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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

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Dear Mr. Rognvaldsson,

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) provides satellite image derived analysis and mapping in support to UN sister agencies, UN Member States, Non Governmental Organizations and the Red Cross movement for approximately 40 emergencies per year. UNOSAT, a centre of excellence in satellite applications, based in Geneva with a wide network of collaborating partners, is focused on practical results and delivery of products and services that makes a difference in today's complex emergency operations.

UNOSAT is tasked by the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS), to facilitate and coordinate maps and satellite imagery for the immediate response phase following natural disasters. In this regards, it is important to have reliable weather forecasts, as for example search and rescue activities following earthquakes or landslides depend very much on hydro meteorological conditions. At the moment, the international early response community typically rely on global models and media forecasts, but a more detailed and dedicated service is likely to further enhance planning and implementation of relief efforts, thus contributing to saving lives in this crucial early phase of a disaster.

From what we have learned so far from SARWeather, it seems like a promising service due to its proven flexibility, rapid set up for new events, interoperable output allowing for integration into GDACS and the Virtual On Site Operations Coordination Centre (VirtualOSOCC), a key information management intranet for early responders. We have also been impressed by the dedication and quality of work that the staff developing SARWeather has demonstrated.

Should SARWeather, after current testing and future developments, be proven fully operational in the context of GDACS, the aim would be to make it a fully integral part of this decision support system.

With best regards,

Einar Bjorgo
UNOSAT Senior Specialist
UNITAR

Ólafur Rögnvaldsson
Reiknistofa í veðurfræði - Belgingur

Postal Address: UNITAR - Palais des Nations CH-1211 Geneva 10 - Switzerland

Street Address: International Environment House II, 7- 9 Chemin de Balexert CH-1219 Châtellaine - Geneva

T +41 22 917 8400 F +41 22 917 8047 www.unitar.org

Institut des Nations Unies pour la Formation et la Recherche

Instituto de las Naciones Unidas para Formación Profesional e Investigaciones