

## UPDATE ON COORDINATION ISSUES

### I. OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS

1. This paper provides an update on UNHCR's collaboration with United Nations coordination bodies and its global bilateral partnerships with United Nations and other international organizations, as well as with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It complements the oral update on coordination issues presented to the 39<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee as well as the oral report on coordination aspects of the work of UNHCR provided to the 2007 Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council.

2. The changing global environment, United Nations and humanitarian reform initiatives and the evolving partnership concept are creating both challenges and opportunities for all stakeholders, including UNHCR. The Office is thus reassessing its role to ensure optimum collaboration with its partners as it works to fulfil its mandate to protect and assist refugees and other persons of concern to the Office.

### II. COLLABORATION WITH COORDINATION BODIES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

3. UNHCR has continued to support the reform agenda of the United Nations system and efforts to enhance the effectiveness of international humanitarian action at large. The Office has thus been engaged in the follow-up to the humanitarian response review through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the 2005 World Summit. UNHCR has also liaised with the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence and participated in follow-up to the relevant recommendations in the Panel's report "Delivering as One". UNHCR is actively participating in the "Delivering as One" concept, including in the pertinent initiatives being pursued by United Nations Country Teams in Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. At the global level, UNHCR is contributing to the system-wide elaboration of the policy and operational guidelines and instruments. In both contexts, the Office is giving priority to, on the one hand, the positive and beneficial opportunities that "Delivering as One" presents for advancing solutions for refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. On the other hand, UNHCR has also highlighted those considerations to which attention must be paid so as to preserve the ability of the Office to discharge and be accountable for its international protection responsibilities.

4. It is principally through the IASC that UNHCR contributes to inter-agency policy and guidance on the humanitarian reform process - including the cluster approach, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)<sup>1</sup> and the strengthening of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) system. At the end of 2006, 12.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) were being directly or indirectly protected and/or assisted by the Office and its partners. Under the cluster approach, UNHCR is the lead agency for the global protection cluster; and co-leads the global clusters for camp coordination and camp management, and emergency shelter. The cluster approach has led to stronger cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and with NGOs; as well as to a constructive co-leadership role with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) under the global camp coordination and camp management cluster and with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) under the global emergency shelter cluster. UNHCR has continued to contribute to the conceptual development and practical roll-out<sup>2</sup> of the cluster approach. The Office also maintains a dialogue with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on cooperation under the cluster approach, although the ICRC is not part of the formal response mechanism.

5. UNHCR continues to be actively involved in other key coordination bodies, such as the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies, the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), as well as the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS).

6. The Office's cooperation with UNDG has intensified in the last year on a number of policy and operational issues, notably in relation to the "Delivering as One" initiative. UNHCR participates in consultations on the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) guidelines that were approved by the UNDG Programme Group in January 2007. The Office is closely following and contributing to the discussions on strengthening the Resident Coordinator (RC) system. At the country level, UNHCR offices continue to take part in the work of the UN Country Teams and are engaged in the Common Country Assessments (CCA) as well as the UNDAF.

7. Through ECHA, UNHCR has participated in efforts to address current operational challenges for the humanitarian community such as in the Chad/Darfur situation, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Timor-Leste. As an active participant in the ECPS, UNHCR contributes regularly to the ongoing country reviews and takes part in various working groups, for example, on the rule of law, the development of integrated standards on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants and dependents, as well as on mine action and small arms. Within the framework of a joint United Nations-NGO task force,

co-chaired by ECHA and ECPS, UNHCR is contributing to policy development as well as to the

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<sup>1</sup> As at the end of July 2007, UNHCR has received some USD 50 million.

<sup>2</sup> The cluster approach has been adopted in nine ongoing humanitarian emergency operations: Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire (protection cluster only), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia and Uganda; and in all major new emergencies: Lebanon, Madagascar, Mozambique, Philippines, Pakistan (twice) and Yogyakarta/Indonesia.

compilation of training and awareness-raising material on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the work of ECHA and ECPS feeds into the Secretary-General's Policy Committee and vice versa.

8. Within these bodies and as part of the broader United Nations reform initiatives, the Office has participated in discussions on policy and implementation relating to peace and security, the transition from relief to development, and strengthening of the Resident Coordinator (RC) and HC systems. Moreover, UNHCR has been playing a role in efforts to improve the planning process for integrated peacekeeping missions and is also following developments in the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office. In May 2007, the High Commissioner gave a briefing to the Peacebuilding Commission on the link between peacebuilding and durable solutions for displaced persons.

9. UNHCR works closely with its partners to combat HIV/AIDS among refugees and other persons of concern to the Office. In line with arrangements agreed under the UNAIDS Global Task Team and division of labour among UNAIDS cosponsors, UNHCR, as the lead organization for displaced persons, has reinforced its partnerships with Governments, United Nations and other international organizations and NGOs, and has further expanded its involvement in IDP situations. In July 2007, UNHCR assumed the annually rotating chairmanship of the UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations (CCO). The Office has also continued to work on the implementation of its programme "UNHCR Cares" and, in partnership with other United Nations agencies, to further develop the inter-agency approach to addressing HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

10. UNHCR chaired the Global Migration Group (GMG) during the second half of 2006. Within this framework, the Office took an active part in preparations for the General Assembly's September 2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. At the request of the Chairperson of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (Global Forum), created as part of the follow-up to the High-Level Dialogue, UNHCR seconded a staff member to assist the Chairperson in preparing the first meeting of the Global Forum held in July 2007.

11. UNHCR continues to collaborate closely on mine action through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA), which focuses on strengthening the legal framework for mine action; integrating mine action into the United Nations system; and providing support to the Field. UNHCR supports field activities in Angola, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Sudan and Uganda.

### III. BILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

12. Bilateral collaboration continues to be a key feature in policy development and the implementation of UNHCR's mandate. In collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a global inter-agency work plan on child protection in emergencies was drawn up in early 2007 and is currently under implementation. UNHCR's close cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP) continued in over 30 field operations as well as at the headquarters level, and the biannual high-level meeting between the heads of the two organizations took place in July 2007. In addition, UNHCR remains engaged with the "Ending

Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative" (ECHUI) led by UNICEF and WFP as a means to help reach the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1).

13. The Office continues to collaborate with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Following the signing of a Letter of Intent on collaboration within the ART Initiative,<sup>3</sup> UNHCR currently collaborates with UNDP on ARTS GOLD projects in Ecuador and Serbia. The Office also continues to cooperate with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), particularly on livelihood issues within the early recovery cluster. UNHCR has been participating in the United Nations system-wide Working Group on employment creation, income generation and reintegration in post-conflict situations, co-led by ILO and UNDP. This Working Group was established in early 2007 by the Office of the Secretary-General and is tasked with drafting a system-wide policy for submission to the Policy Committee of the Secretary-General. UNHCR continues to collaborate with the World Health Organization (WHO) on addressing health needs of persons of concern to the Office. Within the framework of the comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between UNDP and UNHCR in 2005, a total of 801 United Nations Volunteers were deployed to 75 operations, as compared to 780 deployments in 2005. Forty per cent were deployed nationally in 2006, contributing towards building local and national capacity as well as to strengthening a sense of ownership amongst communities.<sup>4</sup>

14. In recognition of the complementarity between refugee law and international human rights law, UNHCR continues to cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the seven treaty monitoring bodies and the Special Procedures, in order to strengthen the international protection of refugees, the protection of IDPs and stateless persons, and to prevent and reduce statelessness. A high-level meeting between OHCHR and UNHCR is scheduled for September 2007, with the aim of further institutionalizing the well-established cooperation between the two organizations. UNHCR also contributed to the institution-building phase of the Human Rights Council and continues to be engaged in the Council's substantive work. Furthermore in July 2006, UNHCR signed an MOU with the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons to address outstanding gaps relating to policy on human rights and protection of IDPs.

15. To ensure that the integrity of asylum is preserved and guard against security concerns unduly affecting the international protection of refugees and asylum-seekers, UNHCR collaborated with a number of United Nations agencies in the context of the United Nations' efforts to counter terrorism. For example, the Office has strengthened its cooperation with the United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) and its Executive Directorate (CTED) and enhanced its cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in an effort to ensure that legislation to address security concerns does not curtail the right to seek and enjoy asylum.

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<sup>3</sup> The ART Initiative is an approach designed by a group of United Nations agencies under UNDP leadership which aims at promoting human development at the local level based on decentralized cooperation.

<sup>4</sup> Updated statistics from United Nations Volunteers Headquarters of June 2007.

16. In the context of international efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, UNHCR continued to cooperate with a variety of international and regional organizations, such as UNODC, OHCHR, ILO, IOM and OSCE, as well as with NGOs engaged in anti-trafficking initiatives, to ensure that legislation and law enforcement measures in this area are protection-sensitive and capable of identifying victims of trafficking with international protection needs.

17. UNHCR cooperates with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Secretariat in New York, where refugees and migrants form part of maritime migration. In view of concerns over the increasing number of maritime incidents involving refugees and migrants in many parts of the world, UNHCR and IMO in 2006 jointly produced a leaflet providing guidance on rescue at sea operations. In June 2007, a high level meeting between IMO and UNHCR took place to further strengthen inter-agency cooperation.

18. UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have reinforced their cooperation relating to Palestinian refugees of concern to the Office. Since 2004, this has included a yearly strategic dialogue, one outcome of which was the publication, in January 2007, of a joint information brochure outlining the respective mandates and roles of the two organizations.

19. UNHCR has continued to work with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), particularly to address the issue of statelessness, and co-organized a session on nationality and statelessness during the May 2007 IPU Assembly in Indonesia.

20. A Handbook on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons was launched in March 2007 as a result of inter-agency efforts by FAO, OCHA, OHCHR, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

21. IOM and UNHCR are key partners in many operations worldwide. A revised Agreement on Operational Issues between UNHCR and IOM was concluded in July 2006, and the annual high-level meeting between the heads of the two organizations took place in May 2007.

22. Collaboration between UNHCR and the ICRC was expanded at both the field and headquarters levels. In November 2006, the two organizations signed a Joint Note in order to further enhance cooperation and coordination. This includes the Iraq operation, where UNHCR is in frequent contact with the ICRC to determine the most effective modalities of delivering urgent humanitarian assistance by remote management.

23. UNHCR's continuing collaboration with IFRC included the preparation of a Letter of Understanding setting out the modalities under which UNHCR and IFRC co-chair the emergency shelter cluster working group meetings at the global level.

#### IV. PARTNERSHIPS WITH NGOS

24. UNHCR continuously strives to improve and build on its vital partnerships with NGOs. In late 2005, the Office initiated a review of its management of the sub-project agreement (grants management) process and the current levels of UNHCR contributions to NGO headquarters' overhead costs and expatriate salaries. Among the concrete proposals currently being implemented are: improvements in the overall management of sub-project agreements, including timely signing of agreements and transfer of first instalments; and an increase in the headquarters overhead support costs for international NGO implementing partners from 5 to 7 per cent, effective July 2007. The level of UNHCR's contributions to the salaries of expatriate staff of international implementing partners will be reviewed and a UNHCR working group on selection criteria for implementing partners is to be established shortly.

25. In the last quarter of 2006, UNHCR commissioned an "Interlocutors Review" involving international and national NGOs as well as UNHCR staff. The main recommendations were to redefine partnership in a more inclusive, transparent and equal manner, while respecting each other's mandates. A joint UNHCR-NGO retreat in January 2007 reinforced these recommendations and the need to move in a new direction, i.e. from the concept of implementing partner arrangements to a more strategic approach that would ensure more tangible and predictable relations.

26. In the last quarter of 2006, UNHCR has developed a partners' database containing basic information on some 3,000 NGOs. According to updated figures, the Office in 2006 channelled some USD 248 million – around 17 per cent of its annual budget - through implementing partner agreements with some 645 NGOs, including 489 national NGOs. More than 84 per cent of the funds channelled through NGOs covered seven main sectors: legal assistance/protection; agency operational support; shelter/other infrastructure; health and nutrition; community services; education; and transport/logistics.

27. Since mid-2006, UNHCR has signed MOUs with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Medical Corps (IMC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), NRC and OXFAM, with the aim of further strengthening existing arrangements with NGOs. At the invitation of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), the High Commissioner has accepted to be a full partner in its Peer Review exercise on Humanitarian Accountability. This year's main theme of the Annual Consultations with NGOs will be "Partnership".

#### V. CONCLUSION

28. UNHCR's collaboration with partners goes beyond United Nations coordination bodies, global bilateral partnerships with United Nations and other international organizations as well as NGOs. Governments, the private sector, peacekeeping forces, the media, universities, refugees, host communities and a wide range of other actors play a vital role at the local, country, regional and global levels in ensuring international protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees and other persons of concern to the Office: optimum collaboration with other actors is thus crucial for achieving meaningful results. UNHCR is pursuing its efforts in this respect and welcomes guidance from the Standing Committee on how to further enhance its coordination and partnership approach in the future.