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Telemedicine in Disaster Applications

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for the Benefit of Developing Countries in the ECLAC Region

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Background

I would like to commend the organizers of this forum for continuing to demonstrate their leadership and currency with respect to applying space technology to prevent and mitigate the effects of disasters. In particular, I note the inclusion of the new and rapidly developing applications of Telemedicine on our program today.

Applications of data, audio and video technologies in acute and chronic care have been demonstrated over the course of the last 25 years. Telecommunications technologies have also been successfully used in the tracking and prevention of infectious diseases, in the administration of other population-based public health programs, and to train health care providers. Evidence is becoming available that suggests that a broad range of health services can be improved in a cost effective manner through Telemedicine initiatives cooperatively developed and managed by national and local governments, hospitals, insurance providers, private health care service and technology providers, and the public

Telemedicine, however, is not without its critics and, in those countries which have taken an interest, there will be a continuing need to explore procedural and policy issues including protocols for delivering (and receiving) care and new approaches to payment and liability that will involve governments, physicians, hospitals, patients, insurers, and the community at large.