Charter

for

GLOBAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

Version 7

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1. Charter Description

This Charter is intended to provide the terms of reference within which GEM operates.

- *It describes the aims and purpose of GEM.*
- *It defines the leadership and membership of the organisation, the responsibilities of both and their expectation of each other.*
- *It lays out how GEM will achieve its objectives and the resources necessary to do this.*

GEM is a team of volunteers from all over the world who give their time freely and come from diverse social, political and religious origins. This Charter does not intend to provide an absolute set of rules; each member must be able to operate within their own country's constraints, but some common terms of engagement are laid out here as a common-sense reference. For those whose primary language is not English, the hope is that this Charter is concise, clear and unambiguous.

2. Vision

- *The primary vision of GEM is to provide communications support during disasters.*
- *The goal is to enable those in a disaster area to communicate with those that can provide assistance.*
- *The wish is to provide this service free to any user, within the legal constraints imposed on that user, GEM as the provider and the operation of its communications systems.*
- *The greatest value of the GEM service would be to provide a physical communications link where no other exists, or to provide additional communication paths where demand on other channels is heavy.*
- *Unlike many existing organisations, GEM interfaces amateur (ham) radio and Internet-based audio to provide worldwide channels, flexibly set up and controlled to suit the needs of each different situation.*

3. Objectives and Success Criteria

- *The objective of GEM is to establish a worldwide network of communication nodes, comprised of installations that interface radio frequency equipment with Internet connections ('Gateways'). This objective will be achieved when there are sufficient, permanently available Gateways so that any two points on the earth can communicate reliably using the GEM network.*
- *Through consistency of approach and reliability of its systems, GEM aims to become recognised as a respected provider of volunteer support. Success will be measured by the degree of recognition afforded by the world's emergency communications organisations and relief agencies. The best indicator will be spontaneous approaches from these bodies seeking GEM support.*

4. Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Benefits to GEM	Benefits to them	Constraints
Leadership	Experience and expertise, principal responsibility,	Being involved in successful support during	Are volunteers as much as any other, but take

	point of contact and steers direction	emergencies	responsibility. Required to be highly proactive, remain accountable to the membership at all times and abide by this Charter.
Members	Gateways all over the world, specific skills, they make available their own time, equipment and systems, round-the-clock manning	Being involved in successful support during emergencies	Required to be present regularly and provide their facilities at least semi-permanently. Must abide by this Charter. May join or leave at will, subject to the membership criteria in place.
Supporters	Additional support and facilities during busy periods	Building experience of being involved in supporting emergencies within a controlled environment of more experienced colleagues	No expectation of skills, experience or long-term association with GEM. But may be key people on the ground in a disaster area. Need to control those who seek instant membership or leadership role. Need to manage those who have nothing relevant to contribute, including casual listeners.
Organisations in related roles	Collaboration and skill-sharing, efficient technical and system interfacing. Mutual support and understanding	Collaboration and skill-sharing, efficient technical and system interfacing. Mutual support and understanding	GEM members will, and are encouraged to be, members of related organisations.
Those in need	Provide information and communication to/from the disaster area, ideally through equipment that interfaces with the GEM systems	Provide the key connections that GEM may be able to route to sources of assistance	May have limited skills, limited or transitory facilities. May only be seeking financial aid. May have no information to pass.
Sources of help	Provide the destination for initial support requests, then the source of instruction, direction, information or enquiry	Enabled to communicate directly into the disaster area via the GEM systems	Identity may not be initially apparent meaning GEM may have to store data for their attention. May not wish to respond to support requests. May require GEM to provide equipment to their location in order to use GEM systems.

5. Scope

- *As an organisation comprised entirely of volunteers, GEM must function in an environment where members (the principle stakeholders) are free to donate or withdraw*

their time, equipment and systems at will. With a worldwide membership, many variables govern the attitude of the individual to their part in the organisation. This Charter can only provide a broad template for the conduct and level of motivation expected from its members and mechanisms for dealing with difficulties in this area.

- *GEM has no collective financial responsibility, therefore all interaction with other stakeholders must not involve monetary elements; for example, fees or sponsorship. While GEM may pass messages about the transfer of financial aid between sender and receiver, GEM itself must never act as an intermediate point in the arrangement either in word or deed.*

- *Due to the nature of its establishment, GEM must not undertake a binding commitment or guarantee to provide its services or collaborate with any other organisation. In truth, GEM will always try its best to provide assistance but cannot promise this. Any longer term arrangement to collaborate should be governed by agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding.*

- GEM must always operate within international law and its members must also act within the laws and limitations of their home countries. For example, amateur radio licensing and what is deemed 'appropriate use' of the Internet vary from one country to another.

- *GEM should aim to develop and maintain its systems and structure in approximately the following order. As the organisation changes, these key requirements must be returned to.*

1. *Establish a leadership team, define how it will operate and be accountable, and plan the development of the organisation. This Charter must remain in force and relevant, nevertheless subject to any rewrite as democratically determined by the leadership group.*
2. *Establish the essential systems by which the organisation will internally communicate and be governed.*
3. *Establish a membership, defining the desired membership and leadership criteria.*
4. *Work to develop a network of international Gateways.*
5. *Work to develop relationships with related organisations and professional bodies.*
6. *Establish a web site and email for communicating with members and for informing the general public of the organisation's vision and progress. This should also be aimed at attracting further membership.*
7. *Until well-established and stable, GEM should avoid entering into enrichment activities (such as press and publicity, Memoranda of Understanding with related organisations and similar).*
8. *Devise and embark upon training of members in the many areas of skill required by the organisation.*

- *At all times, GEM should aim to develop and provide something unique to emergency communications and related activities, a service that is not already being provided by another organisation.*
- *GEM should manage its development by using project management tools that allow tasks to be identified, allocated to individuals and deadlines set for their completion.*
- *The work of GEM, whether it be daily administration or longer term projects, should be equally and fairly shared amongst those who have agreed to take on roles and in particular by those at the more senior levels of membership.*
- *The GEM Leadership should meet as often as possible to determine policy and the organisation's direction. In terms of accountability, the Leadership team should aim to meet the membership approximately four times a year in open meetings where an*

agenda must be pre-posted through which the membership will have the opportunity to raise issues.

- *GEM should ensure that it documents and records its activities. Most importantly, every activation should be followed by a thorough debrief at which the performance of the organisation should be examined and lessons learned should translate into improvements and training opportunities for the future.*
- *GEM should manage its involvement with emergency communications carefully. There is a fine line between enquiring whether help is required compared to commencing operations uninvited. Any tendency to get involved unnecessarily should be studiously avoided, even at the cost of membership dissatisfaction. An indicator of a mature organisation is how it conducts itself at the interface with others, knowing when keeping out of the way is the most appropriate action.*
- *When passing traffic on behalf of a third party, it is not the role of GEM to either interpret or act upon the information contained therein.*

6.   Leadership and Membership

- *GEM should strive to welcome members from anywhere in the world. Although mainly an organisation of radio amateurs, this is not a prerequisite because a range of skills is required, not all related to radio operation. It is important that experienced people should join GEM, but those that wish to develop new skills through membership should also be welcomed.*

- *Among the skills that GEM considers valuable are:*

* Radio Operators: good communicators, perhaps with Net Control Station experience
* Administrators: handling traffic using databases and web skills
* National Coordinators: willing to represent GEM in their home country
* Web Developers: to keep the web site and news services up to date
* IT Specialists: to maintain the GEM servers and web-based systems
* Innovators: Those that can identify and put into practice new ideas and systems
* Language Skills: people who can speak more than one language or who can translate from a language into English

- *In general terms, GEM requires of a member:*

* To have Internet access: to use the on-line facilities
* To have reasonable spoken English: the administrative language of GEM is English, although the language used on-air will be determined by circumstance
* To adhere to GEM's principals of mutual respect and tolerance with regard to race, religion and culture
* To be a dedicated and daily visitor to the GEM facilities. It is expected that, whenever a member has Internet access, they will connect to the GEM systems (the Echolink conference and Spark at least) and announce their availability, take part in any activity and monitor.
* To be willing to give free time and effort when a major world incident occurs and through attendance at staff and training nets

- *GEM respects the voluntary nature of all of its membership as follows:*

1. *Members have a personal motivation to help and assist in achieving goals and objectives as defined by the group they join.*

2. *Members should know what their organisation's objectives are and also know who to contact and what to do when called to assist in any emergency.*
3. *Members are not forced to do things either against their will or something they know they are not capable of doing.*
4. *Members are appreciated for the time and effort they spend in helping and assisting others in distress.*
5. *Members are entitled to know what is going on behind the scenes in any operation and are valued for the positive input they can give the organisation when difficult situations arise.*
6. *Members voluntarily use their own equipment and time for the benefit of those in distress without the feeling that compensation is an accepted requirement.*
7. *Volunteers are expected, in an emergency situation, to maintain a log of activities and information necessary for when a new operator needs to take over a shift.*
8. *A member is expected to be a reliable person, one who GEM can depend on for accuracy and honesty in fulfilling their duty in any situation.*
9. *All sensitive and confidential information gleaned in an emergency situation shall remain confidential within GEM.*
10. *A member will always be willing to assist and help a fellow volunteer, within reason, when working under difficult communications situations and to help and assist fellow volunteers to achieve their objectives in an emergency scenario.*

* *Types of GEM membership:*

SUPPORTER: When someone goes through our registration process, they become known to the organisation as a casual Supporter. By registering, Supporters declare their interest in GEM and emergency communications. New applicants are directed to our MYGEM facility where they are asked to complete their profile, which tells GEM about their skills, equipment and experience so that they can be called upon when their particular strengths are needed. Supporters are also encouraged to regularly check in to the GEM Echolink conference. Because Supporters tend to come and go, there is minimal expectation on both sides of the relationship and thus their access to other GEM on-line systems is limited. If a Supporter is particularly active over a period of time, or they possess particularly important skills that GEM needs, they can be promoted to full Membership. Conversely, Supporters that do not appear to be active may find that their access privileges lapse.

MEMBER: Member status is mainly a recognition of long-term devotion to GEM. GEM expects Members to support the organisation in word as well as deed. They will show a more regular presence and a higher degree of dedication than Supporters. The aspiration to learn in the skill areas required by GEM, such as qualifying as an NCS or learning how to manage the on-line systems as an administrator, would be encouraged at Member level. Over time, the aim would be for Members to aspire to a Leadership position. This would be accelerated if the Member was willing to take on some of the many outstanding projects that would help GEM to develop. Alternatively, outstanding expertise in a discipline required by GEM could also attract promotion. Members should be willing to share such knowledge with others by providing or assisting with training. Members are granted access to all of the GEM on-line systems so that they can take the fullest part in emergency support activities. Members also receive a personal GEM email address for use in all communication on behalf of the organisation. Members must remain significantly active within GEM- if their presence falls away then, over time, levels of privileged access will cease and they may be returned to Supporter class.

LIAISON OFFICER: This special class of membership is reserved for those who are willing to represent whole countries or regions of the world, usually because they are based there. Liaison Officers must be able to translate from their local language(s) to and from English; they coordinate and represent other GEM Supporters and Members based in their area. Liaison Officers may need to take charge and direct GEM activities if the focus of an event is on their particular region. GEM also expects Liaison Officers to make contact and build relationships with professional and governmental bodies in their home countries, using their instinctive knowledge of local protocol. Liaison Officers also provide the GEM point of contact for radio amateur organisations in their own areas of the world. Liaison Officers should be well-trained and conversant with all of the GEM on-line systems - they may be granted administrator rights to control such systems in certain circumstances. The Liaison Officer role is exceptionally important to GEM and therefore their ability to always promote GEM in a good light with their local contacts is paramount. Even new joiners can expect to be quickly elevated to this position if they live in an area of the world in which GEM lacks good membership numbers or they speak languages that are particularly needed by our organisation.

LEADERSHIP: Those in the Leadership team have specific responsibilities for key areas that are essential to the effective running of GEM. Leaders are expected to 'go the extra mile' and give a great deal of time and dedication to the organisation, leading and motivating all other Members and Supporters in every way. Leaders have administrator-level access to all of our systems and thus have executive control over the moment-by-moment activities of GEM. Any member of the Leadership team may place GEM on an activation standing by consulting with just one other. Leaders are expected to represent GEM at the highest level with outside contacts, generating and/or contributing to documentation and development in all aspects of the organisation. They are expected to attend and represent GEM at international meetings should these be held in their region of the world, as well as giving written or verbal presentations to major gatherings of emergency communications specialists. Leaders must actively seek to bring GEM to the favourable attention of the widest possible audience and are expected to contribute in turn to the minor ongoing costs that keep GEM functioning. The Leadership team will consist of long-standing and ever-present members of GEM who possess the highest level of skill and experience in their particular fields of expertise in emergency communications.

- *The registration process:*

The GEM registration process allows us to gather details of people who can be of benefit to the organisation. Once their registration has been received, Supporters are directed towards our on-line MYGEM facility where they are required to give as much detail as possible about the skills, facilities and experience they have to offer. This information is held in our secure database so that we may call on those skills if circumstances so dictate. However, it is important to note that registering with GEM is only the beginning of the application process. Once registered, Supporters will be contacted by a sponsor – an established member of GEM – who will act as a point of contact and guidance. There will be a probationary period before a new applicant is accepted for membership. During this period they are encouraged to demonstrate a good level of interest in GEM.

CONTROL AND LIMITATIONS PLACED ON ALL MEMBERS AT ALL SENIORITY LEVELS

- *All proposals will be voted upon by the Leadership team. A simple majority will be required to approve a proposal. However, if 50% or fewer of the Leadership team are present at the vote, the decision should be noted but remain unapproved until the vote can be taken again when a greater number of the team are present.*
- *Acceptance for membership for new joiners, or promotion or demotion of any existing member, will be voted upon by the Leadership team.*

- *When a new candidate is put forward for a senior position, the current Leadership members will have the opportunity to interview the individual openly on a platform such as a VoIP conference. The interview will be overseen by a moderator. Following the interview, the Leadership team will vote to accept or decline the appointment.*
- *The members of the Leadership team must be permanently accessible and accountable to the Membership of GEM. If there are concerns with the performance of a particular Leadership team member, these should ideally be resolved by informal negotiation. If this is not possible, the position of any Leadership team member may be challenged by a petition endorsed by a significant number of Members. The Leadership team will then convene a meeting with those Members in order to resolve the matter.*
- *At no time will conflict between members or member sub-groups be permitted to create long-lasting divisions within GEM.*
- *No one person or sub-group within GEM may unilaterally take any action, activate the organisation in an emergency, make any appointment or make any official communication to other organisations. This includes any Leader, who similarly is not entitled to act alone. All such actions may only be undertaken with the approval of the wider Leadership team.*
- *Any member, at any seniority level, who causes the good name of GEM to fall into disrepute, will forfeit their membership.*
- *Any member, at any seniority level, who allows the GEM systems to be compromised, for example through allowing unauthorised access or through releasing privileged information (such as administrator passwords), will forfeit their membership.*
- *No member will supply a GEM Press Release to any outside organisation, including items that they have written themselves, without firstly providing the copy for authorisation by the Leader responsible for external communications. This is so that the content and format may be approved.*
- *No member or sub-group of GEM will create a facility in the name of the organsiation (for example; social networking systems such as Twitter or Facebook, websites or alternative IT systems) without firstly obtaining the full sanction of the GEM Board. Use of the GEM logo must similarly be pre-approved for all publications (including all written material, individual or group websites and blogs).*

7. Assumptions and Dependencies

ASSUMPTIONS
- *The principal assumption is that GEM can provide a facility which can genuinely enhance the support structure around a disaster. This considers that 'official' communications may be badly damaged in the immediate aftermath of the disaster and the need for early information may only be obtainable through non-official routes, such as amateur (ham) radio, other wireless communications or what remains of the cabled public network and Internet.*

DEPENDENCIES
- *GEM is heavily dependent on its volunteer membership, the size and geographical spread of which governs the organisation's capability to provide truly global communications. Every effort should be made to encourage membership interest, but those appointed should take an active role within the team and regularly make available at least one identifiable resource or skill.*
- *GEM relies on the relative freedom and widespread instance of amateur (ham) radio around the world. To provide the potential for communications support at any location, GEM should work to enable local interest in amateur radio and recognition of its worth by the authorities. GEM should particularly seek membership in areas of the world that are more prone to disasters.*

8. Resources

The following resources should be made available to the organisation. These should ideally be provided by the members of the organisation at zero cost. Where possible, such systems should be maintained on servers that are under the direct control of the members and should be mirrored on at least a secondary server located in a different part of the world so that local outages do not affect GEM's ability to operate.

Resource	Description and Source
Worldwide network of Gateways	Radio frequency equipment, capable of short and/or long-range wireless communication, established at as many locations around the world as possible. Software and/or hardware to interface this with the Internet so that a bidirectional audio path is enabled between the two. In the majority, this will be personally-owned amateur (ham) radio equipment located at premises belonging to GEM members, interfaced to an Internet-capable computer.
Audio over the Internet	Equipment for passing two-way audio to remote locations via the Internet. This could be one of a number of different software, some in the public domain and others restricted in access to licensed radio amateurs. The necessary computer and Internet connection will usually be in the private ownership of the GEM member.
Deployable equipment to disaster area	A kit of equipment, maintained as ready to ship and designed to be compatible with GEM systems, which can be sent to a disaster area to enable local relief support to connect to the GEM network.
Deployable equipment to the source of assistance	A kit of equipment, maintained as ready to ship and designed to be compatible with GEM systems, which can be sent to the premises of the source of relief support in order to connect to the GEM network.
Command and Control of traffic	A facility for controlling the flow of traffic as it passes through the GEM network. This is likely to be, but not essentially, a point in the Internet part of the audio path. Establishment of such a facility is likely to be part of the Audio over Internet software.
Storage of traffic	A database facility for logging and recording the traffic handled by GEM. This may be required if the destination for the traffic is not available or unidentified, also for legal purposes or for training. A method for public submission to this system may be desirable. A system for the protection of sensitive data may be desirable.
Internal Communication	A facility for instantaneous speech and text chat, restricted to GEM members only for the purposes of immediate command and control of resources. This is likely to be software of the Instant Messaging genre. An internal email system, allowing members to use a GEM email address for official communications and for delivering targeted mail to specific sub-groups of the organisation. A dedicated web site or forum, restricted to membership access only. A repository of the defining GEM documents (such as this one) and other operational material, with access restricted to members. An internal telephone exchange, allowing free calls between members across the world. A bulk SMS system for alerting members to an activation.
External Communication and	A web site, designed to promote the work of GEM and provide such operational information as may be of benefit to the wider public and

| publicity | non-members. With due caution and avoiding exaggeration at all costs, GEM should generate the occasional Press Release that brings attention to its activities. Contact with external organisations should be conducted from a single point within the organisation (such as a Leadership role specifically established for the purpose) with a good level of consultation across the Leadership team before any correspondence is entered into. It is important that common formats for all communication are used; template page layouts, logos or emblems, email signatures should be presented in a uniform style right across the organisation. |

Approval

The following individuals have approved this Charter. By giving such approval, these individuals agree to use this Charter as the basis for the governance and development of the GEM organisation.

Role	Name	Date
Interim Board member	Francois Botha ZS6BUU	
Interim Board member	Dennis Baumgarte AE2EE	
Interim Board member	Roger Schmid HB9SLM	
Interim Board member	Ray Sabb KA1AAA	
Interim Board member	Steve Richards G4HPE	
Interim Board member	Claus Blechinger OE5CEN	
Interim Board member	Juan Bertolin EA5XQ	
Interim Board member	Ronimar Costa dos Santos PU3CVB	
Interim Board member	Paul Gaskell G4MWO	

Revision History

Name	Date	Reason For Changes	Version
1st draft	6th January 2011		01
Pre-release version	15th January 2011	Interim Board discussion and agreed modifications, followed by unanimous vote of adoption.	04
Revision	22nd April 2011	Added phrase concerning use of GEM name on social networking systems, websites and blogs	07