



**OCHA**  
Office for the Coordination  
of Humanitarian Affairs



# GUIDELINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES

VERSION 1

JOINT UNEP/OCHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT



UNITED NATIONS



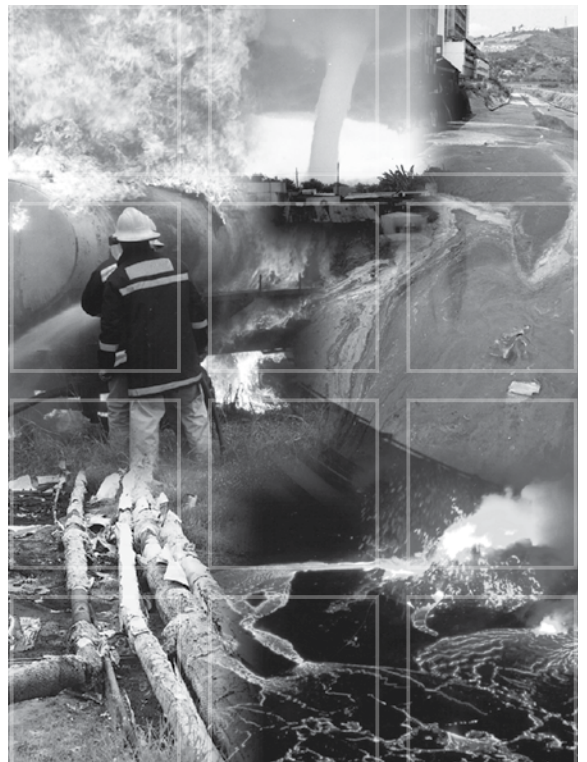
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**UNITED NATIONS**  
New York and Geneva, 2009



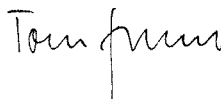
## FOREWORD BY THE AGEE CHAIRMAN

With climate change leading to more severe weather conditions, we are expecting an increase in the number and scale of natural disasters. As a consequence, we have to be prepared to respond to ever more environmental emergencies. Since the creation of the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU) in 1994 and that of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) in 1995, significant progress has been made in improving the response to environmental emergencies. Achievements include broad awareness building, the establishment of a worldwide network of stakeholders involved in environmental issues and the development of numerous tools and guidance material for environmental emergency response. However, the success of the JEU is best illustrated by the fact that the unit has been involved in the response to more than 100 environmental emergencies over the last 15 years.

Upon recommendation by the AGEE, the *Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies* have been prepared by the JEU to advise both providing and potential recipient countries on how to mobilize, receive and/or provide international assistance in the event of an environmental emergency. They aim to ensure international assistance is provided rapidly and efficiently if and when needed. The Guidelines are a living document that will be improved whenever lessons are learned and best practices identified in the evaluation of international environmental emergency operations.

We encourage all countries to put the risk of environmental emergencies on their agenda and to contribute to shaping the methodology to be even more effective to assist victims of environmental impacts. We also invite all countries to adopt the *Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies* as an integral part of their national disaster management framework.

We thank partner countries, organisations and individuals that have contributed to the development of the *Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies*.



Toni Frisch, Switzerland  
AGEE Chairman

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AGEE	Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies
ATA Carnet	Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission Carnet
EC-MIC	European Commission Monitoring and Information Centre
ESB	Emergency Services Branch
FCSS	Field Coordination Support Section
FEAT	Flash Environmental Assessment Tool
GDACS	Global Disaster Assessment and Coordination System
HIT	Hazard Identification Tool
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IATA	International Air Transport Association
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
JEU	Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PCDMB	UNEP Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch
UN	United Nations
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
Virtual OSOCC	Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre



## **1.0 Introduction**

The response to environmental impacts of natural disasters and complex emergencies, as well as industrial accidents, often requires a level of technical expertise that is beyond the capacity of individual states.

*An environmental emergency can be defined as a sudden-onset disaster or accident resulting from natural, technological or human-induced factors, or a combination of these, that cause or threaten to cause severe environmental damage as well as harm to human health and/or livelihoods.<sup>1</sup>*

This includes secondary consequences from natural hazards such as earthquakes, storms, floods, tsunamis, wildland fires, landslides and/or man-made disasters such as industrial accidents, transport accidents, chemical spills, oil spills and a multitude of other types of emergencies. Often, governments in affected countries must seek expertise and resources available from the international community to address such crises. In these cases, international support may be provided bilaterally, directly from one assisting country to the affected country, or multilaterally, through international entities like the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU).

### **1.1 Background**

As part of its functions, the JEU acts as the secretariat to the international Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) which is an inter-governmental consultative mechanism, established in 1995, that brings together disaster managers and environmentalists from developed and developing countries to exchange ideas and experiences on global environmental emergency response issues.

At the seventh meeting of the AGEE held in June 2007, the AGEE recommended the JEU commission a study that would examine the *operational aspects of providing and receiving international environmental emergency assistance*. Building on, and taking into account other procedures, guidelines, and mandates, the study would address issues of requesting and providing assistance during emergencies/disasters, but with a special focus on environmental emergencies. Based on a thorough analysis, the expected outcome of the study would be the development of a single document, a “*Best Practices Guideline*” for current and potential providers and recipients of assistance in environmental emergencies.

Based on the findings of the study, recommendations for what practices could be introduced for environmental emergencies were identified. These recommendations have been formulated as provisions in the “Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies” The full study can be found at the JEU website at:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep>

The JEU has facilitated the development of the Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies in cooperation with member states and organizations of the AGEE. The procedures described in the Guidelines draw on references from a variety of sources, including:

- The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Guidelines;
- The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Field Handbook;

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP's Governing Council, UNEP/GC.22/INF/5, 13th November 2002.



- Publications by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC);
- Publications by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA);
- Standard Operating Procedures from the European Community Mechanism for Civil Protection, International Humanitarian Partnership, and Euro Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre;
- JEU Mission Reports.

## **1.2 Purpose**

The Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies are intended as a reference guide for countries wanting to improve their framework for preparedness in the event of an environmental emergency, and for international environmental emergency responders providing assistance. The Guidelines are not an authoritative instruction but rather detailed recommendations based on an accumulation of institutional memory and experience related to international environmental emergency response.

The Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies were, in principle, endorsed at the eighth meeting of the AGEE held in May 2009. The AGEE further encouraged seeing the Guidelines as a living document, subject to continuous revision that allows for the incorporation of lessons learned. The AGEE Steering Committee, serving as an extension of the larger AGEE, will review the Guidelines and propose a revised version before the next AGEE meeting to be held in 2011. Any comments on the Guidelines or proposals for improvements should be addressed to the JEU:

*Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit  
Palais des Nations  
CH 1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 (0) 22 917 4419  
Fax: +41 (0) 22 917 0257  
E-mail: [canton-rodriguez@un.org](mailto:canton-rodriguez@un.org)  
Website: <http://ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep>*

## **2.0 International Environmental Emergency Response System**

At present, there exist numerous resources for international environmental emergency response. This section introduces and outlines the various entities' purpose and scope regarding international environmental emergency response.

### **2.1 Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU)**

The JEU is the United Nations mechanism to mobilize and coordinate emergency assistance to countries affected by environmental emergencies and natural disasters with significant environmental impact.

In 1989, UN General Assembly Resolution 44/224 was adopted, recognizing the need to strengthen international cooperation in monitoring, assessing and anticipating environmental threats and rendering assistance in cases of environmental emergencies. Governments had come to recognize the connections between environmental conditions, human health and the success of development efforts. Member states also determined that there was a need to improve international response to environmental emergencies and dedicated the UN to that role. In 1993, governments concluded that a special international tool to respond to environmental emergencies was needed, but that the environmental knowledge found in UNEP should be integrated into existing UN natural disaster response mechanisms. As a result, the JEU was established as cooperation between UNEP technical expertise and the humanitarian response coordination structure of OCHA.

The JEU is housed in OCHA's Emergency Services Branch (ESB) and has full access to OCHA's tools and services for coordination of response, including the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams. The JEU links to UNEP through the Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch (PCDMB) which is responsible for UNEP's work in areas of the world where the environment is impacted by conflicts and disasters, or where the environment is a factor contributing to conflicts and disaster impacts.

The JEU works with affected countries to identify and mitigate acute negative impacts stemming from emergencies, providing independent, impartial advice and practical solutions. It also works with organizations dedicated to medium- and long-term rehabilitation to ensure a seamless transition to the disaster recovery process. With support from regional representation of both OCHA and UNEP, the JEU can be of assistance to affected countries in both emergency response and early recovery.

To mobilize and coordinate international assistance, the JEU endeavours to be the primary point of contact for countries affected by environmental emergencies or natural hazards with significant environmental impact. Upon alert of an incident, the JEU will advise on immediate actions and, if necessary, forward a request for assistance to potential donor countries in cooperation with the affected country. The JEU is available 24/7 to mobilize assistance for those facing emergencies.

### **2.2 Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE)**

The AGEE was established in 1995, at the recommendation of governments. It is an international forum that, on a biennial basis, brings together environmental experts from around the world to share information, expertise and lessons learned for improved response to environmental

emergencies worldwide. The AGEE consists of member states and international organizations under a rotating chairmanship, with the JEU acting as secretariat. Its mandate is to:

- Provide a forum for an exchange of views and experience among countries on questions related to the provision of international assistance for environmental emergencies;
- Promote international cooperation in the response to environmental emergencies, with particular attention to developing countries;
- Identify and examine selected challenges with regard to the provision of international assistance for environmental emergencies, which are of major concern to countries, with the aim to prepare appropriate suggestions and recommendations on possible actions at the international level;
- Review the work of the JEU, and provide advice on its future activities.

The AGEE may establish working groups tasked to address issues under discussion in the AGEE community. The purpose of such groups is to develop solutions to specific issues, e.g., advocacy strategies, training, operational aspects. The AGEE is also the endorsing body for the Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies.

### **2.3 National Focal Points**

The JEU, in close consultation with the AGEE, has established a global network of officially designated National Focal Points. This network serves as a channel for information and assistance, and allows the JEU to maintain efficient links between potential donor and recipient countries. It is recommended that the National Focal Point be a senior officer in the government ministry or agency responsible for the management of international and/or national disaster response. Ideally, the function of National Focal Point would be embedded in this ministry/agency in order to establish and maintain institutional memory in his/her country and to ensure continuous government commitment vis-à-vis the response to environmental emergencies.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the National Focal Point for environmental emergencies be the same entity, or be co-located with the same entity, holding the position as the National Focal Point for the UNDAC system and/or INSARAG. This is due to the fact that tasks and responsibilities of these positions are either the same, similar or overlapping with regards to preparedness, information exchange, alerts, requests, mobilization or the facilitation of rapid receipt or provision of international emergency assistance. For the 31 European countries participating in the Community Civil Protection Mechanism, it is recommended that, where possible, the existing contact points for the European Mechanism also serve as the operational National Focal Points for environmental emergencies. Further support from the European Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (EC-MIC), as the main regional focal point in Europe, would be welcome to facilitate the European response to requests for environmental expertise and assistance. For countries that are not part of UNDAC or INSARAG, regional and/or in-country UN representation may provide support in establishing National Focal Points and also assist with alerts and facilitation of international assistance during environmental emergencies within their region.

Regardless of which governmental ministry/agency carries the responsibility of National Focal Point, it is recommended that close links be maintained between entities within the government having responsibilities for emergency response, receipt/provision of international assistance, and environmental issues, to ensure the most efficient and effective receipt/provision of international environmental emergency assistance. The JEU, in cooperation with regional and/or in-country UN representation, will maintain a directory of National Focal Points.

A National Focal Point for environmental emergencies has two main responsibilities:

**1. Administrative**

Serve as a point of contact between the national government and the AGEE for non-emergency related activities such as political, institutional and financial matters;

**2. Operational**

Be available 24/7 through phone, email, and/or fax; serve as the primary contact/interlocutor for the JEU; process requests and/or offers of international assistance for environmental emergencies; and provide relevant information on emergencies.

Based on national specifics, countries may wish to designate multiple National Focal Points, dividing the responsibilities accordingly.

#### **2.4 Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (Virtual OSOCC)**

For exchange of information both between emergencies and during response, OCHA has developed the Virtual OSOCC that is a web-based information management tool. The main purpose of the Virtual OSOCC is to facilitate decision-making for international response to major disasters through real-time information exchange by all actors of the international disaster response community, including the environmental emergency response system.

Through the Virtual OSOCC, users have the opportunity to create e-mail and SMS messages that are sent automatically to subscribers to provide critical situation updates during disaster response operations. In between emergencies, the Virtual OSOCC can be used to facilitate training, meetings and workshops through e-mail notification, on-line participant registration and discussion of background material. It also provides the users with a discussion forum for any area of interest, including information exchange on best practice and lessons-learned after disaster response operations.

Access to the Virtual OSOCC is restricted, requiring a password, to disaster managers from governments and disaster response organizations. Actors from the environmental emergency response system are recommended to actively use the Virtual OSOCC for information exchange. Username and password can be requested online through the login page at <http://www.ocha.unog.ch/virtualosocc>.

#### **2.5 International Environmental Response Resources**

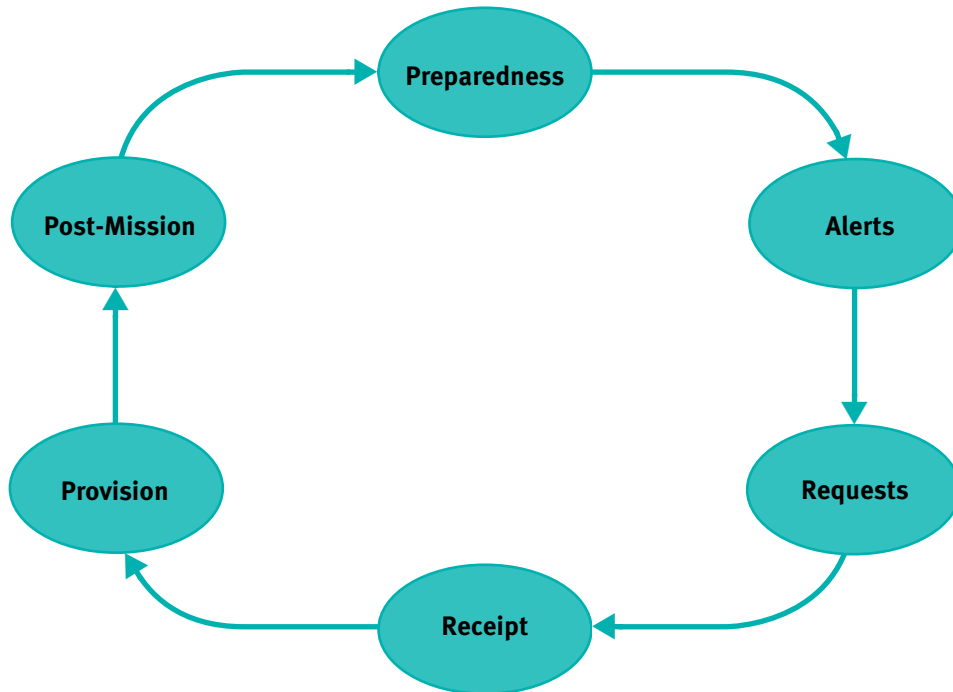
Through its network of donors, the JEU has access to a pool of international experts capable of deploying to an affected country upon request. Depending on the nature of the incident, i.e., type of hazard/accident and impact, and/or type of substance involved, the JEU will endeavour to tailor-fit the expertise needed. The expert(s) may be deployed independently or as a part of an UNDAC or EC-MIC mission to assess the incident, perform sampling, and, if possible, analyze the results in-country. Some donor countries have also developed customized environmental assessment modules that can be deployed as a part of an overall relief operation.

Upon completion of the assessment, the expert(s) will give emergency advice on how to contain the impact of the incident and what urgent mitigation actions need to be taken. In cases where special technical expertise and/or equipment are needed to manage the incident, and these capacities are not available in the affected country, the JEU can facilitate the mobilization of such resources.

These resources can also be drawn upon if countries wish to receive technical advice in preparedness and contingency planning for national environmental emergencies.

### **3.0 International Environmental Emergency Assistance**

The Guidelines address international environmental emergency assistance in a cycle which includes the following six stages:



#### **3.1 Preparedness**

The stage between environmental emergencies during which time lessons from previous experiences are reviewed and relevant amendments and improvements to procedures are made, training is conducted, and planning for future response occurs.

Responsibilities of all countries:

##### **Administrative:**

- As National Focal Point, act as a point of contact for the JEU and ensure processing of non-emergency related matters as funding, training, and capacity building;
- Represent the country in AGEE meetings and ensure appropriate follow-up of recommendations;
- Promote awareness within concerned governmental entities about international environmental emergency resources, particularly the JEU and AGEE;
- Disseminate information from the JEU, such as reports and invitations to AGEE meetings, workshops and training opportunities;
- Ensure that the JEU has updated contact information for the National Focal Point;
- Ensure institutional memory within the ministry/agency having the responsibilities as National Focal Point.

**Operational:**

- Maintain a National Focal Point that is available 24/7 through phone, email, and/or fax and ensure that up-to-date contact information is available to the JEU at all times. JEU contact information for non-emergency purposes can be found under section 1.2;
- Develop a capacity for rapid exchange of information with regional and/or in-country UN representation, and the JEU, including the use of the Virtual OSOCC.

**Recipient countries' responsibilities:**

- Implement and maintain procedures to request, or welcome offers of, international environmental emergency assistance according to sections 3.3 and 3.4;
- Implement and maintain procedures for receiving international environmental emergency assistance, including expeditious processing or complete waiver of customs and visa requirements (see also the "Model Customs Agreement" in Annex 5);
- Develop a capacity to implement international environmental emergency assistance in national coordination mechanisms.

**JEU's responsibilities:**

- Advocate and promote awareness about environmental emergencies and the international environmental emergency response system;
- Assist countries to establish a National Focal Point for environmental emergencies according to section 2.3 in cooperation with regional and/or in-country UN representation and the OCHA Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS);
- Maintain a directory of National Focal Points in cooperation with regional and/or in-country UN representation and FCSS;
- Act as resource centre for the facilitation of technical advice in national environmental emergency preparedness planning;
- Ensure 24/7 availability to give technical advice on environmental emergencies and assist affected countries in assessing the need for international assistance.

**Providing countries' responsibilities:**

- Ensure appropriate procedures for processing of requests received from affected countries or through the JEU according to sections 3.3 and 3.4 are in place;
- Ensure that all staff likely to be deployed internationally in response to an environmental emergency are properly vaccinated according to international standards, have valid travel documentation, and have sufficient knowledge about the international emergency environment, including proficient safety and security training;
- Have preparations in place for sufficiently packing, marking and classifying equipment according to international standards (see also Annex 4);
- Bear all costs related to international deployment and ensure self-sufficiency of deployed resources.

### **3.2 Alerts**

The stage when awareness about an incident potentially requiring international environmental emergency assistance is established.

#### **Recipient countries' responsibilities:**

- Monitor potential secondary environmental consequences following the impact of natural disasters, large industrial accidents or other forms of man-made disasters;
- Contact, without delay, the JEU if there is doubt on how the incident should be handled and/or if it is uncertain whether the incident can be handled by national resources. The JEU can be reached through OCHA's Emergency Duty Number: **Tel +41 22 917 2010 or Fax +41 22 917 0023**;
- Provide available information on the nature of the incident, location and description using the "Assistance Request Report" (Annex 1) as a checklist;
- Ensure the appropriate authority formally requests international assistance or issues a statement welcoming offers of such assistance;
- If there is an obvious need for international assistance, submit the "Assistance Request Report" in Annex 1 to the above mentioned fax number.

#### **JEU's responsibilities:**

- Monitor potential secondary environmental consequences following the impact of natural hazards or large accidents through media, situation reports, and/or through contact with regional and/or in-country UN representation;
- Contact without delay the National Focal Point, or similar authority, in an affected country to enquire if international assistance is required and coordinate this with regional and/or in-country UN representation;
- Advise the relevant authorities of the affected country on the actions to take and/or what resources may be available to them should they wish to request international assistance;
- Inform partners, e.g., UNDAC, EC-MIC, and potential responding countries about the incident and make relevant information available on the Virtual OSOCC;
- Prepare to mobilize international resources should the situation require international assistance.

#### **Providing countries' responsibilities:**

- Monitor potential secondary environmental consequences following the impact of natural hazards or large accidents through the Virtual OSOCC, media, and/or situation reports;
- Be prepared to mobilize resources and offer assistance either bilaterally to the affected country or through the JEU;
- Inform the JEU about capacity and stand-by status, and make relevant information available, preferably on the Virtual OSOCC.

### **3.3 Requests**

The stage when a country formally asks for international environmental emergency assistance.

#### **Recipient countries' responsibilities:**

- Provide technical information in cooperation with the JEU using the “Assistance Request Report” (Annex 1) as a checklist (to be verified, signed and returned), or submit the form directly to the aforementioned fax number (see section 3.2);
- If it is, for any reason, not possible to issue a formal request, ensure that a statement, welcoming offers of international assistance, is forwarded to regional and/or in-country UN representation and/or JEU and be prepared to exchange technical information about the incident using the “Assistance Request Report” (Annex 1) as a checklist;
- Inform other relevant national authorities about the request for international assistance;
- Prepare for receipt of international assistance (see section 3.4).

#### **JEU's responsibilities:**

- In cooperation with the National Focal Point, assess the preliminary information provided using the “Assistance Request Report” (Annex 1) as a checklist and send finalized form to the affected country for verification and signature;
- Based on the information received, forward a request for assistance to potential donor countries and post information on the Virtual OSOCC;
- Prepare and coordinate deployment of assets, either independently or together with UNDAC or other type of international deployment, e.g., EC-MIC;
- Provide continuous updates on the Virtual OSOCC on all matters regarding the deployment, e.g., country specific Hazard Identification Tool (HIT) (if prepared), overall situation updates, contact information, etc;
- Communicate with regional and/or in-country UN representation and advocate for facilitation of the receipt of international assistance.

#### **Providing countries' responsibilities:**

- Confirm receipt of request to the JEU;
- Assess own resources and, if feasible, mobilize and offer assistance either bilaterally to the affected country or through the JEU;
- Keep JEU informed of any offers of bilateral assistance;
- Once a decision has been made to deploy, make an entry into the Virtual OSOCC stating what resources will be deployed, their capacity, and estimated time of arrival.



### **3.4 Receipt**

The stage when a country receives international environmental emergency assistance in its own national territory.

#### **Recipient countries' responsibilities:**

- Facilitate the arrival of international environmental emergency assistance, including expeditious processing or complete waiver of customs and visa requirements;
- Provide regular information to arriving experts/response teams with regard to entry points, customs and visa requirements, and other arrival arrangements and either post this information on the Virtual OSOCC or forward it to the JEU;
- Coordinate arrival arrangements with regional and/or in-country UN representation.

#### **JEU's responsibilities:**

- Act as a link between providing countries, recipient country, regional and/or in-country UN representation;
- Ensure that relevant information is shared in a timely manner, including making it available on the Virtual OSOCC.

#### **Providing countries' responsibilities:**

- Ensure that all mission-related equipment is sufficiently packed, marked and classified according to international standards (see also Annex 4);
- Ensure that all staff have sufficient and valid travel documentation and vaccinations;
- If environmental emergency assistance forms part of an UNDAC team, or other type of deployment, contact the Team Leader as early as possible – ideally, before departure – to agree on further actions;
- Upon arrival in the recipient country, contact the National Focal Point (or their representatives) and/or in-country UN representatives;
- Should anything unforeseen occur during travel, such as missing a flight connection, the JEU should be informed immediately.

### **3.5 Provision**

The stage when international environmental emergency responders assist a country with specific resources to mitigate the impact of hazards or accidents.

#### **Recipient countries' responsibilities:**

- If feasible, a liaison person with environmental and operational knowledge should be seconded to the international environmental emergency responders to act as guide, interpreter, and link to national authorities;
- Ensure that the received assistance is integrated into national coordination mechanisms;
- Ensure that emergency advice on how to deal with the impact of the hazard/accident is communicated to national authorities and, if necessary, to the affected population.

#### **JEU's responsibilities:**

- Manage the information on the Virtual OSOCC and provide regular situation updates;
- Ensure that information about the environmental emergency response is included in overall situation reports;
- Ensure that sufficient links are established and maintained with regional and/or in-country UN representation;
- If necessary, ensure that the assistance is coordinated with other forms of international response;
- Act as backstop for the mission and ensure that necessary administrative support is provided in cooperation with the providing country;
- Mobilize and coordinate additional assistance if needed.

#### **Providing countries' responsibilities:**

- Coordinate all activities with national authorities or other international responders, such as the UNDAC team;
- Through the expert, assess the impact of the incident and communicate the results in the form of a written mission report promptly to all concerned parties;
- If necessary, provide the national authorities and affected population with emergency advice on immediate actions to be taken;
- Promptly communicate needs for additional international resources to the JEU if necessary;
- Provide updates on mission activities on the Virtual OSOCC;
- In all activities, behave with respect for the affected countries' customs, traditions and religion and adhere to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

### **3.6 Post-Mission Activities**

The stage when international environmental emergency responders complete their mission and depart to their home country.

#### **Recipient countries' responsibilities:**

- Facilitate the departure of international assistance teams and equipment, possibly including export of samples of hazardous material for further analysis;
- Ensure that the mission report is disseminated to concerned national entities;
- Ensure that recommended recovery actions and disaster risk reduction measures are implemented.

#### **JEU's responsibilities:**

- Ensure that the mission report is disseminated to relevant international entities, including regional and/or in-country UN representation;
- In cooperation with regional and/or in-country UN representation, ensure that a proper transition between emergency response and early recovery takes place;
- If necessary, facilitate technical advice and resources to support the affected country in the implementation of recommendations;
- Facilitate an evaluation of emergency procedures and disseminate findings to all stakeholders and make them available on the Virtual OSOCC;
- If necessary, facilitate review of emergency procedures based on lessons learned.

#### **Providing countries' responsibilities:**

- Devise transition/exit strategy in cooperation with national authorities and regional and/or in-country UN representation taking into account measures for early recovery and disaster risk reduction;
- Ensure that all mission related equipment is sufficiently packed, marked and classified according to international standards before departure, including samples of hazardous material brought back for further analysis (see also Annex 4);
- Evaluate deployment performance and communicate recommendations for updates of emergency procedures to JEU.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Notification and Request for Assistance form

THE JOINT UNEP/OCHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT

EUROPEAN COMMISSION CIVIL PROTECTION CO-OPERATION MECHANISM

UNECE CONVENTION ON THE TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

## URGENT

Assistance Request Report - Serial number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_ UTC \_\_\_\_\_ Local

From/Country of emergency: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax/Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail : \_\_\_\_\_

Pages (incl. cover page): \_\_\_\_\_

To (Joint Unit/MIC/Point of contact): \_\_\_\_\_

Fax : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail : \_\_\_\_\_

#### Nature of emergency/accident

Accident	Type of accident	Attack with	Natural disaster	
Chemical	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire	<input type="checkbox"/> Explosives	<input type="checkbox"/> Earthquake	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mining tailings	<input type="checkbox"/> Explosion	<input type="checkbox"/> Chemical agents	<input type="checkbox"/> Flood	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Release into water	<input type="checkbox"/> Bio agents	<input type="checkbox"/> Landslide	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marine pollution	<input type="checkbox"/> Release into air	<input type="checkbox"/> Radioactive agents	<input type="checkbox"/> Forest fire	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

001	Date emergency/accident				
002	Time emergency/accident	UTC		Local	
<b>Location</b>					
011	Country/Town/Area				
012	Latitude		degrees/minutes	North/South	
013	Longitude		degrees/minutes	East/West	
<b>Request for assistance</b>					
071	On-site assessment/advice				
072	Response teams/ equipment	Fire <input type="checkbox"/> Hazmat <input type="checkbox"/> Search and Rescue <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster medicine <input type="checkbox"/>			
		Others: _____			
073	Humanitarian assistance				
074	Sampling and analysis				
075	Clean-up/restoration				
<b>When and how (delivery of assistance)</b>					
081	When assistance				
082	How assistance/delivery				
083	Contact person				
<b>Logistics</b>					
091	What and where	Short description of emergency and immediate effects			
Emergency and mitigation measures already taken					
101	Evacuation				km radius
102	Sheltering				km radius
103	Other				
<b>Other information</b>					
111	The status of this report was valid at: (date) _____/(time)_____ UTC			<b>Receipt of this report should be acknowledged promptly by fax or e-mail</b>	
CONTACT: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Emergency calls (24hrs): +41 22 917 2010 Emergency Fax (24hrs): +41 22 917 00 23					

## **Annex 2: Flash Environment Assessment Tool (FEAT)**

The Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT) helps to identify existing or potential acute environmental impacts that pose risks for humans, human life-support functions and ecosystems, following sudden-onset natural disasters. FEAT focuses primarily on immediate and acute impacts arising from released hazardous chemicals. It can also help to identify potential long-term issues, for example those involving releases of persistent compounds. FEAT also provides information on physical impacts to the natural environment, such as soil erosion and salt water intrusion. Based on this information, users can decide on initial risk management actions under disaster conditions. In particular, it helps users make timely and accurate requests for additional, specialized equipment or expertise to address impacts.

Disaster response teams are faced with the difficult task of not only dealing with the disaster at hand, but also identifying and responding appropriately to these potential environmental impacts. However, thousands of toxic chemicals could be involved in any given disaster, each with its own toxicity profile, and with a multitude of exposure pathways, e.g., air, water and soil, and receptors, e.g., humans, livestock, and fishing grounds. In such complex situations, it can be easy to overlook or misjudge important risks. At the same time, given the often overwhelming demands of disaster situations, complex and full-fledged environmental assessments would be inappropriate. Therefore, a practical, accurate, yet simple tool is required to assist initial response teams such as United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams.

With these challenges in mind, FEAT is a carefully balanced compromise between simplicity and scientific rigor, with emphasis on usefulness to response mechanisms such as UNDAC teams. It provides quick answers in complex disaster situations, even in the absence of specialized technical resources or expertise.

In summary, FEAT is a “first aid” tool to identify environmental impacts, and support initial response actions in disaster contexts. It does not take the place of in-depth environmental assessments, which may be appropriate at later stages of the disaster response. Findings from use of the FEAT should be communicated quickly to appropriate organizations so that appropriate actions can be taken.

More information and the complete FEAT user guide can be downloaded at: <http://ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep>

### **Annex 3: Hazard Identification Tool (HIT)**

Natural disasters often have secondary impacts, including damage to infrastructure and industrial installations. These so-called environmental emergencies may pose a threat to the health, security and welfare of the affected population and the emergency responders. Too often, these risks are neglected, resulting in preventable deaths and injuries. It is therefore essential that information on the location of the hazardous facilities and the potential impacts is made available to relevant authorities and emergency responders at a very early stage of the disaster response or even prior to the onset of a disaster.

The Hazard Identification Tool (HIT) has been developed to assist in the desk research based identification of potentially hazardous facilities. The HIT User Guide gives information on the HIT objective and methodology and provides the user with step-by-step guidance on how to apply the HIT, including a list of valuable sources.

The objective of the HIT is to limit the consequences of natural disasters and technological accidents on the human population, hence to reduce the number of victims. To this end, the HIT is applied to identify potential secondary risks of a natural disaster and provides information that can subsequently feed into the decision making process on requests for further specialized assistance and targeted mitigation measures.

The methodology of the HIT is based on the FEAT, a rapid assessment methodology used to identify the most acute hazards to human health and the environment after natural disasters. The HIT does not replace the FEAT; on the contrary, both tools are complementary: The HIT is compiled based on a desk top research, and sent to first responders and/or national authorities for in-country verification. It is important to emphasize that the HIT is only a first step to reach the goal of limiting the consequences of secondary risks.

The HIT consists of a list of “big and obvious” facilities and objects that may pose a risk to human health and life, as well as the natural environment. The list includes indications of the hazardous substances that are expected to be present in these facilities, as well as the hazard types associated with these substances and related estimated impact types. The hazard types and estimated impact types in the HIT are based on the above mentioned FEAT to facilitate ease of complementary use.

#### Impact types

- **Direct impact on human health:** Immediate adverse health effects, possibly leading to immediate death (e.g. explosion, immediate toxic effects)
- **Direct impact on life-support functions and nature:** Immediate impact on crops, fish resources, agricultural land, water supply and immediate threats to biodiversity and certain species or ecosystems
- **Long-term impact on life-support functions, nature and humans:** Toxic persistent substances entering the food chain and natural ecosystems and effects of carcinogenic substances.

More recently, HITs have also been provided in support of disaster response preparedness activities and simulation exercises.

All HITs can be accessed via the country/disaster specific links at the right column of this page. HITs are also published at the Global Disaster Assessment and Coordination (GDACS) website.

Country specific HITs are published at the following locations:

JEU Homepage:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep>

Global Disaster Assessment and Coordination (GDACS) website: <http://www.gdacs.org/>

Virtual OSOCC:

<http://ocha.unog.ch/virtualosocc/>

### **Disclaimer / Limitations of the HIT**

The HIT is only an identification tool and does not provide the user with reliable recommendations for response, preparedness or mitigation activities. For this, specialized expertise from qualified and experienced actors is mandatory and on-site assessments will be needed for verification. The HIT is based on the FEAT, but a simplification thereof in the sense that it only provides an overall estimate of the hazard and impact types of the substances that can be expected to be found in the facility. While these calculations are scientifically based, hazardous substances used at a certain facility may be different from the ones listed in the HIT and impact also highly depends on the quantities of substances present. Based on the list of information sources, the HIT may not provide a conclusive list. Other hazards may not be readily identifiable and it is therefore strongly encouraged to use additional information sources.

## Annex 4: Import/Export Manifests

### Introduction

Many states have laws in place for customs duty and/or restriction exemptions with regard to certain types of goods imported/exported for humanitarian relief. It is also common for governments to have special emergency provisions in their customs legislation allowing for special arrangements being put in place for processing of incoming relief items following a major disaster (see also the “Model Customs Agreement” in Annex 5). Nevertheless, international responders should always be able to present detailed manifests of the equipment they carry to facilitate expeditious customs processing.

If the recipient country accepts the use of ATA Carnets ([www.atacarnet.com](http://www.atacarnet.com)) for temporary admission of professional equipment it may be advantageous to investigate if issuance of such a Carnet is an option. See World Chambers Federation at <http://www.iccwbo.org/wcf/id2831/index.html> or contact a nearby consolidator/shipper for further information.

### Manifests

A manifest should, as a minimum, contain the following information:

- **Date** – Stating the date of the export/import;
- **Reason for Import** – A short description stating that the equipment is for humanitarian assistance or emergency relief;
- **Shipper/Owner** – Stating who owns and is responsible for the shipment during transport. Shipper and owner will in most cases be the same, unless equipment is sent as unaccompanied cargo;
- **Consignee** – Name and contact details of the person responsible for the consignment once it has reached the country of destination. For equipment brought by relief teams, etc. this will usually be the same as shipper/owner;
- **Terms of Delivery** – Refers to the international commercial term (incoterm) that applies to the shipment. They are normally used to divide transaction costs and responsibilities between buyer and seller in international commerce and stated on an invoice for customs purposes. For equipment imported by relief teams it is recommended to use the code CIF, which indicates that Cost, Insurance, Freight is included in the invoiced value;
- **Overview** – A table specifying the various items imported with description, quantity, weight/volume, estimated value in international well-known currency (e.g., USD) and possibly serial numbers of the items. Above or underneath the table the total quantity, weight, volume and value should be indicated. However it should be stated that the item is not imported for commercial purpose;
- **Declaration** – At the end of the manifest a declaration is normally included stating that the equipment is intended to be used, disposed of, or re-exported. Furthermore, it is also declared what origin the equipment has, often referred to in customs-terms *preferential status*.

A manifest may be structured as a proforma invoice to further state that the equipment is not intended for commercial purposes, but only for the owner’s professional use. See below for example.





## **Annex 5: Model Customs Agreement**

### **MODEL AGREEMENT**

**between the United Nations and State/Government of \_\_\_\_\_  
concerning measures to expedite the import, export and transit  
of relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel  
in the event of disasters and emergencies**

Whereas paragraph 3 of the Annex to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182 underlines that humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of and in principle on the basis of an appeal by the affected country, and that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations;

Whereas paragraph 6 of the said Annex calls upon the States, whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance, to facilitate the work of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in implementing this assistance;

Whereas paragraph 7 of the said Annex urges the States in proximity to emergencies to participate closely with the affected countries in international efforts, with a view to facilitating, to the extent possible, the transit of humanitarian assistance;

Whereas paragraph 28 of the said Annex instructs the United Nations to continue to make appropriate arrangements with interested Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to enable it to have more expeditious access, when necessary, to their emergency relief capacities, including food reserves, emergency stockpiles and personnel, as well as logistic support;

Whereas paragraph 29 of the said Annex further instructs the United Nations to develop special emergency rules and procedures to enable all organizations to procure quickly emergency supplies and equipment;

Whereas paragraph 30 of the said Annex requests disaster-prone countries to develop special emergency procedures to expedite the rapid procurement and deployment of equipment and relief supplies;

Whereas paragraph 4 of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 47/168 calls upon potential donors to adopt necessary measures to increase and expedite their contributions, including setting aside, on a stand-by basis, financial and other resources that can be disbursed quickly to the United Nations system in response to the consolidated appeals of the Secretary General;

Whereas paragraph 8 of the said Resolution requests the Secretary General, after consultations with Governments, to report on ways and means to improve further United Nations capability in the areas of prevention and preparedness in relation to natural disasters and other emergencies, in particular emergencies involving food, medicines, shelter and health care, as provided in General Assembly resolution 46/182;

Whereas the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs serves as the central focal point in the United Nations with Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerning the United Nations emergency relief operations;

Whereas the Customs Co-operation Council adopted, on 8 June 1970, a Recommendation to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters;

Whereas the International Convention on the simplification and harmonisation of Customs procedures (Kyoto Convention), the Customs Convention on the A.T.A. carnet for the temporary admission of goods (A.T.A. Convention), the Convention on Temporary Admission (Istanbul Convention), the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention) and the International Maritime organization Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic recommend simplified procedures and other facilitation measures to be applied, inter alia, to the transborder movement of relief consignments and possessions of disaster relief personnel;

Whereas the State/Government of \_\_\_\_\_

wishes to contribute to the expeditious delivery of international humanitarian assistance to the disaster-affected population;

Now therefore, the United Nations represented by

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs or a designated United Nations Agency)*

and the State/Government of \_\_\_\_\_

represented by \_\_\_\_\_

hereby agree as follows:

## ARTICLE 1.

### Definitions

For the purpose of this Agreement the term:

1.1. “*Disaster*” means:

A serious disruption of the functioning of the society, causing widespread human, material, or environmental losses which exceed the ability of affected society to cope using only its own resources.

The term covers all disasters irrespective of their cause (i.e. both natural and manmade).

1.2 . “*Disaster relief personnel*” means:

Individuals, groups of individuals, teams and constituted units executing delivery of humanitarian assistance within the framework of a United Nations relief operation.

Examples of disaster relief personnel that can be involved in any particular disaster are:

UN delegates;

Experts on mission for the United Nations;

Emergency response personnel to assist refugees and internally displaced persons;

International Search and Rescue teams;

Medical teams;

Specialised teams provided by foreign military, civil defence and civil protection organizations (MCDA teams);

United Nations Disaster Assessment and Co-ordination (UNDAC) team.

1.3. “*Possessions of disaster relief personnel*” means:

All equipment, provisions, supplies, personal effects and other goods brought for and/or by disaster relief personnel in order to perform their duties and to otherwise support them in living and working in the country of the disaster throughout the duration of their mission.

1.4. “*Relief consignment*” means:

Goods, such as vehicles and other means of transport, foodstuffs, medicaments, clothing, blankets, tents, prefabricated houses, water purifying and water storage items, or other goods of prime necessity, forwarded as aid to those affected by disaster.

1.5. “*United Nations relief operation*” means:

Assistance and/or intervention, by the United Nations, a United Nations Agency or on its behalf, during or after disaster to meet the life preservation and basic subsistence needs. It can be of emergency or protracted duration.

1.6. “*Emergency*” means:

A sudden and usually unforeseen event that calls for immediate measures to minimize its adverse consequences.

## ARTICLE 2.

### Organizations involved in United Nations relief operations

Included are:

- United Nations (UN)
- UN Agencies
- Governmental (GOV), intergovernmental (IGO) and non-governmental (NGO) organizations certified by the UN as bona fide participants within the framework of a United Nations relief operation
- Transport carriers contracted by the UN, a UN agency or a UN certified GOV/IGO/NGO for transportation of relief consignment(s) and/or possessions of disaster relief personnel.

## ARTICLE 3.

### Facilitation measures for United Nations relief operations

The State/Government of \_\_\_\_\_ agrees to:

#### 3.1. With respect to exports:

- 3.1.1. Waive any economic export prohibitions or restrictions, and any export duties or taxes, in respect of goods contained in relief consignments destined for countries having suffered disasters and in possessions of disaster relief personnel;
- 3.1.2. Accept at exportation, as a general rule, the written summary declarations made out by the UN, or its agencies, or organizations involved in UN relief operations as detailed in Article 2 of this Agreement, of relief consignments as evidence of the contents and of the intended use of such consignments;
- 3.1.3. Take such steps as may be necessary in order that the Customs authorities where the exports are made are in a position to:
  - a) expeditiously examine, only when necessary for security or narcotics/contraband control purposes and where appropriate by applying sampling or selective techniques against the summary declaration, the contents of the relief consignments and possessions of disaster relief personnel, and certify the results of this examination on that declaration;
  - b) where possible, place such consignments under Customs seals where such action is likely to avoid delays in the forwarding of the goods at later stages in their journey;
  - c) permit such consignments to be presented for export clearance at any approved Customs office and, in stockpile States, in advance of the need for actual export; and
  - d) permit such consignments to be placed in a Customs warehouse for subsequent export, for providing humanitarian assistance;

#### 3.2. With respect to transshipment or transit:

- 3.2.1. Allow operators, under supervision of the public authorities concerned, to disassemble transshipment cargo including shipments in containers and on pallets, so that they may sort and reassemble shipments for onward carriage without examination, except for

reasons of security or in special circumstances, and subject only to simple documentation where required;

3.2.2. Facilitate as far as possible the carriage of relief consignments and possessions effects of disaster relief personnel in Customs transit, with due regard to any action taken under paragraph 3.1.3. above;

3.3. With respect to imports:

3.3.1. Allow admission free of import duties and taxes or charges having an equivalent effect and free of economic import prohibitions or restrictions in respect of:

a) all relief consignments imported by the UN, or its agencies, or organizations involved in UN disaster relief operations as detailed in Article 2 of this agreement, for distribution free of charge by them or under their control to victims of disaster in their territory, in particular where such consignments consist of foodstuffs, medicaments, clothing, blankets, tents, prefabricated houses or other goods of prime necessity;

b) possessions of disaster relief personnel delivering humanitarian assistance;

3.3.2. Facilitate the temporary admission, with conditional relief from import duties and taxes of any equipment required by the UN or its agencies or organizations involved in disaster relief detailed in Article 2 of this Agreement, and used by them or under their control in action undertaken to alleviate the effects of a disaster; and whenever possible not to require security but accept an undertaking given by them to re-export such equipment;

This equipment covers *inter alia*:

- transmission and communication equipment;
- water purifying and water storage items;
- all equipment, machinery, tools and electronic devices required by technical specialists, such as doctors, engineers, communications technicians, logisticians, community workers, etc. to perform their duties;
- equipment not directly involved in relief operations but used to fight and eliminate the consequences of natural and similar disasters, e.g. for elimination of pollution of all types, decontamination of buildings and territories, inspection of industrial structures, etc.;
- administrative support items such as office equipment, e.g. computers, photocopiers and typewriters, expendable supplies, staff security items and administrative manuals and documents;
- tents, prefabricated and mobile staff accommodation units and associated materials including cooking and dining equipment and supplies, sanitation requirements and compound safety/security items;
- possessions of disaster relief personnel;
- means of transport and spare parts and equipment for their repair;
- animals for rescue operations, e.g. specially trained dogs.

3.3.3. Authorise and make suitable arrangements for the relief consignments, including those in containers and on pallets and the possessions of disaster relief personnel to be examined and/or released outside the hours and places normally prescribed, and to waive any charges for Customs attendance;

- 3.3.4. Allow operators and importers to submit manifest and entry details to Customs prior to arrival of the relief consignments in order to facilitate immediate release;
- 3.3.5. Accomplish physical examination of cargo, when required, on a sampling or selective basis, and carry out such examination as rapidly as possible;
- 3.3.6. Make arrangements whereby the maximum number of relief consignments can be released promptly after arrival upon presentation of a provisional entry document or a legally acceptable electronic equivalent, subject to complete fulfilment of Customs and other requirements within a specified time limit.

**ARTICLE 4.**

Application of facilitation measures

The measures in Article 3 shall be applied:

- to relief consignments and possessions of disaster relief personnel sent to disaster-affected areas by any of the organizations referred to in Article 2 of this Agreement;
- by Customs at the points of entry and/or exit, whether or not they have been informed by their superior administration of a particular relief consignment and/or possessions of disaster relief personnel.

**ARTICLE 5.**

Ad-hoc adjustments

The United Nations and the State/Government of \_\_\_\_\_

may conclude ad-hoc adjustments to the present Agreement.

**ARTICLE 6.**

Non-waiver of immunity

Nothing contained in this agreement shall be deemed a waiver, express or implied, of any immunity from suit or legal process, or of any privilege, exemption or other immunity enjoyed or which may be enjoyed by the United Nations and its personnel by virtue of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations adopted by the General Assembly on 13 February 1946.

**ARTICLE 7.**

Entry into force, amendment and termination

- 7.1 This Agreement shall enter into force (within \_\_\_\_ days) upon its signature by both parties.
- 7.2 This Agreement may be amended only by a written instrument signed by both parties.
- 7.3 This Agreement may be terminated by either party on 90 days written notice to the other party.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Model UN Certificate**

**Issuing Organization** .....

*(Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*

.....

*or a designated UN Agency)*

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

This is to certify that

.....

*(name of an organization, individual, group of individuals, team, constituted unit, etc.)*

.....

is a *bona fide* participant of the United Nations relief operation undertaken at the request of the Government of

.....

*(name of requesting country)*

in order to provide international assistance to meet the life preservation and basic subsistence needs resulting from

.....

*(name of the natural disaster, complex emergency, environmental emergency, etc.)*

.....

and as such is entitled to the application of the Customs facilitation measures which are applied to the relief consignment(s) and/or possessions of disaster relief personnel involved in United Nations relief operations by Customs authorities at the points of entry and/or exit.

All those whom it may concern are requested to extend to the bearer the facilities, privileges and immunities which pertain to and facilitate by all suitable means the execution of the mission on which he is engaged.

**The holder of this certification and his representative(s) will be held responsible for compliance with the laws and regulations of the country/Customs territory of departure and the countries/ Customs territories of temporary admission.**

This certification is valid until .....

*(year) (month) (day)*

Done in ..... on .....

*(place) (year/month/day)*

*(Signature of an authorised Official and stamp of the Issuing Organization)*



**For additional information on the Model Customs Agreement, please, contact:**

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\* \* \*

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