storage sites in country before a disaster strikes. It is these pre-positioned supplies that are most frequently used and distributed first in the initial 0 - 15 days after a disaster before newly imported supplies are available and utilized. Replacing or replenishing used pre-positioned supplies, so they are available for any future disaster is a critical activity. The cross-border facilitation measures for disaster relief goods and equipment during the disaster relief phase should be extended to replenishment shipments for pre-positioned supplies, even if these shipments arrive sometime after the disaster relief period.

2.6 *Continuous improvements from lessons learned*

60. In order to improve the cross-border facilitation measures for disaster relief goods and equipment, States are strongly encouraged to continuously review the mechanisms they have put in place. Particularly after disaster events or exercises, systems and procedures should be examined to identify improvements that can be made. Involving all cross-border regulatory agencies, eligible assisting actors and other stakeholders is key to this process to ensure that mechanisms and procedures are working smoothly.

3. **Operational readiness**

61. This section outlines key recommendations to enhance the operational readiness of cross-border agencies to facilitate the movement of disaster relief goods and equipment in the first 0 - 15 days after a large-scale natural disaster.

3.1 *Capacity building and simulation exercises*

62. Capacity building requires political will, commitment, engagement and ownership of the process by all stakeholders and at all levels. Capacity building efforts should be based on an assessment and analysis of capacity building needs and may include many different activities such as briefings, technical and soft-skills training, workshops, mentoring, practice simulations, reviews of processes and systems, etc.

63. The ability for governmental regulatory agencies to carry out allotted functions to facilitate the movement of disaster relief goods and equipment as suggested in these Guidelines should be considered when identifying and planning capacity building efforts.

64. Capacity building in this area should also be enhanced and the needs tested and identified through regular desktop exercises, simulations and drills as well as reviews of past disaster responses. A wide selection of key stakeholders covering the full end-to-end export-to-import process should be involved in simulation and training activities to build and test

³¹ The SAFE Framework of the World Customs Organization (WCO) defines an AEO as “a party involved in the international movement of goods in whatever function that has been approved by or on behalf of a national Customs administration as complying with WCO or equivalent supply chain security standards. AEOs include inter alia manufacturers, importers, exporters, brokers, carriers, consolidators, intermediaries, ports, airports, terminal operators, integrated operators, warehouses, distributors” Available at http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe_package.aspx.

coordination procedures and the effectiveness of links between entities. Regulatory agencies as well as eligible assisting actors and private sector representatives should all be involved to help to identify operational bottlenecks and possible solutions. Performance measurement and ‘time-release’ type studies for disaster relief consignments can also support identifying issues and where procedures may require improvement.

65. Exercises and simulations should be regularly scheduled. Larger, complex exercises can be planned less frequently (for example, every 2-3 years) while smaller, more simple exercises should be undertaken more regularly (for example, quarterly). Scheduling simulations and exercises annually before key disaster seasons commence is encouraged. The regular active participation of cross-border regulatory agencies in simulations and exercises organized by other governmental agencies and eligible assisting actors is also highly recommended to ensure all steps and stakeholders involved are considered.

3.2 Scalability considerations

66. The ability for cross-border regulatory agencies to scale up or scale down their capacity to facilitate a large influx of disaster relief goods and equipment following a large-scale natural disaster relies on careful planning of alternatives, backup solutions and reserves. These plans are critical to operational readiness. Using inter-agency working groups and other similar forums to develop and guide scalability planning is highly encouraged.

67. Cross-border regulatory agencies must have such plans in place for accessing extra staff if and where needed, considering the likely post-disaster operating environment. Having staff contact details ready and the mechanisms to quickly set rosters and rotate needed staff to critical locations should be considered. Backup and reserves of essential equipment for cross-border regulatory agencies to be able to operate also need to be carefully planned and maintained by respective agencies for operational readiness.

68. Additional specific considerations for marine and airport operators include:

- Cargo-handling equipment for loading and unloading;
- Electricity supply and telecommunication services;
- Reserve fuel supplies;
- Facility entry and exit points, for example truck access routes;
- Additional storage areas for loose, palletized and container cargo;
- Firefighting and safety equipment;
- Cargo inspection equipment, including x-rays;
- Cold chain capabilities; and
- Alternative ports if main ports are inoperable.

69. Logistics Capacity Assessments (LCAs)³² have been undertaken for over 100 countries and compiled by the global Logistics Cluster, coordinated by the World Food Programme. They contain baseline information about logistics infrastructure, processes and regulations, markets, and contacts for a country and aim to ensure that the logistics information required to inform decision-making for disaster relief operations is available to enhance humanitarian logistics preparedness, response and coordination. LCAs provide a useful reference of baseline information for scalability planning for disaster relief. Cross-border regulatory agencies, national disaster management coordinating bodies, international and domestic eligible assisting actors as well as private sector actors should assist in maintaining up-to-date information and amending the LCAs as required. Useful information may also be available through minimum preparedness actions undertaken by United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and humanitarian country teams following the

³² Logistics Cluster, *Logistics Capacity Assessments*, available at <https://dlca.logcluster.org/display/public/DLCA/LCA+Homepage>.

emergency response preparedness planning guidance from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).³³

4. Modernization with standards and information systems

70. The modernization of information systems and the adoption of global standards provide potential to improve efficiencies in every part of the supply chain as goods are moved across borders, including for disaster relief. Automated systems can reduce manual mistakes and increase time and cost efficiencies. Using common data and information system standards can benefit the completeness and accuracy of data as well as interoperability and the ease of data-sharing between systems. This can reduce operating costs and help better manage trade risks as well as enable easier performance measurement and analysis of time-release data to identify and inform of needed improvements.

71. While some cross-border regulatory agencies have adopted computer-based systems to some degree, there is considerable diversity in how agencies operate systems, what the regulatory requirements are, and which government agencies are involved in border control procedures. In some least-developed countries, computer-based systems may also be highly undeveloped and not regularly used. Improvements can benefit disaster relief and result in better product identification and prioritization, transparency, risk management, clearance and improved anti-counterfeit and safety recall capabilities enhancing compliance and safety. These kinds of modernization initiatives are an important part of establishing state-of-the-art processes for all cross-border trade as well as benefiting disaster relief efforts. They are long-term goals and require significant planning, so it should not be expected that they be created during the initial phase after a disaster, but they can be used if already in existence.

4.1 *Systems supporting simplified workflows*

72. While internet and electricity-reliant IT systems may be unavailable immediately following a large-scale natural disaster, it may still be possible to implement the simplified workflow process in the post-disaster operating environment following the fallback procedures discussed in section C1.

73. There are a range of computerized cross-border regulatory agency management systems that can help simplify process workflows and also assist in the cross-border facilitation of disaster relief.³⁴ Key capabilities of such systems include identifying products and organizations to be given priority treatment, recognizing priority consignments, processing pre-arrival information to release goods without delays using appropriate controls and audit and reporting features.

4.2 *Single Window mechanisms*

74. A Single Window is “a facility providing trade facilitation that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit related regulatory requirements. Individual data elements should only be submitted once electronically.”³⁵ Single Window mechanisms

³³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Emergency Response Preparedness, Draft for Field Testing* (2015), available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/e_mergency_response_preparedness_2015_final_2.pdf.

³⁴ One example is the Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments (ASYREC) add-on software that has been developed to run on the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) and other systems. The ASYREC add-on allows for immediate recognition of organizations involved in United Nations relief operations and allows these entities to expedite imports of humanitarian relief cargo and for customs authorities to have a more accurate overview of incoming relief consignments. Refer to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *Smoothing the way for humanitarian aid: the UN's life-saving ASYREC partnership* (2018), available from <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1673>

³⁵ UNECE, *Recommendation No. 33: Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window*, 2020 Edition (ECE/TRADE/352/Rev.1). Available at <http://www.unece.org/unctefact/tfrees.html>

crystalize many other trade facilitation measures that can help streamline formalities at the border. For eligible assisting actors, Single Window mechanisms are critical to reduce the time needed for various approval processes including tax and duty exemptions for disaster relief consignments, which often involve multiple regulatory agencies. The preparatory phases of putting in place a Single Window including the coordination between governmental regulatory agencies, streamlining data requirements, establishing a single national dataset aligned to international standards and establishing the enabling legal environment can all benefit the facilitation of disaster relief goods in the long term.³⁶ Even if a Single Window facility is not available electronically online because of a disaster, the inter-governmental agency cooperation created is beneficial.

75. Private sector platforms such as Single Submission Portals³⁷ can also assist in expediting border clearances as they can act as an interface between eligible assisting actors and regulatory agencies at the border.

4.3. *Business continuity management*

76. Business continuity management is “a risk management process designed to ensure the continuity of a business's key activities in the case of a major disruptive event (e.g. an IT systems breakdown or an epidemic of illness among staff). It involves identifying the key activities of a company (or organization), the resources needed to deliver them (e.g. personnel, systems, plant and machinery), and the major risks affecting these resources; a strategy must then be developed to restore key activities as soon as possible after any disruption.”³⁸ Making plans to maintain business continuity is critical for any modern organization. Business continuity planning includes but is more extensive than the fallback procedures recommended in section C1.

77. A diverse range of advice and tools exist to support business continuity planning for governmental regulatory agencies.³⁹ All cross-border regulatory agencies are encouraged to make and regularly review business continuity plans to maintain services following a disaster and to be able to help facilitate rapid disaster relief to affected populations.

³⁶ For additional advice refer to UNECE *Recommendation No. 33 (ibid); Recommendation 34: Data Simplification and Standardization for International Trade, 2013, Recommendation 35: Establishing a Legal Framework for an International Trade Single Window, 2013*, available from <http://www.unece.org/unecefact/tfrecs.html>

³⁷ UNECE, *Recommendation 37: Single Submission Portals, 2019*, available from <http://www.unece.org/unecefact/tfrecs.html>

³⁸ Law, Jonathan, *A Dictionary of Business and Management* (Oxford University Press, 2009), available from <https://www.oxfordreference.com/>

³⁹ See, for example, the World Customs Organization *Trade Recovery Guidelines* (2018), available at http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe_package.aspx; or the International Organization for Standardization, *ISO 22301:2019, Societal security – Business continuity management systems – Requirements* (2019), available at <https://www.iso.org/standard/75106.html>

Annex I: Key references to this document

1. There are many existing international standards, legal frameworks and guidelines that are relevant to this document, and often cover more detail in their specific areas. These include the following:

<i>Reference (ordered alphabetically)</i>	<i>Brief description</i>
1. Customs Cooperation Council, Convention on Temporary Admission, Annexes B.9 and D, (Istanbul, 26 June 1990), available from: http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/about-us/legal-instruments/conventions-and-agreements/istanbul/istanbul_legal_text_eng.pdf?la=en	This is a convention that governs the temporary admission of goods, including relief goods.
2. Customs Cooperation Council, Recommendation of the Customs Co-operation Council to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters (June, 1970), available from: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/about-us/legal-instruments/recommendations/pf_recommendations.aspx	This document outlines recommendations for the management of relief consignments.
3. Customs Cooperation Council, Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the Role of Customs in Natural Disaster Relief, June 2011, available from: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/about-us/legal-instruments/resolutions.aspx	This Resolution invites members to implement the revised Kyoto Convention and make plans for the proper reception of relief consignments with capacity building assistance supported by the Secretariat.
4. Customs Cooperation Council, SAFE Framework of Standards, 2018 edition, available from: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe_package.aspx	The SAFE Framework provides an instrument for enhancing cooperation between customs authorities, relevant government agencies and economic operators.
5. Customs Cooperation Council, The relevant key principles of the SAFE Framework of Standards in further facilitating the process of clearing relief consignments, undated, available from: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster.aspx	This document examines the degree to which the key principles of the SAFE Framework of Standards may prove useful in further facilitating the clearance process for relief consignments.
6. Customs Cooperation Council, Trade Recovery Guidelines, 2018, available from: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/frameworks-of-standards/safe_package.aspx	This document provides guidelines for the recovery of trade following disruptions.
7. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Emergency Response Preparedness, Draft for Field Testing, July 2015, available from https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/emergency_response_preparedness_2015_final_2.pdf	The IASC developed this guide to support the international humanitarian system to apply a proactive approach to emergency preparedness.
8. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2011, Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL Model Act), available from: www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/88609/Pilot%20Model%20Act%20on%20IDRL%20(English).pdf	The IDRL Model Act is built on and intended to supplement the IDRL Guidelines. It serves as a reference tool and example for lawmakers as they develop legislation on managing outside aid in a manner appropriate to their national circumstances.
9. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2011, Model Emergency Decree for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and	The IDRL Model Emergency Decree is specifically directed to those situations where a clear legal framework is not in place before the onset of a large-scale disaster, or where the

<i>Reference (ordered alphabetically)</i>	<i>Brief description</i>
Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRC Model Emergency Decree), available from: https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/12/Model-Decree_EN-LR.pdf	adoption of more comprehensive legislation is not practicable.
10. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2007 Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL Guidelines), available from: www.ifrc.org/what-we-do/disaster-law/about-disaster-law/international-disaster-response-laws-rules-and-principles/idrl-guidelines/	The IDRL Guidelines are a set of recommendations to governments on how to prepare their disaster laws and plans for the common regulatory problems in international disaster relief operations.
11. International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 2017, Checklist on the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL Checklist), available from https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/12/IDRL-Checklist-EN-LR.pdf	The IDRL Checklist is a tool to assist relevant actors to make use of the IDRL Guidelines, especially in relation to the development and review of laws, policies, plans and procedures.
12. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Response in Asia and the Pacific: A Guide to International Tools and Services, 2017, available from https://www.unocha.org/asia-and-pacific-roap/asia-disaster-guide	This Guide helps disaster managers in national governments gain basic knowledge of how to mobilize and use international and regional tools and services for disaster response and preparedness efforts
13. Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunications Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations, Tampere, 18 June 1998 available from: https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXV-4&chapter=25	The Treaty recognizes the essential role of telecommunications following a disaster and establishes arrangements for the request and provision of telecommunications assistance.
14. United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 1996, Model agreement on customs facilitation in international emergency humanitarian assistance, available from: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/230021?ln=en	This is a model agreement for use between States and the United Nations concerning measures to expedite the import, export and transit of relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel in the event of disasters and emergencies.
15. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, ASYCUDA system, 2020, available from: https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/TTL/ASYCUDA-Programme.aspx	ASYCUDA is an integrated customs management system for international trade and transport operations in a modern automated environment. The ASYREC add-on will enable to identification and prioritization of humanitarian relief goods.
16. World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), July 2014, is available from https://www.tfafacility.org/trade-facilitation-agreement-facility	The TFA contains provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. It also sets out measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues. It further contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building in this area.

Annex II: Key stakeholders

1. The list below outlines the key stakeholders that have a direct role in the cross-border movement of disaster relief and who should ideally participate in the design and/or implementation of facilitation measures.

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. Beneficiaries	These are the disaster affected people and communities, including internally displaced people. The impact of a natural disaster on people, communities and livelihoods can be reduced through connected and streamlined preparedness activities and response processes. Beneficiaries' needs must be properly assessed by disaster management agencies to determine priority disaster relief goods and equipment.
2. Eligible assisting actors providing goods and equipment	These can be any assisting international or domestic humanitarian organization, assisting State, foreign individual, foreign private company providing charitable relief or other foreign entity responding to a disaster in the affected State or sending relief goods or equipment. Eligible assisting actors providing goods and equipment will require assistance with the cross-border movement of relief consignments. They may or may not be the importer/exporter on record. The criteria should include whether the assisting actor (a) has adequate capacity and experience in disaster relief and complies with international quality standards; (b) adheres to the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality; (c) does not intend to make any profit or other commercial gain from providing disaster relief; and (d) possesses adequate insurance for their disaster relief activities.
2a. Eligible assisting actor	These are eligible assisting actors who have been approved by the government as a provider of goods that will be distributed free of charge or will be used by or under the control of such organization. An approved/registered donor may also represent other actors (who are not approved/registered) as 'implementing partners' to support relief efforts.
2b. Unregistered assisting actor	These are eligible assisting actors that do not have prior approval from the government to donate goods in the country. These organizations may need to transfer the ownership of goods over to approved/registered donors in order to benefit from special simplifications and facilitations or request a fast-tracked registration process during disaster response or undertake both processes in parallel.
3. Eligible assisting actors providing services, technical advice and other assistance	This can be any assisting international or domestic humanitarian organization, assisting State, foreign individual, foreign private company providing charitable relief or other foreign entity responding to a disaster in the affected state by providing services to the affected state to assist disaster relief operations. This encompasses advice and technical assistance which is not necessarily linked to the donation of goods or money. Many non-government organizations (NGOs), INGOs, United Nations entities and others offer essential human services, expertise and technical assistance. Like donors of physical goods, eligible assisting actors providing services can also be classified as either registered or unregistered.
4. Governmental regulatory agencies	
4a. National disaster management coordinating body	This is a government agency whose primary purpose is to coordinate response to natural or man-made disasters and for capacity-building in disaster resilience and crisis response. This body is often referred to as the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA). While many countries have a separate, dedicated disaster management agency, others may have responsibilities delegated across different governmental bodies. Coordination and preparedness measures are even more critical in these scenarios.
4b. Cross-border regulatory agencies	Governments legislate to give different regulatory bodies the authority and resources to ensure compliance with border controls. The functional responsibilities embedded in these agencies vary from one country to another and may include cooperation with

Stakeholder	Description
	<p>cross-border agencies of neighbouring transit countries. The facilitation of disaster relief spans across various agencies responsible for the control of goods, people and vehicles. This can include, but is not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities responsible for health; • Authorities responsible for duties and taxation; • Authorities responsible for sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) controls; • Authorities responsible for food and drugs; • Authorities responsible for disease control; • Authorities responsible for standards and metrology; • Authorities responsible for border clearance; • Authorities responsible for immigration; • Authorities responsible for security and interior affairs; • Authorities responsible for the fight against fraud; • Authorities responsible for trade policy, foreign affairs and international relations; and • Authorities responsible for civil aviation authorities.
<p>4c. Partner government agencies (in the country of origin of the shipment)</p>	<p>When the necessary agreements have been put in place, cross-border regulatory agencies can receive documentation or information from governmental regulatory agencies in the countries from which shipments originated. Partner government agencies can impact the effectiveness of relief facilitation through accurate and timely information such as export declarations or certificates of origin. Partner government agencies can also help provide early notifications through inter-agency coordination and expedite relief logistics by prioritizing relief consignments.</p>
<p>4d. Militaries (local and foreign)</p>	<p>Military airports, other facilities and transport assets may provide essential support for the movement of disaster relief shipments, both during export from donor locations as well as at arrival in the destination country. Regular clearance procedures may not be foreseen in such places, which may cause some problems since some countries require a proof of exportation for fiscal reasons in the country of departure in order to avoid liability for the value added tax, for example.</p>
<p>5. Private sector economic operators providing support</p>	
<p>5a. Customs clearing agents / brokers</p>	<p>This is a person or a company who is licensed by the local customs authority, after passing an examination, to act as a professional agent for an importer or exporter, prepare and submit all documents for clearing goods through customs, and who is paid customs brokerage for his/her service.⁴⁰</p> <p>Often, they also fulfil this same role with cross-border regulatory agencies that are not customs. Some countries require all clearance procedures to be performed by customs agents/brokers.</p>
<p>5b. Other private sector economic operators</p>	<p>These are private sector operators who assist with the border clearance process and who may provide support, inputs or expertise during disaster response. These may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle, route and terminal transport service providers, including shipping agents; • Airport terminal operators;

⁴⁰ UNECE Trade Facilitation Terms: An English-Russian-Chinese Glossary, third revised edition, 2019, pp 60-61.

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>5c. Local suppliers of disaster relief goods and equipment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade/community systems that support regional information sharing; • Regional and local community leadership; • Stevedores; • Cargo handling agents; and • Electronic systems providers. <p>Businesses in the disaster affected country may seek to rapidly import needed goods and equipment for sale to responding disaster responders and eligible assisting actors. These businesses may or may not be determined eligible for import tax and duty waivers or priority facilitation arrangements depending on the local regulation and circumstances. However, more disaster relief agencies and eligible assisting actors are recognizing that purchasing needed goods and equipment locally from businesses within a disaster affected country has added benefits, such as assisting economic recovery.</p>

Annex III: Typical types of disaster relief goods and equipment

1. While needs must always be assessed following a disaster, typical types of disaster relief goods and equipment requiring cross-border facilitation during the initial 0-15 days following a sudden onset natural disaster include the following:

blankets	battery generators	clothing	foodstuffs
household kitchen sets (pots, pans, cutlery, etc.)	household hygiene items and kits (soap, sanitary napkins, etc.)	laboratory equipment	latrines
means of transport	medical equipment	medicines	mosquito nets
prefabricated houses	plastic sheets (also known as tarpaulins)	search and rescue trained animals	shelter repair tool kits (hammer, nails, rope, etc.)
solar lights	surgical equipment	telecommunications equipment	tents
vehicles	water purification units	water storage (buckets, jerry cans, transport bladders, tanks, etc.)	

Relief items are commonly distributed as pre-packed kits with multiple products, for example kitchen kits, medical kits, shelter repair kits, hygiene kits, etc.
