

Seminar on Crisis Management and Information Technology  
Helsinki, 29 September – 1 October 2002

*Concluding remarks by President Martti Ahtisaari on 1 October 2002*

It has become time to thank all the participants and to draw some concluding remarks. I am sure that yesterday, with our tight schedule and long sessions and perhaps overwhelming amount of information, your long experiences of sitting in international conferences were very valuable. I am glad that today in the working groups we could distillate this information more into practical recommendations to the process.

We took a conscious risk in bringing together this very heterogenous group. It was not obvious and guaranteed that a dialogue could be established and a common language found. In the future we have to be able to focus the discussion more to the key issues.

The feedback that I have received from the ITCM board members and members of the OMG C4I task force has been largely positive. They have gained information of the hard reality of the operations in the field, which you cannot know without being there yourself; and of what it means to make IT solutions to work in that environment. It is also necessary to remember that sometimes the simplest solution is the best when you have to react fast in a complex situation. I hope that also the people from the crisis management domain and with political backgrounds got some ideas on how ICT can be better utilised to fulfill the mandates of the missions.

The next exercise will be one of information management. The London School of Economics will produce a report of these two days, putting all this information and discussions in a format that you will be better able to use. This report will be sent to everybody. Furthermore, from the ITCM web page you can shortly find the statements given, and the updated list of participants will be sent to you by e-mail. All your input concerning the substance is very valued and some have already promised to send us their evaluation.

After all, the key accomplishment has been getting you all here together and the contacts that have been made here. The advisory council mentioned yesterday will be a means perhaps to institutionalise this network and to get the right people together. The advisory council will enable dialogue between the crisis management organisations and IT vendors. To put it in very simple terms: if the organisations don't tell what they need, they are less likely to get it.

I would like to raise a couple of points from yesterday's statements that I found thought-provoking. The first one is the point made by both of the representatives from OSCE, that the political leadership and proper management processes need to be put in place in the organisations before ICT can bring added value. You cannot automaticise ad hoc processes. David Stewart Howitt's point and very illustrative examples of PLIP and the Kosovo EU pillar Lessons Learned Unit show the need to define the root problems before the right solution can be applied. The third point I want to take up is the need to make sure that the ICT used by the international field

operations can be transferred to the local authorities of the host country. Therefore I would like to end with the thought that our objective is not to enhance the international crisis management operations as such, but to enhance their capability to restore the local capabilities and build sustainable and democratic societies.

Thank you all for coming and my special thanks to the Object Management Group in helping to get these different communities together.