

UPDATE ON COORDINATION ISSUES

1. As indicated in the previous update on coordination issues at the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee,¹ the update for the current meeting will concentrate primarily on UNHCR's interaction with United Nations coordinating bodies, rather than on bilateral cooperation. In addition, this note includes:

- for the first time, an overview of UNHCR's efforts at collaborating with the NGO community, in response to requests by a number of member States;
- a description of UNHCR's activities to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic in refugee-affected areas, including its application to become a co-sponsor of UNAIDS; and
- the introduction of the Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern.²

I. INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

2. In order to strengthen the Office's participation in a select number of inter-agency task forces and reference groups created under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), UNHCR has re-organized its focal points system. This identifies officers responsible for speaking on behalf of UNHCR in inter-agency fora, and for formulating UNHCR's contributions to various studies and reports. The aim is to improve the organization's contributions and ensure a timely response to issues within the United Nations system.

A. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

3. The IASC Plenary meeting held in Paris on 24 April 2003 focused mainly on Iraq, particularly on preparedness efforts, the structure of the United Nations humanitarian presence and its relationship with the occupying powers. Emphasis was also placed on the revision of the Flash Appeal and the need to continue consultations on coordinating structures.

4. IASC Working Group meetings were hosted by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Rome on 12-13 March, and by UNHCR in Geneva on 8-9 July. The discussion in Rome centred on Iraq, contingency planning, and the Guidelines on the Use of Civil and Military Defense Assets (MCDA) in Complex Emergencies. In the case of Iraq, once again the main focus was on preparedness measures and relations with the military.

¹ EC/53/SC/INF.1

² EC/53/SC/INF.3

5. The topics covered at the July Working Group meeting in Geneva included Afghanistan, West Africa, Iraq, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and humanitarian financing. There was strong support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to develop enhanced and flexible security measures and transitional activities in order to ensure that durable solutions can be attained for repatriating refugees and IDPs. On West Africa, UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) jointly introduced the topic of the Inter-Agency Review Mission (co-led by OCHA and UNHCR), which will review the current humanitarian situation and formulate a collaborative protection strategy at the regional level. On Iraq, UNHCR's Special Envoy supplemented the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator's overview of the situation, emphasizing the delicacy and volatility of the inter-ethnic and political situation on the ground. He also stressed that great caution was required in facilitating voluntary repatriation movements to the country under the current circumstances. A general framework, inclusive of benchmarks, would have to be discussed with countries currently hosting Iraqi refugees.

6. UNHCR also contributed to the IASC process that led to the adoption of the Activation Protocol for the United Nations Joint Logistic Centre initiative (UNJLC), and hosted the meeting which took stock of the most recent progress made in this report.

B. OCHA (CAP, IDP Unit, joint missions)

7. In June UNHCR launched a consultative initiative with OCHA in order to enhance harmonization of UNHCR's fund-raising cycle and priorities with those of the CAP. It was proposed that UNHCR fund-raising officers and geographic focal points participate in a retreat with OCHA's CAP Unit and desk officers to identify ways and means to improve coordination.

8. UNHCR has maintained close coordination with OCHA, particularly in discussions about the protection of IDPs. Following an exchange of letters in 2002 between the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the High Commissioner on IDP responsibility and UNHCR's operations, OCHA's IDP Unit was tasked with a system-wide initiative named The IDP Response Matrix. This matrix should help to assess the global effectiveness of institutional mechanisms and policies currently in place, including those implementing a "collaborative approach" to internal displacement. UNHCR also deployed two senior staff members to the OCHA IDP Unit.

9. UNHCR participated in the inter-agency mission to Afghanistan which reviewed the IDP situation and responses and made a number of recommendations. UNHCR also participated in a joint review mission to West Africa in last June, and in the follow-up meeting on 17 July. UNHCR and OCHA co-led this mission, which included donors, NGOs and other United Nations agencies. At the review meeting in July, a special session on Liberia reached agreement on joint advocacy and assessments, as well as the elements of a coordinated response. Following the Accra peace agreement signed on 17 August, UNHCR took part in a multi-disciplinary assessment mission to Liberia together with humanitarian representatives from OCHA, UNICEF and OHCHR to ensure that humanitarian concerns are incorporated in the United Nations Peacekeeping mission design.

C. Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV)

10. The Implementation of the IASC Plan of Action was the subject of a systematic reporting and stocktaking exercise among IASC members. Participants received advance copies of the SGBV Guidelines in anticipation of the launch scheduled for this autumn. The existence of the Task Force was extended by six months to December 2003. It will focus on completing the original terms of reference, in particular for recourse mechanisms and stocktaking of agencies' progress in this area.

D. Humanitarian Financing

11. The July meeting of the IASC Working Group agreed to hold a one day inter-agency workshop to look at the three humanitarian financing studies, as well as a fourth study commissioned by OCHA.

12. UNHCR also participated in the Stockholm International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship in June. One of the outcomes of this meeting was to establish an informal Implementation Group to be based in Geneva and chaired by Canada. The Implementation Group will seek to ensure further development of the aims of the Implementation Plan for Good Humanitarian Donorship and proper coordination with other ongoing processes. Agencies agreed to create an IASC contact group to liaise with the Implementation Group.

E. United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and Durable Solutions

13. In April 2003, UNHCR became a full member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). Membership of UNDG will enable UNHCR to coordinate its work more closely with development agencies in order to ensure that refugees and returnees are given due consideration in the formulation of policies pursuing durable solutions. The High Commissioner participated for the first time in the UNDG meetings this year in Paris in April, and again in early July in Geneva.

14. UNHCR also participates in the joint UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition which recently completed a review of eight country operations, the outcome of which was reported on in a transition paper and a matrix summarizing critical issues. This Group has also developed interim guidance for transition appeals for United Nations Country Teams in Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Sudan, and Tajikistan. The work of the UNDG/ECHA Working Group has provided another forum for improving coordination between agencies at field level.

15. With a view to more effective planning for durable solutions, UNHCR is revising its reintegration guidelines to incorporate recent inter-agency experiences in the 4Rs pilot programmes in Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. These guidelines will also draw on the outcome of the UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition. UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, FAO, WFP and the World Bank will also be consulted to provide necessary inputs. The first draft of the revised reintegration guidelines should be completed by November 2003.

16. Considerable progress has been made in coordinating efforts geared towards the achievement of durable solutions for refugees and returnees. UNHCR has developed

the Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern in close coordination and consultation with other United Nations agencies and the World Bank. This document advocates the systematic inclusion of refugees and persons of concern into relevant planning and programming instruments throughout the United Nations system. Opportunities should thus be maximized to better respond to the challenges inherent in refugee and returnee issues using existing planning and programming tools such as CCA/UNDAF, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), etc. Through the 4Rs pilot programmes and development assistance for refugees (DAR) approaches, day-to-day coordination on programming/technical issues between agencies at both headquarters and field levels has improved considerably.

F. Migration and Asylum Nexus

17. Coordination with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has continued in the context of the discussions on the nexus between migration and asylum, as part of the Action Group on Asylum and Migration (AGAMI). Migration has become a major global topic that requires a worldwide policy response and multi-lateral cooperation.

18. The need to link labour migration with human rights, development and demographic issues, as well as to address trafficking and asylum issues, has brought other actors into the debate. This was highlighted notably in the Background Report on Migration (the Doyle Report) prepared for the Senior Management Group by an inter-agency and multi-disciplinary Migration Working Group. Consequently, a new forum has been established to include, in addition to UNHCR and IOM, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Labour Office (ILO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Initially referred to as the "Quint", it first met on 23 April 2003. At the follow-up meeting on 19 August 2003, it was agreed that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should also join the forum, which henceforth would be called the Geneva Migration Group (GMG).

19. The GMG will be convened quarterly for regular sessions under a rotating chair and will focus on inter-agency cooperation, highlighting issues of common concern in the field of migration. It will facilitate information flow between agencies, promote common positions, and develop an overview of the various activities undertaken by United Nations Agencies in the field of migration. Other relevant departments and agencies such as the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) will be kept involved.

G. UNAIDS Co-sponsorship

20. Over the past two years, UNHCR has made important strides towards improving its HIV/AIDS programmes and policies for refugees and other persons of concern. An HIV/AIDS and Refugees Strategic Plan for 2002-2004 was developed and presented to UNHCR's Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS in February 2002. After feedback from the group, the plan was modified and is now being implemented. UNHCR has improved its technical expertise both at headquarters and in the field, and has increased funding for such programmes. Part of the Strategic Plan calls for improved cooperation and coordination with other agencies and governments.

21. UNHCR works closely with National HIV/AIDS Control Programmes (NACPs) in refugee hosting and returnee countries as well as with UNAIDS, both at headquarters and in the field. UNHCR provides technical advice and data to UNAIDS on numerous issues involving refugee and conflict situations, including through contributing to the UNAIDS annual report on the global epidemic. UNAIDS Country Coordinators are becoming more involved with UNHCR at the country level, improving cooperation and coordination between host government national HIV/AIDS programmes and those for refugees.

22. UNHCR has developed close cooperation with other agencies and coordinating bodies on HIV/AIDS issues. It is an active member of the IASC Reference Group on HIV/AIDS in Emergency Settings as well as the Inter-agency Advisory Group on AIDS. UNHCR is coordinating programme research on HIV/AIDS, food and nutrition in refugee camps with WFP and UNICEF. It has also increased ties with numerous academic institutions, resulting in collaboration with Columbia and Harvard University programmes in Southern Africa. UNHCR also works closely with the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium, and, in consultation with the World Bank, the Gates Foundation, and the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). UNHCR continues its close and essential partnership with numerous NGOs working on HIV/AIDS issues throughout the world.

23. Given UNHCR's enhanced commitment to combat HIV/AIDS within refugee populations, combined with the recognition that these programmes must be linked with host and returnee governments HIV/AIDS programmes, UNHCR is seeking to become a co-sponsor of UNAIDS³. Currently, UNHCR and UNAIDS are bound by a Cooperation Framework (November 1998). Numerous meetings on co-sponsorship have occurred between the two organizations, including an exchange of letters between the High Commissioner and the Executive Director of UNAIDS, and it has been established that UNHCR meets all of the requirements to become a co-sponsor. The comparative advantage in joining UNAIDS includes its mandate to protect refugees, who are generally not included in host country National AIDS Control Programmes (NACPs) and proposals to donors. Furthermore, unlike other co-sponsors, UNHCR has substantial ongoing HIV/AIDS refugee programmes and the logistics *in situ* to reach refugees and other persons of concern. UNHCR already spends a significant amount of its core budget on HIV/AIDS-related activities, including funds from the health, education, community services and protection sectors. A headquarters project for HIV/AIDS totalling USD 1.8 million was established in 2003. UNHCR currently has an HIV/AIDS Technical Officer and a Programme Officer at headquarters and HIV/AIDS Regional Coordinators in East Africa, Southern Africa and Central/Great Lakes Africa.

24. There are several advantages for UNHCR to become a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, including improved advocacy and protection as well as funding opportunities. Becoming a co-sponsor will improve the Office's advocacy efforts for the inclusion and integration of refugees into host country HIV/AIDS policies and programmes, as well as helping with the reduction of stigmatization and discrimination against refugees. It will also make it easier for UNHCR to access technical support, share information and improve coordination with national governments and their NACPs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other United Nations

³ UNAIDS was established in 1994 and currently has eight co-sponsors including UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO, the World Bank, UNDCP, and ILO. WFP is likely to become the ninth co-sponsor shortly.

organizations. Co-sponsorship will make relationships with other co-sponsors at both headquarters and country levels closer, and will facilitate the implementation of UNHCR's policies, including the 4Rs and DLI. Potential funding opportunities include improved access to funds from the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), World Bank, the Gates and other Foundations, as well as from UNAIDS' unified biannual budget. Finally, by becoming a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, UNHCR is showing a strong commitment and responsibility towards combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

H. ECOSOC Substantive Session

25. The 2003 ECOSOC Substantive Session took place in Geneva from 30 June to 25 July. Its Humanitarian Segment focused on two main themes: Humanitarian Financing and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Assistance and Transition from Relief to Development. The High Commissioner was among the panelists in the debate on Transition from Relief to Development. In his statement, he stressed that the search for durable solutions for refugees requires a fair share of development assistance to meet the needs of uprooted people.

26. The Assistant High Commissioner participated in the panel on Humanitarian Financing. He pointed out how UNHCR's dual mandate – to provide international protection and search for durable solutions – requires an overall approach to the humanitarian intervention encompassing longer-term programmes that support a stabilization process. Humanitarian operations should represent an investment for the future and UNHCR must design programmes enabling development, while donors should ensure predictable funding to support these efforts.

27. During the General Segment, the Assistant High Commissioner introduced UNHCR's Annual Report⁴ on its activities in 2002, and delivered an oral update on Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. These reports described the steps undertaken by UNHCR in 2002 to strengthen international protection, implement operational activities, and develop coordination mechanisms and partnerships with other actors. Increasingly negative perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers, refoulement of vulnerable groups, security threats and sexual and gender-based violence were among the main challenges that UNHCR had had to face. In his statement, the Assistant High Commissioner described the main ongoing voluntary repatriation operations in Africa and related challenges, and also touched upon operations in other regions.

II. BILATERAL COOPERATION

A. Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement

28. In the context of the Iraq crisis, UNHCR and ICRC signed a joint internal note on interaction and collaboration to clarify each organization's role and responsibilities. In the same period, March 2003, the Heads of UNHCR and IFRC signed a Framework Agreement between the two agencies and individual Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for the provision of humanitarian assistance in countries neighbouring Iraq.

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B. Overview of Collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

29. Effective collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is essential to the achievement of UNHCR's global objectives. One of the best means for the Office to maximize its effectiveness is to coordinate and engage with governments, international organizations, and NGOs through implementing and operational partnerships.

30. During 2002, UNHCR channelled over one third of its annual budget - some USD 340 million - through implementing partnerships with over 700 governmental, inter-governmental, and NGO partners. While financial support to refugee-hosting governments and other inter-governmental organizations made up almost one third (representing some USD 110 million) of the overall funds channelled through implementing partners in 2002, NGOs comprised the single largest group of partners supported by UNHCR. In 2002, the Office funded 553 NGO implementing partners through over one thousand project agreements for a total value of USD 224 million, which represented approximately 21 per cent of the annual budget. In an effort to promote and use local capacities and expertise, three out of four of UNHCR's NGO implementing partners are national or local NGOs. In 2002, over USD 80 million were disbursed to some 400 national NGO implementing partners. In 2002, almost 75 per cent of the funds channelled through implementing partners covered six main sectors: agency operational support (15.7%), transport and logistics (14.0%), shelter/other infrastructure (12.5%), legal assistance/protection (10.9%), health and nutrition (10.0%) and education (9.8%).

31. Of equal importance to UNHCR are the operational partnerships which the Office strives to establish with NGOs who increasingly bring their own resources to refugee assistance, protection, and resettlement operations. In an effort to better meet refugee needs, in July 2003 the High Commissioner issued a new policy directive which stresses the need for UNHCR to further enhance its collaboration with operational partners through full participation in its assessment, planning and budgeting. This directive calls for a shift away from a current resource-driven planning model to one based on the actual needs of refugees derived from agreed minimum standards.

32. UNHCR continues to promote the Framework Agreement on Operational Partnership (FAOP), which some 90 international and national NGOs have signed to date. While the FAOP has strong potential as a tool to improve coordination in field operations, particularly in an environment where many NGOs are independently resourced and are not seeking UNHCR funds, it is increasingly recognized by both UNHCR and NGOs that it needs improvement to ensure greater operational relevance. UNHCR and selected NGOs are now exploring together where the FAOP can be further strengthened.

33. In February 2003, the handbook "Partnership: An Operations Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners" was revised and widely disseminated to partners in the field. This handbook, first published in 1996, is recognized as one of the most useful operational guidance documents produced by UNHCR to date.

34. In addition to field-level operational partnerships, UNHCR also works closely with numerous NGOs and NGO umbrella groups on advocacy and policy formulation. For example,

NGOs played an active and important role in the Global Consultations on International Protection, which led to the drafting and adoption of the Agenda for Protection by UNHCR's Executive Committee in October 2002. In the area of resettlement, NGOs continue to play a pivotal role in UNHCR's Annual Tri-Partite Consultations on Resettlement which each year bring together States, NGOs, and UNHCR to review ongoing programmes and policies.

35. UNHCR has also taken steps to strengthen coordination with its counterparts in the United Nations family, inviting many of its closest collaborators to UNHCR's annual consultations with NGOs - the Pre-ExCom. Likewise, UNHCR has attended NGO/Civil Society consultations with UNDP, WFP, DPI and the Non-Governmental Liaison Service.

36. As a measure of its engagement with NGOs, UNHCR took an active part throughout 2002 in a number of NGO-driven initiatives such as the Sphere Project, Reach Out Protection Training, and the Humanitarian Accountability Project. On their part, NGOs frequently participate in the Office's own evaluations through either direct participation or consultation.

37. NGOs also play an important role in UNHCR's governance, bringing special expertise and field experience to Executive Committee and Standing Committee deliberations. In recent years, some 250 representatives from over 180 national and international NGOs, United Nations and other international organizations have attended the annual Pre-ExCom Consultations with NGOs. These informal consultations have been modified since 2002 to feature a round-table format designed to promote greater dialogue among participating agencies. The Pre-ExCom consultations with NGOs provide valuable insights and enrich input to the joint NGO-statements delivered by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) at ExCom.

38. UNHCR's partnership with NGOs also extends to several important NGO standby arrangements which enhance the Office's capacity to respond to the needs of the field through deployment of qualified staff in the areas of refugee protection, resettlement, community services, field security, child protection, engineering, telecommunications, and other vital sectors. Many of these cooperative arrangements with NGOs have been running for over 10 years and are among the most effective means the Office has to quickly and efficiently respond to emergencies.

39. Collaboration with NGOs is also seen throughout UNHCR's extensive field operations. In Central and South America, the Office has worked closely with national NGOs to form Protection Networks whose services extend from providing legal counselling, to assistance to urban refugees and the internally displaced. Similarly, in Central and Eastern Europe, the Office has worked in association with some international NGOs to strengthen the capacities of dynamic national NGOs who will remain an active force for refugee protection as UNHCR's operations phase down. In Southern Africa, UNHCR works closely with national and international NGOs, not only on all aspects of the delivery of basic services in refugee camps, but also on providing legal services, information and educational opportunities to urban refugees. In Asia and the Middle East, UNHCR continued in 2002 to offer emergency management training with an emerging group of national and international NGOs who are increasingly active in refugee emergency operations.

40. Well beyond the value of its implementing partnerships, the Office continues to benefit greatly from its long-standing engagement with NGOs. Effective collaboration with NGOs is crucial, not only for reaching refugees and other persons of concern, but also for finding durable solutions to their plight.