



CONCEPT NOTE

Leveraging Digital Innovation for Disaster Preparedness, Anticipatory Action, and Response

OVERVIEW

A powerful tropical cyclone is fast approaching—time is running out. In moments like this, responders must make quick, informed decisions. But how can digital tools help?

The session will engage participants in an interactive exercise using previous emergency scenarios, prompting them to navigate key challenges using data-driven solutions. From early warning systems and predictive analytics to coordination platforms and logistical tools, we'll explore how businesses and humanitarian actors are leveraging digital technologies and innovation to strengthen disaster preparedness, anticipatory action and response.

Following the opening exercise, a panel of experts from the private sector and humanitarian organizations will share how they are using digital solutions in reshaping emergency response efforts. Panelists will share insights on the latest innovations, practical applications, and lessons learned from recent emergencies.

Throughout the session, participants will have the opportunity to engage through real-time polls and questions, ensuring a more dynamic and thought-provoking discussion.

DATE AND TIME

Tuesday, 25 March 2025
09:00 – 10:30 Geneva (UTC+1)

LOCATION

[International Conference Center Geneva \(CICG\)](#), Salle 4

REGISTRATION

Advance registration is required.
[Please register online here.](#)

CONTACT

For more information, email connectingbusiness@un.org.

Photo credit: Philippines Disaster Resilience Foundation

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. Explore the role of digital technologies and innovation in humanitarian response by examining how businesses and humanitarian organizations use data-driven tools to enhance preparedness, enable anticipatory action, and improve response efforts.
2. Engage participants in an interactive scenario to illustrate real-world decision-making challenges and demonstrate how digital platforms—such as crisis mapping tools and coordination tools—can optimize emergency response.
3. Facilitate a dynamic discussion with experts to share best practices, lessons learned, and practical applications of digital technology and innovation in humanitarian crises, empowering participants to integrate these innovations into their own disaster response strategies.

PARTICIPANTS

This session is open to participants from across the humanitarian, development, government, academic, and private sector communities, particularly those engaged in disaster preparedness, response, and digital innovation. The session will be especially relevant for humanitarian practitioners, technology providers, private sector representatives, and policy makers seeking to enhance coordination and decision-making through digital tools. By fostering a collaborative environment, the discussion will encourage knowledge exchange, highlight innovative approaches, and explore pathways for deeper partnerships in leveraging technology for crisis management.

PROGRAMME

09:00-09:10 Welcome and Opening Remarks

- **Ramesh Rajasingham**, Director – Coordination Division and Head and Representative of OCHA in Geneva

09:10-10:30 Interactive Exercise and Panel Discussion

- **Dana Yaari**, Emergency Response Team Lead, Monday.com
- **Leonardo Milano**, Data Science Team Lead, OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data
- **Rene “Butch” Meily**, President, Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation

Moderator: Rhiza Nery, Deputy Programme Coordinator, OCHA-UNDP Connecting Business initiative

10:15-16:30 Q&A and Closing Remarks

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Ramesh Rajasingham

Director – Coordination Division and Head and Representative of OCHA in Geneva

Ramesh Rajasingham was appointed Head and Representative of OCHA in Geneva and Director of the Coordination Division in September 2018. Mr. Rajasingham has more than 25 years' experience in the UN, including as OCHA's Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. He has carried out assignments with OCHA and UNICEF and worked in crisis settings around the world, including as Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis. Rajasingham, a Sri Lankan national, holds a Master's in Economics and speaks English and French.



Dana Yaari

Emergency Response Team Lead, Monday.com

Dana is the Emergency Response Team Manager at monday.com, where she and her team connect disaster response humanitarian aid organizations to the digital tools they need to save critical time and resources. Prior to joining Monday.com, Dana worked for a decade in investment banking before switching gears to work with IsraAID in disaster zones across the world, supporting vulnerable communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.



Leonardo Milano

Data Science Team Lead, OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data

Leonardo Milano leads the Data Science team at the OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data, where he supports the humanitarian community around the development, evaluation, validation, and application of data science tools to better inform humanitarian response. Prior to joining OCHA, Leonardo worked as a Senior Data Scientist for the Norwegian Refugee Council, carrying out cutting-edge research on the topic of displacement related to conflicts and disasters worldwide. Trained as a physicist, Leonardo previously worked at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, California. Leonardo holds a PhD in Physics from the University of Turin, Italy.



Rene “Butch” Meily

President, Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation

Butch is the author of an upcoming memoir, *From Manila to Wall Street – An Immigrant’s Journey With America’s First Black Tycoon*. Butch’s current job is President of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), a private sector disaster management organization that includes the major business groups in the country. He helped found PDRF, turning it into a global role model for private sector involvement in calamities. The organization operates the world’s only national private sector Emergency Operations Center.

Butch wears several hats. He heads IdeaSpace Foundation, a technology accelerator for early-stage startups, and QBO Innovation Hub, a public private partnership launched to mentor startups. Until December 2020, he served as president of Pacific Global One, an aviation firm affiliated with Philippine Long Distance Telephone. Butch has worked in conflict situations in the southern Philippines including a terrorist siege in 2013 and an ISIS-inspired rebellion in 2017.



Rhiza Nery

Deputy Programme Coordinator, OCHA-UNDP Connecting Business initiative

Rhiza Nery is the Deputy Programme Coordinator of the Connecting Business initiative (CBI) based in Istanbul, Turkey. Her portfolio includes network support and management, impact measurement, accountability to affected populations and SME disaster resilience.

Previously, Rhiza was the Business Continuity Program Manager of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), where she led the implementation of programs for Micro, Small, Medium enterprises (MSMEs), corporations and critical infrastructure. She also worked as a Professional Fellow at the Florida Division of Emergency Management where she acted as an emergency planner during Hurricane Michael in 2018. Rhiza completed her Masters in Disasters, Adaptation and Development at King’s College London as a Chevening Scholar.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

OCHA-UNDP Connecting Business initiative (CBI)



Established and jointly managed by the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) and the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP), CBI is dedicated working with local businesses to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. CBI Member Networks are independent chambers of commerce, trade

federations, business associations and private foundations that are ready, willing and able to lead private sector disaster management in their countries. CBI empowers local businesses to work hand-in-hand with governments, civil society, humanitarian organizations and affected people to alleviate human suffering while building more resilient societies. Learn more at connectingbusiness.org or email connectingbusiness@un.org.