

## UPDATE ON COORDINATION ISSUES

### I. OVERVIEW

1. Due to the recent tragic incidents in the United States of America, the meetings of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group and the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), originally scheduled for 13 and 14 September, did not take place. Consequently, this information note is limited to other important developments in coordination issues since the last Standing Committee in June. Several international conferences with global representation which have taken place in this period, are described briefly below.

#### Special Session on HIV/AIDS

2. UNHCR participated in this Special Session of the General Assembly, held in New York from 25 to 27 June. UNHCR contributed to the United Systems system strategic plan on HIV/AIDS 2001-2005 (UNSSP), coordinated by UN/AIDS. Several African delegates drew attention to the issues of human rights of refugees as well as the impact of conflict on the spread of disease amongst refugees and displaced persons. For its part, UNHCR has established an internal Task Force on HIV/AIDS, in which all regional bureaux and relevant departments and divisions are participating. The Task Force began its work in early June by reviewing how UNHCR is addressing this challenge in 18 different countries across Africa, Asia and Europe. UNHCR is also setting up an Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS at which Standing Committee members and observers will be able to provide advice on this issue.

#### United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects

3. Humanitarian actors, through the IASC process, took an active part in this United Nations Conference, held in New York in July. UNHCR contributed to the preparation of the IASC Humanitarian Programme of Action which was launched at the Conference, as well as to the funding, design and printing of a brochure illustrating this Programme of Action. In order to highlight humanitarian concerns, the IASC made a separate statement to the Conference. This was delivered by the Executive Secretary of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response. A panel discussion on 12 July, organized by OCHA, was attended by various agency representatives and experts from the field, who were able to share their personal experiences on the subject.

#### World Conference against Racism

4. Throughout the preparatory process, UNHCR worked alongside the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The High Commissioner participated in the Conference itself, delivering a statement on 1 September which stressed the need to respect refugees and asylum-seekers. The Final Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the Conference contained 17 paragraphs relating to refugees. They concerned root causes, fair treatment and respect, durable

solutions, responsibility- and burden-sharing, financial assistance and support, detention issues and training, as well as references to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

## II. 2001 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF ECOSOC

### Africa, Refugees and Development

5. The 2001 substantive session of ECOSOC, held in Geneva from 2 to 26 July, focused mainly on Africa. UNHCR played an active role in several of ECOSOC's meetings, even though the issue of refugees and displacement was not addressed in the debate of the High-Level Segment, devoted to the question of supporting sustainable development in Africa. In his statement to the Humanitarian Segment on 13 July, the High Commissioner questioned how the United Nation's role in sustainable development in Africa could be discussed without the issue of refugees being on the agenda.

6. Frequent reference was made at the high-level segment at ECOSOC to the meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in early July, which had launched a New African Initiative, encouraging Africans to conceive and own their development projects and to shoulder responsibility for preventing and resolving conflicts. An account of the intricate relationship between development and conflict was made by the former High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs Sadako Ogata, at the ECOSOC panel on 17 July 2001, on the "Nexus between peace and development ". Mrs Ogata cited the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo where fighting had led to a high mortality rate attributable to disease and malnutrition caused by displacement.

7. A "Dialogue with the UN System Country Team for the United Republic of Tanzania" took place in the Operational Activities Segment on 9 July, as part of the evaluation of the impact of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in the field of cooperation. While UNHCR's presence was important as a demonstration of inter-agency cooperation, the relevance of this process to refugees was found to be limited, the focus being on the priority needs of nationals.

### Humanitarian Affairs Segment

8. The High Commissioner, together with the executive heads of WFP, UNICEF and OCHA, took part in panel discussions on concrete situations in the field, and held a joint press conference to rally political and financial support for humanitarian action from the international community. They also discussed issues of common interest, which included the situation in Afghanistan, and measures for making the CAP (Consolidated Appeal Process) more effective.

9. On 12 July, the panel discussion on "Emergency Humanitarian Assistance to Groups with Special Needs", chaired by the Executive Director of UNICEF, featured case studies on West Africa and Afghanistan. The High Commissioner introduced a paper on West Africa, reviewing activities carried out by UNHCR and its partners, such as the facilitation, together with IOM, of the voluntary repatriation by boat of some 27,000 Sierra Leonan refugees. A preparatory panel briefing was held on 10 July at which the UNHCR Coordinator for Refugee Women stressed the need to implement a specific gender perspective in refugee assistance.

### Unit for IDPs

10. The establishment of a non-operational unit for IDPs within OCHA, was approved by consensus at ECOSOC on 13 July. The unit will be set up by the end of 2001, headed by Mr Kofi Asomani, who leads the Senior Inter-Agency Network on Internal Displacement. UNHCR intends to play an active role in helping to strengthen the international response to the needs of internally displaced

persons, and has also responded positively to OCHA's request for operational agencies to second a qualified senior staff member to the Unit, starting on 1 January 2002.

### III. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION (ACC)

11. The ACC, to be renamed the United Nations Chief Executive Board (CEB), plans to hold its autumn meeting in New York on 19-20 October. A preparatory meeting took place at technical level on 18 July, at which it was confirmed that the two main themes for discussion at the Fall Session would be the Millennium Summit Declaration Follow-up and Africa. The High Commissioner's proposal at the ACC spring meeting in Nairobi - the issue of refugees and development - is of relevance to both these agenda items.

#### High Level Committee on Management (HLCM): Task Force on Security

12. The HLCM Task Force on Security met in New York on 9 and 10 June to discuss the agencies' proposals for sharing the costs of the enhanced UN security system. These were then considered at the HLCM meeting on 10 and 11 September in Geneva, at which a consensus was reached on a cost-sharing formula, essentially based on a census of all agency staff who are covered under the UN security system. Some \$4 million out of the \$53.2 million which constitute the UNSECOORD Headquarters budget costs, will be absorbed by the UN regular budget, while those agencies with less than 0.5% and 1% of staff in the field will contribute a flat amount of \$25,000 and \$100,000 respectively.

13. The HLCM also discussed a joint proposal by UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP, for a governance mechanism for the UN security management system. While the proposal was endorsed in principle, it was agreed that the agencies should submit a paper defining more clearly the relationship between the various components of the governance mechanism and the existing structures. It was proposed that the HLCM should meet twice a year to review recommendations from the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Committee on Security, as well as those from other inter-agency forums, such as the IASC. Its Task Force on UN-NGO consultations on security is one such example. UNHCR is participating very actively in these bodies since staff security remains a top priority.

### IV. FIELD COORDINATION

#### UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator System

14. UNHCR's efforts to enhance its approach to inter-agency cooperation in several areas include the secondment of staff to other UN agencies and participation in the UN Resident Coordinator System. Frequent consultations on assignments of resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators, as well as careful evaluation of how best to run the system, are underway between UNHCR and partners such as OCHA, UNICEF, WFP and UNDP.  
Cooperation at country level

15. Among the many examples of UNHCR's participation in inter-agency cooperation, mention may be made of the following:

- Though subject to change following recent tragic events, a Forum on **Afghan refugee and displaced populations** is scheduled on 5 and 6 October, to be co-chaired by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and the High Commissioner.
- UNHCR has continued to participate actively in the newly-constituted inter-agency/departmental Task Force on the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, chaired by the Department of

Political Affairs. Of particular concern to UNHCR is the question of the disarmament and encampment of some 1000 Central African Republic ex-military who fled into the DRC, and their separation from refugees and civilian populations in the area. UNHCR has been closely coordinating on this issue with the Office of the Secretary-General as well as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, including the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

- UNHCR participated in the Senior IDP Inter-Agency Network high-level mission to **Colombia** in August, designed to strengthen humanitarian activities for the internally displaced population. Two OCHA staff members are to be seconded to the UNHCR's office in Bogota to constitute an IDP coordination unit and support the present IDP focal point.

#### Coordination of geographic information

16. Together with OCHA, WFP, UNICEF and FAO, UNHCR is a member of the Geographic Information Support Team (GIST) which seeks to improve the use and the sharing of geographical information in operational responses. GIS and satellite imagery are used as a common platform for this inter-agency collaboration. UNHCR is also part of the inter-agency United Nations Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG) which meets regularly to develop standard geographic datasets for use by all United Nations agencies. A workshop aimed at strengthening collaboration and information-sharing is being hosted by UNHCR in Geneva on 21 September.

### V. BILATERAL COOPERATION

#### ICRC

17. The annual high level meeting between the ICRC and UNHCR took place at Glion-sur-Montreux on 18 and 19 June. The main theme of the meeting was *"Refugees in War Zones, their security and the security of those who are helping them"*. The discussion centred on issues relating to the respective mandates and activities of each organization; the security of refugees and staff; and the separation of armed elements and handling of former combatants (including visits to detainees). Experiences by both organizations in Chechnya/Ingushetia (Russian Federation), Guinea, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Tajikistan and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia provided a basis for discussion on specific cases. UNHCR and ICRC also exchanged views on IDPs, as well as collaboration in the process of Global Consultations on International Protection.

#### WFP

18. The process leading to the revision of the 1997 Memorandum of Understanding with WFP has continued, with regular meetings of the working groups established for this purpose. These groups are reviewing each organization's responsibilities in order to maximize their respective comparative advantages so that they can each provide added value in assisting refugees. Both agencies have consulted their respective field offices throughout this process. These consultations have served to confirm that the current MOU is both clear and comprehensive, and has helped to meet operational challenges in the field. However, some implementation difficulties remain to be solved and the two agencies agree that an improved text could facilitate the implementation of food and food-related assistance and serve to overcome certain constraints. WFP and UNHCR expect to have a final revised draft by the first quarter of 2002.

## VI. REFOCUSING PARTNERSHIPS

19. The High Commissioner has underlined the need to deepen a culture of partnership within UNHCR, thereby creating more meaningful collaboration with organizations and entities that have a direct relevance to the work of UNHCR. In this connection, an internal working group on partnerships has been established under the overall coordination of the Director of the Division of Operational Support. This initiative will have a strong operational focus, aimed at making a difference in concrete terms to the lives of those of concern to the Office.

20. The review of partnerships by the working group will also need to take into account the changes in UNHCR's operational environment in recent years. With the growth in the number, professionalism and specificity of interventions of actors in the humanitarian and development arena, coordination has become more difficult, requiring a more sophisticated approach. The commitment to broad and inclusive partnerships will therefore also include support to existing coordination mechanisms where these exist, while exploring new methods to ensure that the world's refugees receive the attention they deserve.

21. The Working Group will seek to reinvigorate and build on the positive outcomes of Partnership in Action (PARinAC) process and the outcomes of the plenary debate in the fiftieth session (1999) of the Executive Committee on the theme of partnership. It will also seek to build on existing mechanisms for coordination within the UN system, such as CCA and UNDAF.

22. As a first step, the High Commissioner has decided to focus on non-governmental organizations, UN organizations and other international organizations. This review will be taking place during the last four months of 2001. Deliberations with NGOs are also scheduled during the annual Pre-ExCom meetings with NGOs from 24-26 September.