

## UPDATE ON COORDINATION ISSUES

1. In line with the previous update on coordination issues presented to the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee, the emphasis of the current update will focus mainly on UNHCR's interaction with United Nations coordinating bodies, although updates on bilateral cooperation are also provided, following on the summary of UNHCR's global programmes at the 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2004. For the first time, this note includes discussion of UNHCR's participation in a number of inter-agency missions to examine field-level coordination activities. Continuing with the practice begun in 2003, UNHCR's collaboration with the non-governmental organization (NGO) community is also highlighted.

### I. INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

#### Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Executive Committee on Humanitarian Assistance (ECHA) and cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

2. UNHCR continued its active participation in the work of ECHA and the IASC, seeking to ensure that refugee protection is strengthened through stronger cooperation among agencies and optimal coordination arrangements. UNHCR has also sought to support the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in bringing a new focus to the collaborative approach on internally displaced persons (IDPs), and in ensuring an inclusive debate on the major concerns currently facing the humanitarian community at large.

3. The High Commissioner introduced a discussion paper at the IASC Principals' meeting in December 2003 on the role of humanitarian Coordinators, with a focus on IDPs. While endorsing their Terms of Reference (TOR), he suggested some further guidance for Humanitarian Coordinators on respective agency roles in the collaborative approach. In the interest of enhancing predictability in the overall response to IDPs' needs, he suggested areas in which UNHCR would generally be competent and willing to respond. He pointed to further work which needed to be done to clarify the role of the Humanitarian Coordinators in transitional periods and in situations where there is Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG). Principals endorsed the revised TOR and requested the IASC Working Group to review UNHCR's discussion paper further. Several of the points were then incorporated into a revised policy brief for the field on the collaborative approach, and in a 'procedural roadmap' for Humanitarian Coordinators and Country Teams, endorsed by the Principals on 31 March 2004.

4. IASC Principals also discussed issues of access and security and the wider implications of the new threats to the security of humanitarian workers. An expanded IASC Principals meeting, the 'High Level Humanitarian Forum', in which the High Commissioner participated, was held on 31 March 2004 with some 40 humanitarian agencies. Approximately 20 international and national NGOs attended, several coming from developing countries. Concerns were raised over the possible mixing of identity and 'blurring' of the image of humanitarian organizations, particularly in the context of integrated missions.

5. Concerns on the subject of integrated missions have continued to attract much attention in various inter-agency discussions since the High Level Humanitarian Forum. UNHCR has noted its generally favourable experience with integrated missions so far, while acknowledging the legitimate concern to preserve a distinct humanitarian identity and advocating a "tailor-made" approach that would design each integrated mission according to local realities. UNHCR would stress the need to keep intact the current system for humanitarian coordination - that of Humanitarian Coordinators with support staff from OCHA - irrespective of the exact degree of association with the integrated mission structure. UNHCR is also keen to see the IASC membership consulted systematically in the design of each integrated mission, since coordination of humanitarian actors should go well beyond the United Nations family.

6. The quarterly IASC Working Group meetings during the last year debated a broad range of issues including: the humanitarian role vis-à-vis the political role of the United Nations; security concerns; and the challenges for humanitarian action. Problems in coordination and the IDP response in Liberia were also discussed, as well as internal displacement in northern Uganda. UNHCR has expressed its support for a more comprehensive approach from IASC members to the situation in the north of Uganda, ensuring complementarity of approaches between protection and assistance for refugees and IDPs, and jointly tackling advocacy on wider security and access problems affecting all civilians, including the local population.

7. Discussions on inter-agency efforts to establish common tools and services were the subject of an IASC Common Services Workshop held in May 2004 in which UNHCR participated. The results were reviewed in June by the IASC Working Group.

8. Overall, the Office has significantly contributed to the work of the IASC in a number of areas. One example is the work of the IASC Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises, which has now finalized the development of various tools and mechanisms for implementation of the Secretary-General's Bulletin on the subject. UNHCR will ensure implementation and follow-up with the backing of its internal task force on the 'Code of Conduct', and the tools – along with guidance to staff – is to be disseminated to all staff by September. The Bulletin itself has been provided to all staff and is already incorporated into materials provided to new recruits and consultants.

9. UNHCR has chaired the IASC task force on training, developing a competency profile for emergency team leaders and a detailed proposal for the creation of an IASC Emergency Team Leadership Development Programme. The objective is to develop emergency team leaders across IASC agencies with shared learning experiences and commitment to effective inter-agency cooperation.

10. UNHCR provided considerable input into the development of guidance on civil-military relations drafted by OCHA, and is contributing through the IASC and ECHA to the establishment of a clearer strategy in the humanitarian community on managing increased risks and security challenges while best serving the refugees and IDPs. One of the follow-up actions to the High Level Humanitarian Forum held in March 2004 was to “identify and implement collaborative operational steps to improve security in the field”. An IASC task force was established, which then organized its work around four different themes. UNHCR agreed to form and chair a sub-working group on “Initiating Dialogue”. A first gathering of this sub-group decided the focus should be on the issue of “acceptance” (of humanitarian organizations and their staff among potentially hostile or suspicious local populations) and the types of dialogue necessary to ensure that local communities and power structures allow and ideally support humanitarian activities. The work of the sub-groups should finish by the end of October 2004.

11. UNHCR has worked closely with OCHA in New York on the theme of Protection of Civilians, including most recently the drafting of the Secretary-General’s report. UNHCR organized a workshop in June in Geneva on the separation of armed elements in refugee camps.

12. OCHA and UNHCR held a consultative meeting in September 2003 to exchange views on how to improve the interface between the UNHCR planning process and that of the Consolidated Appeals Process. Specific guidance to strengthen collaboration at the field level and align the various planning processes was included in UNHCR’s year-end planning instructions.

13. The conclusions of four humanitarian financing studies undertaken in 2003 led IASC members to develop a joint needs assessment framework under the Consolidated Appeals Process, now being piloted in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR played an important part in the process and hopes to continue to strengthen the protection aspects of the assessment matrix.

14. The Office has continued to work closely with the IDP Unit (now Division) in OCHA to develop practical recommendations and tools for improved implementation of the collaborative approach on IDPs. UNHCR appreciated the opportunity to examine with the Emergency Relief Coordinator the problems and partial successes of this approach in practice at a February 2004 workshop hosted by the Canadian mission in Geneva, which looked at the future of the international response to IDPs and the role of the IDP Unit. In addition, UNHCR has deployed one senior staff member to the OCHA IDP Unit, and continues to deploy one from July 2004 to the IDP Division, on a non-reimbursable basis. In this connection, as a protection agency, UNHCR is seeking to enhance the predictability of its own response to IDP crises, despite significant resource challenges, and to ensure that field-based staff are aware that this is to be framed squarely within a collaborative approach with other agencies.

Inter-agency missions

15. Some examples of inter-agency missions during the past year where UNHCR participated were as follows:

16. The Chief of the Protection Operations Support Section from UNHCR participated in a high level inter-agency mission to Darfur, Sudan in April 2004. The mission was led by Mr. James Morris, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) and comprised of participants from the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), OCHA, WFP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNHCR, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The mission found an extremely grave humanitarian situation and was struck by the desperate and precarious living conditions of the IDPs, noting that human security and protection of civilians lay at the heart of the Darfur crisis. Several recommendations were made following the mission, many of which were directed at the United Nations Country Team, NGOs and other humanitarian organizations. Those included: accelerating relief efforts; reconfirming sector lead roles; the need to focus and pay sustained attention to gender violence issues and programmes; and to integrate protection strategies into all relief programming, among others.

17. In March 2004, the Internal Displacement Unit and UNHCR organized a joint mission to Liberia to examine inter-agency coordination mechanisms and, particularly, the working relationship between UNHCR and OCHA on the ground. The mission made recommendations on how to define and structure coordination roles.

18. The Senior Protection Officer from UNHCR's Regional Office in Washington participated in a multidisciplinary United Nations assessment mission to Haiti led by the United Nations Department of Peace-Keeping Operations, deployed from 10 - 24 March 2004 further to Security Council Resolution 1529 which declared the readiness of the United Nations to deploy a stabilization force to Haiti. The primary task of the mission was to provide information about the situation on the ground and recommendations regarding the size, structure and mandate of such a stabilization force, for the Secretary-General's report back to the Security Council.

19. UNHCR participated in a United Nations inter-agency mission led by DPA in Ecuador on the northern border with Colombia conducted between March and May 2004. The mission evaluated the situation in the border region and focused on the following issues: i) human rights, ii) humanitarian assistance and refugees, iii) social services, iv) poverty, production and employment, v) environment, vi) public administration and vii) drugs. The mission took place following a request by the President of Ecuador to the Secretary-General during the latter's visit to Ecuador at the end of 2003.

20. An inter-agency mission to the Northern Caucasus took place in June 2004. Representatives from UNHCR, UNDP and NGOs (Danish Refugee Council/Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) participated. The mission's objectives were to identify and develop opportunities to enhance UNHCR and UNDP's role in promoting conflict prevention, social and economic recovery in the Northern Caucasus, with special attention to displacement

issues (refugees IDPs). This was achieved through regional integrated development and community-based approaches. One of the immediate outcomes of the mission will be the creation of workshops for training and needs assessment in order to refine the data collected thus far. The process has only just started and should ultimately lead to a comprehensive recovery strategy for that region of the Russian Federation which will encompass all aspects of UNHCR's work in the region.

21. Over the last 18 months UNHCR has facilitated the work of the United Nations agencies and NGOs in West Timor, Indonesia by providing a Field Safety Advisor. UNHCR plans to continue to make available an FSA to West Timor (which is currently in Phase IV) until the end of 2004. Assistance from UNHCR FSAs to other agencies is also provided in Guinea, Chad, Liberia, Burundi and Afghanistan. UNHCR's Field Staff Safety Section also frequently participates in inter-agency assessment missions.

#### United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and Durable Solutions

22. In April 2003, UNHCR joined the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), with the objective of strengthening its partnerships in the pursuit of durable solutions for refugees, returnees and IDPs. This was a natural follow-through to the internal work done on developing a "Framework for Durable Solutions", which consolidates information on the background, policy development and initial operational activities under three key strategies: Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (the "4Rs"); Development through Local Integration (DLI); and Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR).

23. Since joining UNDG, UNHCR has co-chaired a working group with UNDP that has been created to develop guidelines for the United Nations Resident Coordinators and the United Nations Country Teams in achieving durable solutions for various target groups. These guidelines will form part of the next revision to the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) guidelines and will also assist in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

#### UNAIDS Co-sponsorship

24. On June 24, 2004, UNHCR became an official co-sponsor of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Also, in February 2004, UNHCR hosted and chaired the Inter-Agency Advisory Group on AIDS – the theme was HIV/AIDS among Conflict and Displaced Populations.

25. UNHCR has remained an active member of the IASC Reference Group on HIV/AIDS in Emergency Settings and is supporting field testing and training for the guidelines. UNHCR coordinated with WFP and UNICEF, two other cosponsors of UNAIDS; to develop a programme of options for HIV, food and nutrition in refugee settings; this will be published shortly and a UNAIDS Best Practice issue will be developed on this theme. This expanded cooperation should enable UNHCR to enhance its protection for refugees who often have been excluded from HIV/AIDS programmes and have been wrongly stigmatized as "HIV/AIDS carriers".

### ECOSOC Substantive Session

26. The 2004 ECOSOC Substantive Session took place in New York from 28 June to 23 July. During its Humanitarian Segment, UNHCR was represented by its Director of the New York Office and Special Advisor to the High Commissioner in a panel on “Field-level Coordination of the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Missions in Higher-risk Environments.” During the course of the panel discussion the Director and Special Advisor commented on UNHCR operations world-wide; the principles of “independence” and “non-discrimination” rather than “neutrality” and “impartiality”, which are subject to varying perceptions; the importance of access; the importance of decentralization and coherence at the field level; “multi dimensional”, rather than “integrated” missions; and UNHCR’s approach to staff security, emphasizing the need for a differentiated approach and the integration of security and operational planning.

27. During the General Segment, the Director of the Division of Communication and Information delivered a report emphasizing the coordination aspects of the work of the Office in accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/153, and a report on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa as requested by General Assembly resolution 58/149.

## II. BILATERAL COOPERATION

### Bilateral Partnerships within the United Nations system

28. In April 2004 the High Commissioner and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations signed a joint letter which was the culmination of a process aimed at defining enhanced cooperation between DPKO and UNHCR in the following areas: refugee, IDP, and returnee security; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; mine action; and rule of law. Further areas of technical cooperation were also identified including geographic information systems (GIS), logistics/supply chain, training, and staff exchange. The joint letter was copied to all UNHCR and DPKO staff, along with an information note explaining and detailing the principles underlying the cooperation agreement.

29. On 17 December 2003, the Executive Heads of UNHCR and UN-HABITAT signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU is the result of thorough dialogue on how to enhance cooperation, and provides for HABITAT to offer technical advice in relation to shelter, including water supply development, construction of sanitation facilities and provision of low-cost and environmentally friendly housing for refugees and returnees. There are additional provisions in the MoU concerning property restitution and property rights for returnees or refugees integrating into local communities.

30. UNHCR and WFP maintained close cooperation throughout the year. A number of high-level meetings were held between the agencies at the Assistant High Commissioner/ Deputy Executive Director level in both Rome and Geneva to discuss operational issues. In February 2004, the High Commissioner was invited to address the first regular session of the WFP Executive Board. The Executive Director of WFP is to address the fifty-fifth session of

UNHCR's Executive Committee in October. Collaboration between UNHCR and WFP is being further strengthened through the revised MoU that has been rolled out in four regions. Joint evaluation missions by WFP and UNHCR have begun and will continue over the course of the next year in the MoU pilot countries as the pilot phase is completed in each country.

31. Following an exchange of letters between the High Commissioner and the Director General of ILO in 2001, a number of initiatives has been taken to increase the bilateral cooperation between UNHCR and ILO. A joint statement by the Executive Heads of both organizations is being finalized which sets out the broad parameters of the cooperation, complementing the 1983 Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two agencies. ILO will also partner UNHCR and IOM in a project aimed at a comprehensive solution for Afghan displacement.

32. With more than 600 United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) mobilized in nearly 60 UNHCR operations world wide in 2003, UNHCR gave a high priority to the development of comprehensive policy guidelines covering the deployment of both national and international UNVs, in emergency as well as non-emergency operations. A UNV focal point was also established in the Division of Operational Support to coordinate and monitor the managerial and administrative processes concerning the UNVs attached to UNHCR. To solidify the cooperation between UNHCR and UNV further, a Memorandum of Understanding is expected to be finalized this year, and plans are underway for the preparation of a field manual for UNV deployment, synchronization of a United Nations Volunteer database, and joint training activities.

33. Since March 2003 a series of meetings has taken place with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in an effort to strengthen the field level cooperation between the two agencies. This has resulted in a draft letter on "Strengthening the Cooperation" between UNHCR and FAO. The draft letter aims at ensuring that integration and reintegration programmes promote refugee and returnee self-reliance, co-existence and peace-building. The draft letter is currently being circulated to selected field operations of both agencies for comment and should be finalized for signature at the headquarters level in the near future.

34. WHO and UNHCR are working in partnership (as founding partners) on two global evaluation initiatives with specific reference to refugee health: the Inter-Agency Health and Nutrition Evaluations in Crisis and Refugee Situations, and the Reproductive Health Evaluation in Refugee Situations. WHO has provided field-level technical support to UNHCR (including an investigation of a Lassa Fever outbreak in Sierra Leone). UNHCR is working with WHO in the preparation of technical guidelines including the New Emergency Health Kit and the Tuberculosis Control Manual.

35. The High Commissioner has taken an active role in the workings of the Geneva Migration Group (GMG) since its inception in April 2003. The GMG now comprises the executive heads of International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Office (ILO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNHCR and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It meets quarterly and aims to exchange information, improve coordination and promote dialogue and debate on migration-related issues.

### Other Bilateral Partnerships

36. UNHCR has continued its close cooperation with IOM, including through the AGAMI process, the Geneva Migration Group, and a newly designed project on cross-border migratory movements in the context of the Afghanistan plus initiative, within which UNHCR and ILO are partners with IOM.

37. UNHCR and International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) held their annual high-level meeting on 15-16 June 2004. The main topics included an operational overview of regions of common concern, and agenda items on “humanitarian action and security” and “respective roles of UNHCR and ICRC in situations of potential refoulement and solutions for former combatants.” This year’s event has continued the annual tradition of meetings between the two organizations chaired by the respective agency heads, attended by senior staff, and aimed at enhanced collaboration and communication in our mutual efforts.

38. UNHCR also continued to develop its cooperation and partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), with which it has produced a Handbook for Parliamentarians entitled Refugee Protection: A Guide to International Refugee Law, now available in 29 languages. In addition to heightening awareness of refugee issues during the IPU's periodic parliamentary assemblies, most recently in Mexico City in April 2004, UNHCR cooperated with the IPU and the African Parliamentary Union (APU) in organizing the first-ever regional parliamentary conference on Refugees in Africa: The Challenges of Protection and Solutions, hosted by the National Assembly of Benin from 1-3 June of this year.

### Non-governmental organizations

39. UNHCR continues to forge effective partnerships with NGOs in order to achieve UNHCR’s core priorities of advocacy, providing protection and assistance, and finding durable solutions.

40. In 2003, UNHCR channelled some 223 million US Dollars - one quarter of its annual budget - through implementing partnerships with 573 NGO partners. In an effort to promote and use local capacities and expertise, 420 of the Office’s NGO implementing partners are national or local NGOs. The main sectors covered by this wide-reaching collaboration are: shelter/other infrastructure; transport/logistics; health and nutrition; education; legal assistance/protection; and agency operational support.

41. Strengthened collaboration remains one of the best means to ensure the basic needs of refugees are met, and the Office builds operational partnerships with NGOs, which increasingly bring their own resources and expertise to refugee assistance, protection, and resettlement operations. In a move to examine the implications of shifting from a resource-based to a more needs-oriented planning and programming exercise, the Office has been engaged in consultations with the aim of involving strategic NGO partners even more closely in assessment and planning processes. This should help to improve coordination, avoid duplication of efforts and better target humanitarian assistance and protection.

42. UNHCR also works closely with numerous NGOs and NGO umbrella groups on advocacy and policy formulation. For example, NGOs play a pivotal role in UNHCR's Annual Tri-Partite Consultations on Resettlement which each year brings together States, NGOs, and UNHCR to review ongoing programmes and policies. NGOs actively participate in the work of the core groups of the High Commissioner's Forum, which discuss the three strands of Convention Plus: the strategic use of resettlement; irregular secondary movement of refugees and asylum seekers; and targeting development assistance to achieve durable solutions.

43. NGOs bring special expertise and field experience to UNHCR's governance, which is particularly noticeable in the joint NGO statements delivered at the Executive Committee and its Standing Committees throughout the year.

44. As a result of the allegations of sexual exploitation in refugee camps in West Africa, UNHCR worked towards developing the capacity of NGOs to respond to allegations of staff misconduct and has pursued this work further in 2004 through an inter-agency network involving NGOs, UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR.

45. In order to improve inter-agency technical collaboration, consultations brought together key UNHCR partners involved in the implementation of food and nutrition programmes in refugee settings, particularly in Africa and Asia. The consultations provided for an exchange of views on current operational and institutional challenges and opportunities, and to harmonize policies and implementation strategies so as to enhance the smooth delivery and improve the quality of services to refugees.

46. Similarly, following preparatory discussions in 2003, NGOs, the United Nations agencies and UNHCR have established an education forum initiative to solutions to address gaps in education opportunities for refugees. The main objectives are to discuss strategies to implement the UNHCR field guidelines on education, to discuss standards and indicators, and to strengthen capacity and networking among NGOs and UNHCR in order to improve the management of education programmes.

47. As protection partners, NGO activities range from the provision of legal advice and participation with UNHCR in the RSD process to field protection monitoring and support. Following a Retreat on Protection Partnerships with key NGOs and the ICRC in December 2003, UNHCR's Department of International Protection and the Division of Operational Support have jointly launched, on a pilot basis, a Protection Learning Programme for UNHCR Partners. The programme aims to promote a team-based approach, mainstreams gender and age issues, and stresses the importance of individual and collective accountability among UNHCR and its partners. The programme is designed to foster a common understanding among partners of international protection, to emphasize the complementarity of UNHCR's mandate and that of other agencies, and to promote international legal standards relating to the protection of persons of concern to UNHCR. Furthermore, the High Commissioner's recent directive to all Representatives further encourages regular dialogue and cooperation with the Office's NGO partners on protection issues.

48. UNHCR maintained its standby arrangements with NGOs, some of which have existed since ten years. These arrangements enhance the Office's capacity to respond to emergencies through deployment of qualified staff in the areas of refugee protection, resettlement, community services, field security, child protection, engineering, telecommunications, and other vital sectors.

49. Collaboration with NGOs is also seen throughout UNHCR's extensive field operations. In Central and south America, the Office works extensively 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 works 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 collaborates closely with national and international NGOs on providing legal services, information and educational opportunities to urban refugees. In Asia and the Middle East, UNHCR continues to offer emergency management training with an emerging group of national and international NGOs which are increasingly active in refugee emergency operations.

50. UNHCR recently issued a "Practical Guide for the Systematic use of Standards and Indicators in UNHCR Operations" which will further strengthen needs assessments and integrate evidence into the planning process. Through close collaboration with UNHCR's operational partners, it is foreseen that this joint approach will enable the international humanitarian community to appreciate situations based on common values, which will facilitate prioritization and division of responsibilities. This effort will continue through a targeted retraining programme aimed at improving data collection, programme design and project documentation. UNHCR's indicators are closely linked to the Millennium Development Goals and while the Office's mandate differs from that of development agencies, tracking human development and basic rights is equally important for refugees.