

UPDATE ON COORDINATION ISSUES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the 20th meeting of the Standing Committee, major events dealing with issues of coordination have included the spring session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group meeting. A brief summary of the focus of these meetings is provided below, highlighting UNHCR's contribution. In addition, UNHCR has participated in numerous meetings of the sub-bodies of these main coordination mechanisms.

2. At the bilateral level, the review of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UNHCR and WFP is progressing steadily. The good collaboration between the two agencies was also acknowledged by UNHCR at the Annual Session of WFP's Executive Board in Rome, at the end of May. Joint preparations for UNHCR/ICRC annual meeting are currently underway. This year's theme will be refugees in war zones.

3. The period under review has also been marked by the preparation of reports at inter-agency level to the substantive ECOSOC session to take place in July, and to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. The use of teleconferences and e-mail exchanges of views between the agencies and the UN Secretariat has facilitated this work.

4. In the context of inter-agency consultations in preparing major annual reports, special mention should be made of UNHCR's cooperation with OCHA in the framework of the Secretary-General's Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, and the strong emphasis given to the crucial issue of separating refugees from armed elements. The Office also helped prepare the inter-agency mission led by the Department of Political Affairs to West Africa, and contributed to implementing the recommendations from that mission. Important consultations also took place with DPKO on Sierra Leone (Security Council resolution 1436, para. 9), culminating in a report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the way to bring forward refugee issues. This report was prepared by DPKO with very substantive inputs from UNHCR.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION (ACC)

5. The spring session of ACC took place in Nairobi on 2-3 April 2001. The Secretary-General, chairing the session, welcomed the new heads of UNHCR, IFAD and UNFPA. Discussions focused on three major items.

A. Follow-up to the Millennium Summit

6. ACC endorsed the recommendations of the first meeting of the new High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) pertaining to the aim – expressed in the Millennium Declaration – to halve poverty by 2015. ACC noted, in particular, that:

- The poverty paradigm should be broadened to include social, educational, nutritional, health and cultural dimensions, as well as qualitative aspects, such as empowerment;

- Organizations of the UN system should each prepare an analysis of their respective contribution to the Millennium Declaration's goal of reducing extreme poverty, and share it, as required, with their governing bodies.

7. The ACC members nevertheless agreed that the goals of the Millennium Declaration were first and foremost commitments by, and obligations on, Governments. The UN system's contribution was rather through advocacy, policy development and capacity building vis-à-vis Governments. There was agreement that the UN should exercise its role in a proactive and strategic way. This role would be further reflected in the Secretary-General's "road map" report, to be presented to the next session of the General Assembly.

B. UN initiatives in Africa

8. The Secretary-General noted that the long-standing problems of endemic poverty and economic marginalization in Africa were compounded by new scourges, notably HIV/AIDS. It was important to analyse whether the impact of the multiplicity of initiatives for Africa was not being undermined by duplication of efforts and competition for resources. He called for a comprehensive and holistic approach to peace-building and development in the continent.

9. The ACC noted that it was imperative for the UN system to unite in a single framework for action, owned and led by Africa, based on the rationalization and concordance of existing initiatives. Bilateral donors should be encouraged to consolidate their initiatives into existing frameworks. Attempts to create a unified framework would be discussed further in the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC devoted to African development, in July 2000.

C. Review of ACC mechanism

10. The newly-created High-Level Committees on Programmes (HLCP) and Management (HLCM) have conducted a zero-based review of the subsidiary bodies of ACC. Their findings were similar: each recommending to move away from permanent subsidiary bodies with fixed periodicity of meetings to ad hoc, time-bound and task-oriented coordination arrangements.

11. During a transitional period lasting until the end of 2001, the existing sub-bodies of ACC are expected to consider ways in which more flexible approaches would be adopted in their areas of expertise.

D. UNHCR's views

12. The High Commissioner noted that refugees are by definition persons lacking the protection of their country of origin. Globalization has not brought down the number of refugees. He questioned how the refugee problem could be better handled in terms of governance, including in respect of solutions (voluntary repatriation, reintegration as part of conflict solution, local settlement and resettlement). He also drew attention to the asylum/migration nexus with current negative trends, such as people smuggling.

13. With respect to Africa, the High Commissioner stressed the need for governments to be prepared to look after refugees and internally displaced persons. They needed to be seen as key factors from the outset of peace negotiations, not only in post-conflict settings. He intended to encourage governments to see refugees not as a burden, but to recognize that, if motivated and empowered, refugees have enormous capacity. In fact, refugees have helped build many economically advanced states. He further highlighted the role of women in identifying solutions.

14. The High Commissioner called particular attention to the security of refugees. The civilian and neutral nature of refugee camps and populated areas needed to be ensured. Their location away from border areas was key to securing refugees' safety. He also called for a systematic approach to development and refugees. Concerted action was needed to deal with the problem of refugees, internally

displaced persons and affected local populations. Bilateral development assistance and World Bank programmes with the ownership of receiving countries should address this problem.

15. As a result of the High Commissioner's interventions, the HLCP was invited to give attention to the link between humanitarian assistance and development, particularly in the context of refugee problems.

16. In addition, many ACC members raised the issue of migration as a dimension of globalization requiring more focused policy attention at the international level. Links between various aspects of migration and the range of issues posed by refugees and internally displaced persons were particularly highlighted. Strengthening national and international governance was seen as key to spreading the benefits of globalization and confronting the grave problems posed by drug-trafficking, organized crime and people-trafficking.

17. Regarding the review of ACC mechanism, UNHCR will continue to stress the importance of giving prominence to the issue of staff security, which features on the agendas both of the ACC and of its subsidiary HLCM.

III. INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP (IASC/WG)

18. The IASC Working Group, bringing together a wide range of agencies including NGOs, held its spring meeting in Geneva on 10-11 May 2001. For the first time, there was interaction between the IASC and the European Union and the EU Presidency (Sweden) on the European Commission's Communication on building an effective partnership with the UN in the fields of development and humanitarian affairs. The IASC/WG expressed general support for the Communication. There was also agreement to continue discussions with the EU with a view to having high-level consultations with EU members at the time of ECOSOC's July session in Geneva.

19. Other issues discussed in the meeting included:

- An in-depth regional review of West Africa.
- The report of the WFP-led Staff Security Task Force containing proposals for practical, informal, field security arrangements and options between the UN system and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). UNHCR has actively participated in the preparation of the report and is committed to making the recommendations operational and disseminating them.
- A Thematic Guidance Paper, prepared by the Reference Group on Small Arms. The Paper is intended to assist IASC members in addressing the issue of the human cost of the proliferation of small arms. Furthermore, a brochure will be prepared for the UN Conference on Illicit Arms Trade in All its Aspects, scheduled to take place in July 2001. The Reference Group, led by a NGO consortium in the form of a Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) has done valuable advocacy work during the preparatory process for the Conference.
- The establishment of contingency planning methodology with possible links to the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).
- The preparation of a compendium of field practices, *Growing the Sheltering Tree*, to assist humanitarian field workers in protecting human rights through humanitarian action. This compendium will be issued once endorsed by the IASC.
- Mainstreaming gender aspects in programming and in the Consolidated Appeals (CAP). The IASC/WG also recommended that general instructions on NGO involvement in the CAP process be disseminated to the country teams. Furthermore, it was agreed that a more systematic approach is needed to address security issues in the CAPs.

- Post-conflict reintegration on which a “Golden Rules” document has been prepared and will now be disseminated to field staff to assist in dealing with transition and reintegration issues.
- Increased synergies between agencies in emergency response capacity. UNHCR briefed the IASC/WG on the findings of a workshop held in April 2001, which launched an informal process designed to enhance opportunities in this field. It will be followed by a meeting in September 2002 with enlarged participation of IASC members.
- A UN Joint Logistics Center on which an inter-agency workshop will be organized in September 2001 to review draft operational procedures and manual. This WFP-led initiative is aimed at finalizing plans for composing, acquiring and maintaining ready-made packages to provide field staff with office and communication equipment.
- The Oslo Guidelines on the use of military assets to support humanitarian activities in natural, technological and environmental disasters. The main concern expressed by the IASC membership was the maintenance of civilian control of military assets in humanitarian emergencies. NGOs expressed an interest in participating in the process of drafting proposals for the possible use of military assets in complex emergencies.
- Arrangements for ECOSOC’s Humanitarian Segment, which are now being finalized by OCHA and the ECOSOC Secretariat. UNHCR has provided comments on the draft Report of the Secretary-General which will mark the tenth anniversary of General Assembly resolution 46/182 leading to the creation of OCHA’s predecessor, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

IV. STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

20. While UNHCR has continued to maintain effective contacts with its partners, focus has been placed on the review of the MOU between UNHCR and WFP and preparations for the annual meeting with ICRC on 18-19 June 2001.

21. The process review of the 1997 UNHCR/WFP MOU is progressing well. In both agencies, working groups have been established to identify the issues that need to be reviewed. This MOU continues to be the most widely used document of its kind. Nevertheless, many of its elements are not necessarily taken into account when field staff engage in cooperation in the area of food assistance. The review will, therefore, include a development of a strategy to re-activate and improve its field level implementation.

22. Challenges brought about by refugee emergencies and protracted refugee situations have diversified the areas of collaboration between UNHCR and its partners. In order to effectively address such challenges through joint action, UNHCR is commencing an internal review of its various partnership arrangements.