

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

*Office of President Abtisaari*

## **To the attention of**

Secretary General Kofi Annan, High Representative Javier Solana, Commissioner Christopher Patten, Secretary General Jan Kubis, Secretary General George Robertson, Chairman of the EU Military Committee General Gustaf Hägglund

## **Re: Open letter on the recommendations of the conference “Towards Interoperability in Crisis Management”**

New York, 3 October 2003

Dear Friends,

To explore practical steps toward improving information sharing, coordination, and cooperation from headquarters to the field, and between and among the various organizations responding to crises, the United States Institute of Peace and the Crisis Management Initiative co-hosted the conference entitled “Towards Interoperability in Crisis Management,” which was held 11-14 September 2003 in Helsinki, Finland. This was a follow-up to the first seminar on Crisis Management and Information Technology, Helsinki, September 2002 and the Crisis Response Executive Advisory Team (CREATE) Meeting, New York, March 2003

I had the chance in the course of last spring and summer to discuss with all of you the need for better management of the crisis management operations. As we discussed, the international community has responded to an increasing number of major political conflicts, and interventions have become ever more complex and multifaceted, extending from peace-enforcement to peacekeeping, from policing to nation building, from humanitarian relief to reconstruction and development. Most often, responses have involved a mix of these aspects. The increase in the number and complexity of interventions requires a greater level of focus, resources, enhanced cost-effectiveness and managerial accountability from the international community. An important component for effective crisis management is the implementation of interoperable information and communications technologies (ICT), which can improve coordination and cooperation between and among responding organisations.

I would like to bring to your attention the priorities identified in the above-mentioned conference to be addressed by the four key crisis management organisations and their respective Governing bodies.

To Conference recognised and emphasised the importance of leadership and commitment from stakeholders to increase the professionalism of the International Organisations dealing with crisis management through efficiency and effectiveness by focussing to:

- Improve the internal management of the organisations individually to improve reporting, decision making support and reduce costs. This should be done through process standardization, simplification and partnership with the private sector.
- Promote sharing of information among the organisations and establish interoperable solutions with other partners. This would be beneficial to the international organisations immediately with respect to security of their staff on the ground and in the long term in preparing the international community to move in the direction of crises prevention.
- Encourage through partnership with the industry the establishment of sustainable systems and services that could be left with the national government (e.g. Civilian Registration, Critical Infrastructure, Election support)

The conference recommended the following next steps to be undertaken:

1) To urge member states to ratify the Tampere convention to speed up its entry into force.

2) To establish an advocacy network of Executive Heads, groups of delegates and senior management to promote the above priorities and to enable staff and information exchange between organisations.

3) Agree to pilot a prototype system for secure incident reporting, sharing and management within the four key crisis management organisations.

I thank you for your co-operation and attention to this matter. I would ask you to designate a senior official in your staff to work with the implementation of the conference recommendations.

When I was recently appointed to chair the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of the UN Personnel in Iraq, it reminded me how important role information sharing and interoperable ICT systems can play in the field of the security of the staff in the high-risk areas that the international community is operating.

With best personal regards,



Martti Ahtisaari

Chairman of the Crisis Management Initiative