

Tampere Convention

The Tampere Convention – short for The “Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations” – is a binding international convention that governs the use of radio and satellite communications in response to disasters. Among the provisions, the Tampere Convention requires states who are signatory to ensure “the installation and operation of reliable, flexible telecommunication resources to be used by humanitarian relief and assistance organisations.” In real terms, if an emergency has been declared in the country that has ratified the convention, and the country has accepted the assistance of the United Nations, then said nation cannot impede the use of telecommunications equipment in support of humanitarian assistance.

It should be noted legal obligations to provide free access to telecommunications only apply to member state who have fully ratified the convention. At the time of writing this guide, only 49 member states have fully ratified the Tampere Convention, with another 31 agreeing to ratify in the future. Many of the countries in which humanitarian organisations currently operate have not expressed any commitment to sign onto the convention, and even states who have ratified the convention may find specific reasons to impede or deny access to telecommunications services to humanitarian actors. Prior to importing communications equipment into a country, humanitarian agencies should consult with local authorities, customs brokers, and other humanitarians on the ground to understand what restrictions may be in place.

The full text of the Tampere convention can be found in [Spanish](#), [French](#), [English](#) and [Arabic](#).