

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

IASC PRINCIPALS BI-ANNUAL MEETING

SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS

New York, 7 November 2023

Introduction

Mr. Martin Griffiths, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Chair of the IASC, convened the second IASC Principals bi-annual meeting in 2023 to discuss key humanitarian crises, the climate crisis and COP28, addressing global humanitarian needs through the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, the centrality of protection and IASC Principal advocacy.

Country Contexts

IASC Principals discussed critical humanitarian situations, including the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Sudan, Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo and agreed on actions to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs on the ground.

Addressing the Climate Crisis - IASC Influencing at COP28

The Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Joyce Msuya, expressed her gratitude to FAO, IFRC and OCHA for leading the work of the IASC Deputies Group Sub-Group on the Climate Crisis. The group has focused on 1. delivering collective strategic messages to COP28, leveraging comparative strengths across IASC members; and 2. bringing the humanitarian dimension to the heart of loss and damage negotiations. The IASC aims to identify a collective approach to bolster climate finance in humanitarian settings, through entities and instruments such as the Global Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility; to enhance partnerships with international finance institutions (IFIs) and multilateral development banks; to expand opportunities for collaboration with the private sector; and to outline the way forward for the IASC through a road map for people-centered climate action.

Ms. Msuya highlighted that the Relief, Recovery and Peace Day on 3 December is an important opportunity for the IASC, as it is the first time that a day has been dedicated to humanitarian action at a COP. She added that the Humanitarian Pavilion provides a valuable space, shared with the entire humanitarian community, particularly with civil society, to showcase the intrinsic links connecting climate to humanitarian crises.

She noted that a climate finance account is being explored under the Central Emergency Response Fund, with additional new funding. Securing commitments for new financial resources for climate action in humanitarian settings would represent a significant indication of success of IASC engagement at COP. Bringing people's stories to COP she

deemed of critical importance of. Finally, she underscored that the negotiations around loss and damage are likely to take up considerable time at COP.

Discussion

IASC members agreed on the need to define the unique added-value of humanitarians in climate action, acknowledging that climate is more than a constituency-driven concern and that there is room for progress in considering the commonality of ecological infrastructures more closely. The discussion emphasized the value of focusing IASC collective messaging on vulnerability and future generations, with particular attention paid to vulnerable groups.

Principals indicated that there is a reasonable chance for COP to make progress in establishing the Loss and Damage Fund, as well as in climate-change adaptation, the mainstreaming of nature-based solutions and that of the food-water-health nexus.

Finally, there was consensus that more needs to be done to concretely enhance the quality of humanitarian programming and prioritization, by rendering it evidence-based and making the best possible use of available climate data. Assessing whether the humanitarian sector is adequately equipped in terms of climate-linked programming was seen as a critical first step to request and channel additional climate funding through humanitarian action in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Principals underscored the importance also of gender-sensitive programming in this context.

Follow-up Actions

1. Share common key messages ahead of COP28. [**Deputies Group Sub-Group on Climate Crisis**]
2. Share a list of COP28 events of collective interest for IASC direct engagement. [**Deputies Group and Sub-Group on Climate Crisis**]
3. Work with climate science community to explore ways to strengthen availability and use of climate data and projections for humanitarian action and identify opportunities for data sharing and use across humanitarian sectors sector. [**Deputies Group Sub-Group on Climate Crisis**]

Addressing Global Humanitarian Needs - Prioritization & Setting Boundaries

On behalf of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) Steering Group, Ms. Gemma Connell briefed Principals on the status of the HPC lightening efforts as well as on the issue of boundary-setting and sharpened prioritization of humanitarian appeals for 2024.

She underscored that the IASC needs credible and compelling humanitarian appeals in 2024. She indicated that at present the HPC documents are taking too much collective time; that the IASC is focused too much on processes and not enough on communities; and that it is important to focus on strategic discussions and not technical conversations.

Ms. Connell highlighted that in 2024 the goal is for the IASC to have significantly shortened appeals; for the HPC documents to remain robust and evidence-based but with streamlined processes and documents; for senior IASC leadership to be engaged on strategic aspects of the HPC; and for staff time to be freed up for operational work, including community engagement and operational coordination. Ms. Connell highlighted that most HPC documents will be published in December 2023.

This renewed discipline is necessary against a backdrop of mushrooming of humanitarian appeals in recent years in terms of funding requirements and humanitarian needs (the global humanitarian requirements increased by 184 per cent between 2015 to 2023 from \$20 billion to \$55 billion, and the number of people in need increased by 364 per cent from 78 million to 362 million during the same period); the overstretching of the humanitarian system; and the looming fiscal cliff with drastic cuts in humanitarian funding expected in 2024.

Ms. Connell urged IASC Principals to support in-country leadership in making the difficult decisions underpinning rational boundary-setting to make appeals as credible, clearly defined and well-prioritized as possible, taking into account capacity, access and complementarity with government action. She argued this will empower humanitarian actors collectively to tell a compelling story about the rapidly rising needs and our imperative to respond and allow humanitarian actors to increase the quality of the global response.

Lastly, she encouraged IASC members to firmly advocate to governments and development actors to assist the people humanitarians can no longer serve and/or who would benefit from longer-term programming.

Discussion

Principals welcomed the effort to inject discipline into the HPC, and raised several points around how boundaries are set, how prioritization should be improved, the value of joint efforts towards this endeavour and further concerns on unintended consequences of setting boundaries.

Discussions highlighted that the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) are not equally understood across country contexts, with varying degrees in purpose, from a resource-mobilization tool to an accountability framework, to a planning instrument. It was also pointed out that NGOs need to be properly engaged in the boundary-setting conversations at country-level and that humanitarians might benefit from coordinated collective exit strategies, which are not currently included in the HPC. Principals also highlighted that it is challenging to reconcile the boundary-setting approach with the nexus-related projects in the HPC.

The discussion emphasized that localization efforts, including direct funding to local organizations, should be scaled-up. Some members highlighted that humanitarians lack sufficient information in many contexts to carry out principled discussions on boundary-setting. It was also noted that, in line with the Flagship Initiative and IASC commitments to enhanced accountability to affected people, prioritization should be people-centered and informed by the voices of affected people. Additionally, concerns were raised that gender-based violence and protection from sexual abuse and harassment may be

deprioritized in the boundary-setting process. Overall, Principals agreed that engagement with the IFIs is paramount, although cannot always produce the desired results. Principals agreed that discussions surrounding boundary-setting should be owned by the entirety of Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT), inclusive of NGOs.

Finally, participants acknowledged the complexity of balancing robust planning based on needs and boundary-setting while recognizing that donor dynamics may not correspond. Nonetheless, tighter humanitarian appeals may help to enhance accountability by further exposing the geopolitics at play in underfunded crises.

Follow-up Actions

n/a

Centrality of Protection

UNHCR and InterAction reminded Principals that the present discussion on centrality of protection had its genesis in the 2015 IASC Whole of System protection review which resulted in the IASC Protection Policy. The implementation of the policy was independently reviewed in 2022 with six key areas for improvement identified: conceptual clarity, leadership and accountability, collective responsibility, simplified architecture, protection as an outcome, and inclusive approaches. UNHCR and InterAction were selected by IASC Principals as co-Champions to take forward the review's recommendations. The co-Champions noted that protection was very relevant to the agenda of the IASC Principals both in terms of country context discussions and the institutional mandates and responsibilities of the IASC member organizations. It was important therefore to forge a common approach to protection with collective responsibility on the way in which the IASC approaches it. It is equally important for IASC member organizations to consider the different dimensions of centrality of protection, viewing it not merely through a sectoral approach but a framework that helps overcome risks that people are subjected to in any humanitarian setting.

The co-Champions discussed the IASC Action Plan which was a collective endeavor of members' efforts engaged in IASC Task Force 1 on Centrality of Protection. The Action Plan includes four main elements, namely: (i) delivering collectively on agreed and prioritized protection outcomes; (ii) strengthening accountability of and support to humanitarian leadership (Humanitarian Coordinators (HC) and HCTs) to give priority to protection as an objective and an outcome central to humanitarian action; (iii) strengthening protection analysis - with inputs and priorities from affected people - to inform collective priorities, common response plans and concrete actions, including protection advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy efforts; and (iv) working with parties to the conflict, peace and development actors, local/national actors and affected people, including through knowledge exchange, to achieve protection outcomes. The Action Plan aims to help HCs and HCTs develop their own protection strategies and decide key protection priorities, provide clarity in terms of realities on the ground, and empower HCs and HCTs with relevant tools.

The Action Plan identifies the development, roll-out and dissemination of a toolkit that provides conceptual clarity of the centrality of protection, protection as an outcome, and collective responsibility through several tools (aide-memoire, benchmarks, outcome

measurement) that will strengthen the common knowledge base and help track, measure and support performance in the operationalization of the IASC Protection Policy. The co-Champions noted the need to report back on how IASC member organizations institutionalize the Action Plan and its recommendations. They foresaw a role for donors to support outcome-based protection and noted efforts to simplify and streamline the protection architecture to ensure more coherence while maintaining technical specialist support and coordination. This required further discussions at the Principal level with Area of Responsibility entities.

Discussion

IASC members noted the centrality of protection to all humanitarian settings and the need to elevate and address protection outcomes which requires the collective responsibility of all Principals. Members recognized the importance of pursuing simplification of the protection architecture but noted that critical expertise should be retained while ensuring coherence throughout the humanitarian system. A suggestion was made for NGO Principals to convene with UN Principals on simplification and accountability related issues. Members also recognized the need to invest further in protection outcomes, the need to ensure resources were commensurate with acute protection risks and needs, and that protection should be a political priority for governments.

Co-Champions were reminded to include in the Action Plan a reference to internally displaced people (IDP) and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which were of relevance to the centrality of protection. Equally important to include were references to the Secretary-General's Action Agenda and the forthcoming report of the independent review of humanitarian response in IDP settings. The role of local governments in overcoming protection challenges was also highlighted.

Follow-up Actions

4. The Centrality of Protection Action Plan is endorsed by IASC Principals. [**IASC secretariat**]
5. The role of the IASC co-Champions on the Centrality of Protection [UNHCR and InterAction] is extended until the end of 2024 with a focus on the implementation of the Action Plan. [**IASC members with the support of co-Champions on the Centrality of Protection**]
6. Report back to IASC Principals on how IASC member organizations institutionalize the Action Plan and its recommendations; and organise Principal-level discussions with Area of Responsibility entities on the simplification and streamlining of the protection architecture. [**IASC co-Champions on the Centrality of Protection UNHCR and InterAction**]

IASC Principal Advocacy Pilot

IASC Principal Advocates provided an overview of their experience with the work on the pilot to date, indicating that their teams take this work seriously and are very invested in

its success. The power of the collective was also noted, in particular in relation to joint field missions. It was noted that the nature of the work is very dependent on the context in question, and the structure behind the IASC Principal Advocate, as well as their capacity to dedicate time to it. Several achievements were discussed, including joint visits by the Principals and the development of joint messages. There were reflections on the fact that this work offers an opportunity to bring humanitarian and development actors together in support of the collective. There was agreement on the fact that extending the pilot offers an important opportunity to revisit the original objectives and engagements agreed in relation to the contexts to ensure the work remains on track. There was emphasis on the need to ensure full collaboration among Principals on this work, in particular looking at where other Principals, or Deputies as relevant, could support Principal Advocates particular aspects of the work in order to ensure it is reflective of the collective.

Follow-up Actions

7. The IASC Principals Advocacy Pilot is extended to the end of 2024. [**IASC secretariat**]

8. The IASC Principal Advocates to continue in their roles, and collaborate with other Principals, and others as relevant, to allow the work to be reflective of the IASC as a collective. [**IASC Principal Advocates**]

9. The pilot engagement plans in relation to the contexts of focus are to be revisited to ensure the work remains relevant to what was originally agreed. [**IASC secretariat/IASC Principal Advocates**]

10. Consultations are to be carried out regarding new or expanded contexts of focus for the pilot, once capacity stabilized. [**IASC secretariat**]

List of participants

1. Mr. Martin Griffiths, Chair and **Emergency Relief Coordinator**
2. Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President, **ICRC**
3. Mr. Jamie Munn, Executive Director, **ICVA**
4. Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General, **IFRC**
5. Mr. Julien Schopp, Vice President, Humanitarian Policy and Practice, **InterAction**
6. Mr. Tom Hart, President and Chief Executive Officer Elect, **InterAction**
7. Ms. Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, Chief Executive Officer, **Mercy Corps**
8. Ms. Joyce Msuya, Chair of the IASC Deputies Group, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and ASG, **OCHA**
9. Ms. Janti Soeripto, President and Chief Executive Officer, **Save the Children**
10. Mr. Andrew Morley, Chair of **SCHR** (President and World Vision International)
11. Ms. Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Vice Chair of SCHR/Secretary General, **CARE International**
12. Mr. Gareth Price-Jones, Executive Secretary, **SCHR**
13. Ms. Paula Gaviria Betancur, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, **SR on HR of IDPs**
14. Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, **UNDP**
15. Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director Programme, **UNFPA**
16. Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, **UN-HABITAT**
17. Mr. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner for Refugees, **UNHCR**
18. Ms. Catherine Russel, Executive Director, **UNICEF**
19. Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director, **UN Women**
20. Ms. Cindy McCain, Executive Director, **WFP**
21. Ms. Sam Newport, Officer-in-Charge, **IASC secretariat**