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STAFF SAFETY AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

1.   The purpose of this note is to update the Standing Committee on current efforts that UNHCR is taking - and proposes to take - in order to meet its obligations and responsibilities in ensuring effective staff safety, and a professional security management approach within the context of the global security environment.

2.   This note provides an outline of an internal review, carried out at the request of the High Commissioner, of UNHCR's security policy and practices. It highlights key findings and recommendations and provides preliminary information on the financial implications of these recommendations.

II. THE NEW REALITY

3.   The attacks on the United Nations and ICRC offices in Baghdad last year, resulting in the death of 24 staff and visitors and injuries to more than 150 persons, demonstrated unequivocally that today, humanitarian workers are being chosen as targets by terrorist groups. Whereas humanitarian workers have long been at risk of death or injury through mistakes, misunderstandings and miscalculations, or merely by being "in the wrong place at the wrong time," in this new reality they are being attacked deliberately as part of a strategic plan.

4.   At the same time, public perception of the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian assistance is becoming more sceptical, especially in situations where these impressions are influenced by local protagonists whose aim is to undermine the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance as part of an "instability objective".

5.   While most of the conflict and post-conflict environments in which UNHCR staff operate today offer tolerable security conditions, an increasing number are being affected by the use of terrorism as a political as well as a military tactic.

III. SECURITY MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

6.   Within the United Nations system as a whole, a comprehensive reassessment of the global security environment has led in the past year to the Ahtisaari Report, which identifies systemic failures within the United Nations Security Management System, and to the subsequent Walzer Panel, commissioned to review the responsibilities of key individuals in the security lapses prior to the attack on 19 August. In line with the findings of these two papers, as part of UNHCR's own response to the changing circumstances confronting humanitarian workers, the High Commissioner formed a High-Level Steering Committee to undertake a review of UNHCR's Security Policy and Policy Implementation, under the leadership of the Assistant High Commissioner.

7.   The Steering Committee undertook an in-depth, critical review of UNHCR's management of security issues, in particular with regard to UNHCR staff. The draft report - consisting of three separate documents prepared by a multidisciplinary internal Working Group tasked by the Steering Committee - has been submitted to the Assistant High Commissioner, and upon finalization, will be communicated by the High Commissioner to the Standing Committee. The first document is a summary of the results of the review and the recommendations of the Working Group to the Steering Committee. The second document is a draft of a new chapter addressing security mangement proposed for inclusion in the UNHCR Manual. The third document is a compilation of the various extensive documents produced in the course of the review.

8.   The draft report provided seventy-six recommendations for the strengthening of UNHCR's security policy, its institutional and organizational approach, and the implementation of security policy management. Summarized in four points, the Steering Committee endorsed:

a)   Stronger individual responsibility for security;
b)   Stronger managerial responsibility and accountability for security;
c)   Improved security training at all levels; and
d)   Augmented financing of security training and risk minimization procedures.

9.   Each of the seventy-six recommendations falls within one of these categories, all of which aim to promote, create and maintain a culture of security within UNHCR. The key requirements for the creation of such an organizational culture of security and safety must include that:

- Staff members understand the security risks inherent in the work of UNHCR, especially within complex humanitarian emergencies;
- All staff are trained in, fully understand and can apply UNHCR's approach to security management;
- Security and safety considerations are integrated into the normal functioning of UNHCR operations and activities;
- Security management is seen as everyone's job, with managers at all levels of the organization having a particular responsibility and accountability (as opposed to the attitude that "security is the Field Security Advisor's job not mine");

- Staff members at all levels are disciplined in their compliance with security rules and protocols, and non-compliance is grounds for dismissal;
- UNHCR manages its operations from a risk management perspective, in which risk is continuously analyzed and mitigated, and responsible risk taking is part of how UNHCR staff members carry out their work;
- UNHCR remains an active member of the common United Nations security system, complying with established guidelines, sharing information and contributing recommendations to improve overall security management.

IV. A NEW PARTNERSHIP: UNSECOORD AND THE UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

10.   While the main emphasis of the Working Group's draft report is on the need for UNHCR to strengthen its own capacities, attitudes and methods in relation to security management, the importance of partnerships, through effective utilization of external roles, resources, specialist capacities and specific expertise, is also underlined. In this context the mandate of UNSECOORD and the role of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) are vital mechanisms within the broader process of effective security management. Other available services, such as those provided by private companies specializing in global security analysis and risk assessment, can play a role - through improved early warning mechanisms - to identify, understand and mitigate security risks in parts of the world where armed conflict and/or terrorist activities prevail.

11.   The draft report encourages UNHCR to adopt a more decentralized approach to security, within the UNSECOORD framework. In this context, the Office's Emergency and Security Service (ESS) is tasked with developing tools for operational managers in the field to make well-informed decisions on security, based on enhanced information flows and increased collaboration with UNSECOORD on risk mitigation strategies. One option under examination is the use of risk assessment and mitigation models to support the advice that UNHCR provides to the country-level security management team and to UNSECOORD. To the extent that decisions affecting the common system are more timely and better adapted to local circumstances, such models should positively impact on the ability of field operations to achieve their core protection goals while ensuring staff security. This will help UNHCR deliver on its mandate, maintain operational flexibility and work within the parameters of an improved United Nations security system.

12.   UNHCR also continues to play an active role in all security matters and concerns as they relate to the United Nations common system and broader goals, notably through participation in the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN), and will remain an innovative and energetic driver of the collaborative process. Meanwhile, under the leadership of the Deputy High Commissioner, UNHCR has undertaken a new initiative to improve security at Headquarters, in collaboration with the host country. As part of this initiative, a full-time focal point for Headquarters security has been designated, working closely with the United Nations Security and Safety Service in Geneva. Important physical security measures to be implemented on a short, medium and long-term basis have been identified and discussed with the host country, with a view to putting the necessary measures into effect as quickly and efficiently as possible.

V. NEXT STEPS AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

13.   The High Commissioner has tasked ESS to work with other departments and sections to prepare a work plan and detailed budget to support the application of the seventy-six security recommendations. It should be kept in mind that it may take several years to fully attain the objectives of many of the recommendations, which should also be subject to periodic evaluation. However, the restructuring of ESS (as recommended in the Working Group's draft report) must take place as soon as possible if UNHCR is to be assured of appropriate technical capacity required to implement the work plan.

14.   If the security recommendations and goals are to be implemented, then additional financial costs are inevitable. While implementation of some of the recommendations can be covered within existing resources (e.g. from the Operational Reserve), additional resources will be required, for which a funding request may be drawn up and presented to donors. UNHCR will seek the support and advice of member States on this matter.

15.   The following table is intended to provide the Standing Committee with a preliminary, indicative budget of the additional financial requirements. Some of the report's recommendations have financial implications that have not yet been calculated with any accuracy, for example the recommendation relating to the development of a security information management system.

Item	Annual Cost (US$)
i. Enhancement of FSS	284,214
ii. Enhancement of Regional Capacity	807,894
iii. Enhancement of Administrative Support	80,060
iv. Training	1,000,000
v. Rapid Telecommunication Response Capacity	1,029,800
Total	**3,201,968**

16.   The budgetary figures - which represent annual costs - are based on a number of assumptions. The first is that existing staffing and financial resources for security remain constant. The second is that, following the security review, the numbers and levels of posts in the Field Safety Section (FSS) will be agreed and finalized. The third assumption is that some of the new security-related posts can be achieved from within the existing pool of security posts and through a restructuring of FSS, without significantly adding to the overall total. This last assumption is grounded in the expectation that improved policy and operational guidance, enhanced training and a more effective use of regional FSA posts will, over a period of time, lead towards a reduction of dedicated security posts.

VI. CONCLUSION

17.   Enhancing UNHCR's security policy and strengthening its organizational approach (in the direction summarized in paragraph 8 of this note) will not be achieved overnight, but the process has already commenced. An important initial step is the restructuring and strengthening of the Emergency and Security Service to enable it to fully develop, guide and support the High Commissioner's work plan for implementation of the security review's recommendations.

18.   The guidance, oversight and support of the Executive Committee are required, as well as the commitment of all Governments to their own responsibilities under international law for the security and protection of United Nations and humanitarian personnel. As the evolving security environment continues to influence and affect UNHCR's operational capacity, it is imperative that the organization be able to respond and adapt to the situation, if it is to effectively deliver its international refugee protection mandate while ensuring the highest level of safety and security of its staff members around the world.

19.   The challenge is enormous, but the Office is resolved to adopt proactive and innovative approaches in order to ensure that its staff can assist States in the delivery of refugee protection. The High Commissioner has indicated his commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Steering Committee, once these are finalized, and he will seek the support of the Executive Committee in this respect.

20.   Further reports will be provided to the Committee at suitable intervals on the progress achieved in implementing the High Commissioner's security work plan.