

**IASC  
STRUCTURE  
AND WORKING  
METHOD**

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*Endorsed by: IASC Principals  
31 January 2019*

# INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the new Inter Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) structure and its working methods<sup>1</sup> to ensure that it is better fit for purpose and able to focus on its original mandate, as laid out in General Assembly resolutions. The IASC was established following the adoption of UN General Assembly 46/ 182 in 1991. Additionally, UN General Assembly resolution 48/57 of December 1993 notes that "... the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, should serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination, meet more frequently and act therefore in an action-oriented manner on policy issues related to humanitarian assistance and for formulating a coherent and timely United Nations response to major and complex emergencies[.]"

## NEW IASC STRUCTURES

The following structures are formed to support the **IASC** in fulfilling its mandate, namely:

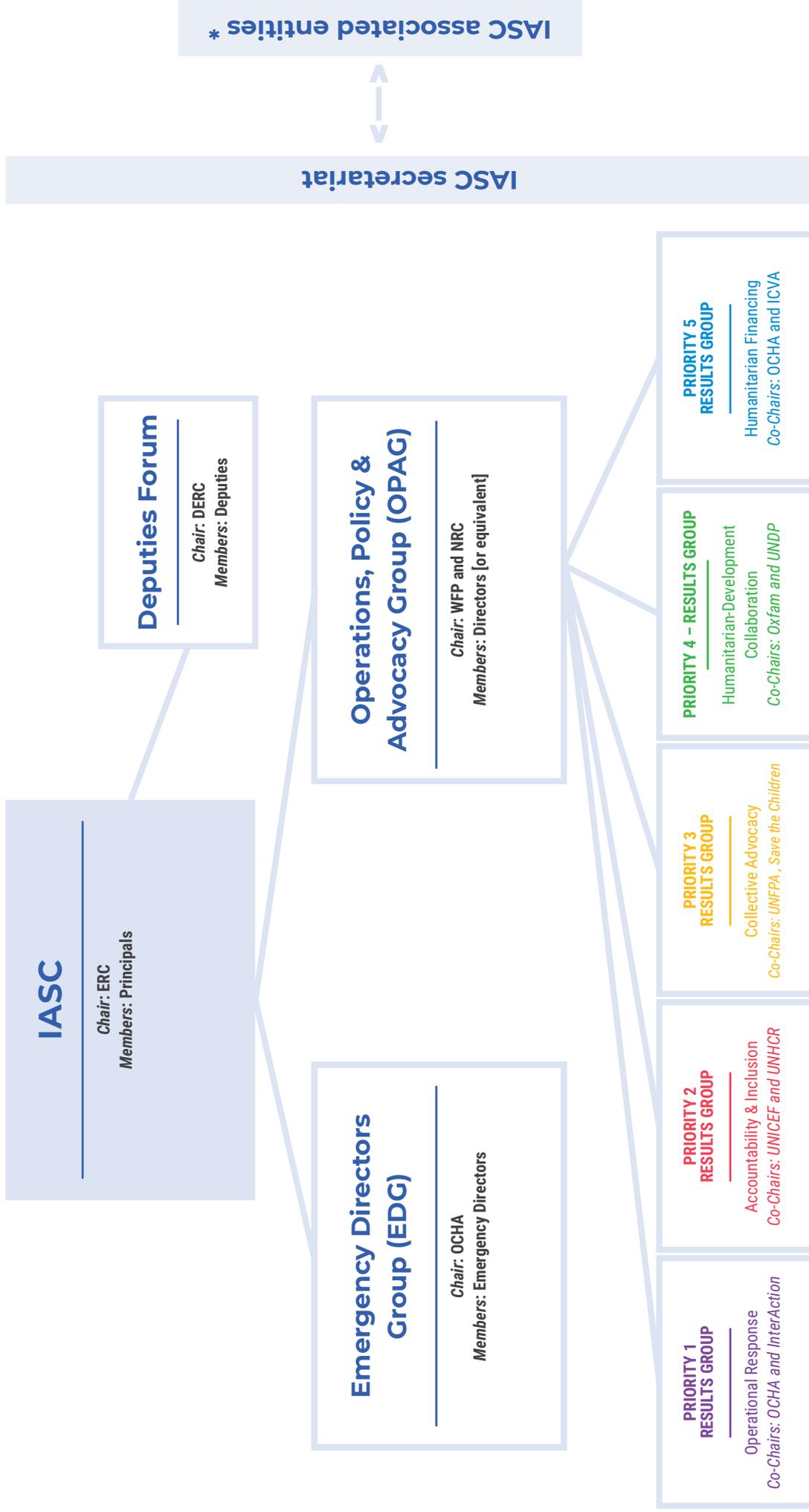
- A **Deputies Forum**, which would operate as an informal platform for dialogue on strategic issues of common interest;
- An **Emergency Directors Group (EDG)**, to focus on tackling the urgent operational requirements of current crises
- An **Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG)** to drive the strategic policy work of the IASC, while the
- Five time-bound **Results Groups** to be tasked by the OPAG to deliver on normative outputs under each IASC strategic priority. *(A review of these Results Groups will be conducted in 12 months to determine their effectiveness, relevance and necessity).*

The new structure and working methods are grounded on the fact that the IASC is, by definition, the primary forum composed of Principals of humanitarian organizations. It aims to be efficient, outcome-oriented, accountable and flexible so that the IASC Principals are better able to support collective and timely humanitarian action. Furthermore, it recognizes that each IASC member organization has its specific governing body to which it is also accountable.

The proposed structure (*Figure 1 below*) is configured taking into consideration the **IASC Strategic Priorities (2019-2020)** which were endorsed by the IASC Principals in May 2018, namely focusing on: operational response, accountability and inclusion, collective advocacy, humanitarian-development collaboration, and humanitarian financing (*please see the IASC 2019-2020 workplan for further details*).

The following sets out **the terms of reference, composition, working methods, and accountability** for IASC, its subsidiary bodies, and its secretariat.

# NEW IASC STRUCTURES



\* The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Group (IAHE), Global Cluster Coordination Group (GCCG), Humanitarian Programme Cycle Steering Group (HPCSG) and Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, Reference Group on Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support

# NEW IASC STRUCTURES

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE (IASC)	
<b>Purpose</b>	As per GA Resolution 48/57, "... the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, should serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination[.]"
<b>Composition</b>	<p><b>IASC Principals</b> are the heads of the IASC's <u>full members</u> (namely, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, FAO, WHO, UN-HABITAT, OCHA, IOM), and IASC <u>Standing Invitees</u> (namely, ICRC, IFRC, OHCHR, UNFPA, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, and the World Bank). The NGO consortia ICVA, InterAction and SCHR are also invited on a permanent basis to attend.</p> <p>The Chair of the IASC may also invite, on an ad hoc basis, representatives of other specialized organizations.</p> <p><i>(Note: Each NGO Consortium may be joined at the table by one other NGO representing itself. A third NGO representative can join as a 'plus 1'. NGO representatives can rotate seats on an as needed basis. This is per established practice in place since 2008).</i></p>
<b>Chair</b>	The IASC is chaired by the <b>Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Under- Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs</b> .
<b>Working modalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ERC convenes meetings of the IASC and sets the agenda in consultation with the IASC Principals.</li> <li>• IASC Principals meet, generally, <b>twice per year</b>. They also meet as necessary on an ad hoc basis.</li> <li>• All background documents are circulated to all members, where possible, not less than 14 days in advance of the meeting. As required, meetings will be minuted and by the IASC secretariat (A Summary Record and <i>Action Points will be produced by the IASC secretariat for the minutes meetings. Action Points will indicate deadlines and responsibility of implementation should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound</i>).</li> <li>• Recognizing that each IASC member has their own governing bodies, decisions of the IASC will not compromise organizations with respect to their own mandates.</li> <li>• The IASC is serviced by an IASC secretariat which is accountable to the ERC in her/his role as Chair of the IASC.</li> <li>• Principals will sometimes, at the discretion of the Chair, meet in a Principals-only format.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability / linkages</b>	As per GA Resolution 46/182, the IASC is accountable through the ERC to the Secretary-General for "better preparation for, as well as rapid and coherent response to [crises]."

<sup>1</sup> This document builds on the IASC ToRs of February 2014.

# NEW IASC STRUCTURES

## SUBSIDIARY BODIES

DEPUTIES FORUM	
<b>Purpose</b>	The Deputies Forum serves as an <b>informal platform for dialogue and information sharing</b> on strategic issues of common interest. It supports progressing key issues which have been endorsed by the Principals and works to resolve potential bottlenecks. It also serves as a platform for strategic dialogue on issues and processes that have an impact on humanitarian action as well as a critical link with other key forums. In addition, the Deputies Forum is an important platform to ensure strategic dialogue with key non-IASC stakeholders, including affected governments, regional bodies, donors, among others.
<b>Composition</b>	Representatives at the <b>ASG level (or equivalent)</b> of the IASC full members and standing invitees. <i>(Note: Each NGO Consortium may be joined at the table by one other NGO representing itself. A third NGO representative can join as a 'plus 1'. NGO representatives can rotate seats on an as needed basis. This is per established practice in place since 2008).</i>
<b>Chair</b>	<b>Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (DERC) and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.</b>
<b>Working modalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As an informal group, the Deputies Forum meets on an <b>ad hoc basis</b>.</li> <li>The DERC convenes meetings of the Deputies Forum and sets the agenda in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>All background documents are circulated to all members of the Deputies Forum approximately 7 days in advance of the meeting.</li> <li>Each Deputy can be accompanied by a 'plus 1'.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability / linkages</b>	The Deputies Forum maintains a close link to the IASC through the DERC, who serves as Chair of the Deputies Forum.

# NEW IASC STRUCTURES

## SUBSIDIARY BODIES

OPERATIONAL POLICY AND ADVOCACY GROUP (OPAG)	
<p><b>Purpose</b></p>	<p>The OPAG serves as a forum supporting the normative and strategic policy work of the IASC, including on <b>system-wide policy matters</b> with a direct bearing on humanitarian operations. It is responsible for overseeing the work of the Results Groups on behalf of the IASC. In practice, this includes developing policies and guidance in line with strategic decisions and requests made by the IASC; making proposals to the IASC on strategic issues; establishing and overseeing the work of the Results Groups; and collaborating with the EDG in identifying and elaborating policy matters with direct bearing on humanitarian operations.” It may also review guidelines produced by inter-agency bodies outside of the formal IASC structure, after vetting by the IASC secretariat, for consideration by the IASC as appropriate. It is important to note that no policy, guideline or other normative document can be considered an IASC-sanctioned reference unless it has been reviewed by the IASC (unless the IASC delegates the endorsement of specific bodies of work to the OPAG).</p> <p>The <u>OPAG</u> differs from the <u>EDG</u> (see below) in that it covers systemic normative issues and focuses primarily on advancing inter-agency dialogue and decisions on normative/policy issues for review/endorsement by the IASC.</p>
<p><b>Composition</b></p>	<p>One representative from each IASC member, at <b>Director level (or equivalent)</b>. (Note: Each NGO Consortium may be joined at the table by one other NGO representing itself. A third NGO representative can join as a ‘plus 1’. NGO representatives can rotate seats on an as needed basis. This is per established practice in place since 2008).</p>
<p><b>Co-Chairs</b></p>	<p>The OPAG is co-chaired by two <b>IASC Deputies (or equivalent)</b> who serve on a rotating basis for a <b>two-year period</b>.</p>
<p><b>Working modalities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The OPAG will prioritize work on IASC decisions or workstreams instructed by the ERC and the IASC (and informed by the Strategic Priorities endorsed by the IASC Principals in May 2018).</li> <li>• The co-chairs convene the meetings of the OPAG and they set the agenda in consultation with the OPAG members.</li> <li>• Each OPAG member can be accompanied by a ‘plus 1’.</li> <li>• They meet in person, generally, <b>once per year</b> to take stock of policy issues and agree on an annual workplan. They also meet as necessary on an ad hoc basis.</li> <li>• All background documents are circulated to all members of the OPAG approximately 10 days in advance of the meeting. All meetings will be minuted and Action Points and Summary Records will be produced by the IASC secretariat (<i>Action Points at all IASC meetings will indicate deadlines and responsibility of implementation should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound</i>).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accountability / linkages</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The OPAG is accountable to the ERC and the IASC Principals. Upon request, the co-chairs of the OPAG can update the Deputies Forum on progress on specific strategic issues.</li> <li>• The Emergency Directors Group and the OPAG maintain linkages through the Chairs of the two groups and, where required, the OPAG may be consulted on key issues relating to emergency response operations. The EDG may bring to the attention of the OPAG issues requiring attention from a policy perspective.</li> <li>• An annual joint meeting of the OPAG and EDG may also be considered to ensure strengthened linkages, at the discretion of the Chairs.</li> </ul>

# NEW IASC STRUCTURES

## SUBSIDIARY BODIES

EMERGENCY DIRECTORS GROUP (EDG)	
<b>Purpose</b>	The Emergency Directors Group <b>focuses on current crises and what is required to meet urgent strategic and operational needs on the ground</b> . This includes advising the IASC on operational issues of strategic concern; preparing options and recommendations for the IASC on operational issues; mobilizing agency and Global Cluster resources to address operational challenges and gaps, in support of Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs); considering future high-risk scenarios and determining appropriate early actions in support of HCs and HCTs; supporting the Principals in the activation and initial implementation of a system-wide Scale-Up Protocols; ensuring appropriate information sharing with the OPAG so as to address policy gaps and inform policy formulation; and monitoring and providing support, including through capacity building and guidance, to the implementation of the Transformative Agenda; carrying out Operational Peer Reviews through the Peer-2-Peer. Its work is distinct from that of the OPAG (see above) in that the Emergency Directors Group focuses on addressing operational issues of <b>ongoing or imminent emergencies</b> rather than on system-wide normative/policy issues.
<b>Composition</b>	<b>Emergency Directors (or equivalent)</b> of IASC members.  (Note: Each NGO Consortium may be joined at the table by one other NGO representing itself. A third NGO representative can join as a 'plus 1'. NGO representatives can rotate seats on an as needed basis. This is per established practice in place since 2008).
<b>Co-Chairs</b>	The Emergency Directors Group is chaired by <b>OCHA's Director of Operations</b> .
<b>Working modalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chair convenes the meetings of the EDG and he/she sets the agenda in consultation with the EDG members and based on ongoing operational activities and priorities.</li> <li>Each EDG member can be accompanied by a 'plus 1'.</li> <li>They meet in person, generally, once per year<sup>2</sup> to complete a review of global humanitarian operations and the performance of the Humanitarian Coordinators. They also meet as necessary on an ad hoc basis.</li> <li>All background documents are circulated to all members of the EDG, where possible, 7 days in advance of the face-to-face meeting and 24 hours in advance of ad hoc meetings. All meetings will be minuted and Action Points and Summary Records will be produced by the IASC secretariat (<i>Action Points at all IASC meetings will indicate deadlines and responsibility of implementation should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability / linkages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Emergency Directors Group is accountable to the ERC and the IASC Principals.</li> <li>Upon request, the Chair of the Emergency Directors Group can update the Deputies Forum on progress on specific strategic issues.</li> <li>The Emergency Directors Group and the OPAG maintain linkages through the chairs and, where required, the Emergency Directors Group will be consulted on key normative/ policy issues. The EDG may bring to the attention of the OPAG issues requiring attention from a policy perspective.</li> <li>An annual joint meeting of the OPAG and EDG may also be considered to ensure strengthened linkages, at the discretion of the Chairs.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Including an annual meeting to complete a review of global humanitarian operations and the performance of Humanitarian Coordinators.

# NEW IASC STRUCTURES

## SUBSIDIARY BODIES

RESULTS GROUPS	
<p><b>Purpose</b></p>	<p>The Results Groups are timebound subsidiary bodies responsible for delivering the agreed <b>normative outputs</b> under each of the IASC Strategic Priorities (SPs) for the biennium (currently five SPs for 2019-2020). <i>Their support may also be sought to review guidelines produced by inter-agency bodies outside of the formal IASC structure.</i></p> <p>The five Results Groups report to the OPAG, with strong linkages to the EDG to ensure that their work is reflective of and responsive to field needs and realities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>RESULTS GROUP FOR PRIORITY 1 (OPERATIONAL RESPONSE)</b> addresses system-wide issues and in particular any gaps from the normative/policy perspective. It reports to the OPAG and relevant issues would be brought to the attention of the EDG for joint consideration.</li> <li>• The <b>RESULTS GROUP FOR PRIORITY 2 (ACCOUNTABILITY AND INCLUSION)</b> focuses on the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse within the humanitarian system and strengthening accountability to affected people.</li> <li>• The <b>RESULTS GROUP FOR PRIORITY 3 (COLLECTIVE ADVOCACY)</b> focuses on increasing the effectiveness of collective advocacy efforts, including with respect to International Humanitarian Law, PoC, access, and the security of aid workers, for an enhanced response.</li> <li>• The <b>RESULTS GROUP FOR PRIORITY 4 (HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION)</b> focuses on strengthening links and synergies between humanitarian and development actions/ programmes, with linkages to peace as relevant, with a view to maximizing long-term impact while safeguarding humanitarian space and principles.</li> <li>• The <b>RESULTS GROUP FOR PRIORITY 5 (HUMANITARIAN FINANCING)</b> focuses on addressing funding gaps including through innovative funding approaches.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Composition</b></p>	<p><b>Representatives</b> with substantive and technical knowledge of the relevant area.</p>
<p><b>Co-Chairs</b></p>	<p><b>Co-chaired by two IASC members</b> who serve on a <b>rotating basis for a two-year period</b>. The co-chairs for each Results Group will be nominated by IASC members, giving consideration to the need to maintain an appropriate balance between UN and non-UN organizations.</p>

## Working modalities

- Each Results Group convenes **once per quarter, as required**.
- With the IASC Workplan (2019-2020) serving as a framework, the OPAG, with the support of the IASC secretariat, will determine the activities that each of the Results Group will be prioritizing. All **deliverables will be timebound**, for greater accountability.
- With the support of the IASC secretariat, the co-chairs are responsible for steering the implementation of the workplan and ensuring engagement / consultations with relevant stakeholders (including non-IASC members).
- The Results Groups will be expected to **reach out to the concerned stakeholders** (including inter-agency bodies, humanitarian leaders, regional organizations, national NGOs, among others), particularly from the field, to inform the activities (including the formulation of policies and guidelines) that they will be working on.
- Each Results Group is responsible for reporting on progress against its workplan (including outreach activities and consultations with non-IASC partners, particularly from the Global South) approximately every 3-6 months to the OPAG.
- While **no additional formal sub-structures will be created under the Results Groups**, these are free to organize their work in any fashion that is deemed efficient and leads to the required implementation of their respective workplans.

## Accountability / linkages

- The Results Group are accountable to the OPAG. They will be required to provide regular updates to the OPAG on time-bound deliverables tasked to them by the OPAG.
- Linkages with non-IASC forums (such as the IAHE Group, the migration network, JSC) as well as critical non-IASC stakeholders will be important to ensure that the normative work is relevant, well-informed and inclusive of existing expertise.

# NEW IASC STRUCTURES

## SUBSIDIARY BODIES

IASC SECRETARIAT	
<b>Purpose</b>	The IASC secretariat’s primary purpose is to support the ERC, in her/his role as Chair of the IASC, including by ensuring that decisions are acted upon and implementation is on track. It supports the work of the IASC, including by closely following up with IASC members and subsidiary bodies to ensure that IASC priorities are achieved and decisions are actioned. Its work includes proactively maintaining communication channels amongst organizations; collating and suggesting possible future agenda items on an ongoing basis; facilitating preparations for each meeting of the IASC, Deputies Forum, OPAG and EDG; disseminating minutes and records of meetings and decisions taken; monitoring the implementation of IASC, Deputies Forum and OPAG decisions; supporting the Chairs of the IASC bodies in highlighting and fostering connectivity between the IASC Principals, the OPAG, the Emergency Directors Group and the Results Groups. It plays a critical role in building synergies amongst the various IASC structures. It also promotes outreach and engagement with non-IASC members and Forums.
<b>Working modalities</b>	The IASC secretariat supports the various IASC platforms by facilitating the agenda- setting of meetings, advising on which issues are to be addressed in which platform, facilitating the preparation of background material in consultation with the relevant structures/organizations (or as instructed by the ERC), following up with the various structures on the implementation of the workplan and ensuring their linkage to the Strategic Priorities, and the general management of meetings of the key IASC structures (in particular the IASC Principals, Deputies Forum, OPAG, and EDG).
<b>Accountability / linkages</b>	The IASC secretariat is accountable to the ERC in her/his role as Chair of the IASC.

# WAY FORWARD WITH CURRENT INTER-AGENCY STRUCTURES:

## EXISTING IASC TASK TEAMS AND REFERENCE GROUPS:

To date, the IASC Task Teams (TT) and Reference Groups (RefGr) have generated valuable outputs on behalf of the IASC, delivering towards the 2016-2018 IASC Strategic Priorities. In support of the IASC Strategic Priorities endorsed by the Principals in May 2018, the existing Task Teams (TT) and Reference Groups (RefGr) will be rationalized as follows:

Group	Current Status	Proposal for Consideration
TT on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)	IASC subsidiary body	Absorb into Results Group 2 (Accountability & Inclusion).
TT on Humanitarian Financing	IASC subsidiary body	Absorb into Results Group 5 (Humanitarian Financing).
TT on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action	IASC subsidiary body	Absorb into Results Group 2 (Accountability & Inclusion).
TT on Strengthening the Humanitarian / Development Nexus	IASC subsidiary body	Absorb into Results Group 4 (Humanitarian-Development Collaboration).
RefGr on Gender and Humanitarian Action	IASC subsidiary body	Continue as <b>IASC-associated inter-agency group</b> , accountable to the OPAG.
RefGr on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings	IASC subsidiary body	Continue as <b>IASC-associated inter-agency group</b> , accountable to the OPAG.
RefGr on Principled Humanitarian Action	IASC subsidiary body	Absorb into Results Group 3 (Collective Advocacy).
RefGr on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness	IASC subsidiary body	Absorb into Results Group 1 (Field Effectiveness) and ensure stronger linkages to the Emergency Directors Group.

# WAY FORWARD WITH CURRENT INTER-AGENCY STRUCTURES:

## EXISTING IASC TASK TEAMS AND REFERENCE GROUPS:

While recognizing the criticality of specific inter-agency structures that currently exist outside of the IASC,<sup>3</sup> the new structures and working methods call for ensuring streamlined efforts to implement the IASC Strategic Priorities. To that end, the following three structures will also be designated as '**entities associated with the IASC**'.<sup>4</sup> These groups would link/interact with different IASC bodies (e.g., OPAG, Emergency Directors Group, Results Groups) as appropriate, via the IASC secretariat. For instance, they may be consulted during the development of new IASC policies/guidelines or may be occasionally requested to produce a specific deliverable by the IASC. They can also submit policies/guidelines for review and endorsement by the IASC (via the IASC secretariat) if they meet specific criteria. Their work is followed by the IASC secretariat, and they must provide an update on their progress every six months:

- The **Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE) Steering Group** provides overall strategic guidance for IAHEs (independent assessments of whether collective results achieved in response to an emergency meet the objectives stated in the Strategic Response Plan and the needs of affected people), oversees their implementation, and helps ensure the dissemination of results. They are also expected to conduct evaluations within 12 months of a SCALE-UP designation. It is accountable to the OPAG.
- The **Global Cluster Coordination Group (GCCG)** which supports the strengthening of country-level cluster and inter-cluster coordination with the overall aim of improving the quality of humanitarian response. It is accountable to the OPAG.
- The **Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) Steering Group** develops inter-agency guidance pertaining to joint humanitarian programming, such as the HPC Reference Module. It is accountable to the OPAG.

**[NOTE:** The Results Groups and the entities associated with the IASC will be reviewed 12 months from the initiation of the new structures for effectiveness and necessity.]

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<sup>3</sup> Other inter-agency groups that currently exist outside of the formal IASC structures include the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Communication Group and Inter-Agency Talent Management Group. They all make valuable contributions to humanitarian action and more systematic engagement with these structures is encouraged to support the implementation of the IASC Strategic Priorities.

<sup>4</sup> This will require a close review of their current ToRs and workplans to ensure that they do prioritize and contribute to the IASC priorities.

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