Inter-Agency Standing Committee

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# Opening

UNICEF’s Deputy Executive Director, Martin Mogwanja, welcomed participants and reflected on his experiences as Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) during the floods in Pakistan in 2010, which in part prompted the Transformative Agenda (TA). The current situation, with four Level 3 (L3) emergencies declared since January 2013 has stretched the humanitarian system, and there is a need to do more to respond effectively. He welcomed the substantive discussion between the Working Group (WG) and the Emergency Directors Group (EDG), looking at how policy and practice can reinforce each other for effective, efficient, and principled humanitarian response. The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) provides an opportunity to position humanitarian action for the future. UNICEF’s internal Strengthening Humanitarian Action initiative will help UNICEF adapt its humanitarian action to different contexts.

The Chair of the IASC WG, Kyung-wha Kang, ASG/OCHA, also welcomed participants and noted that the use of facilitators for some sessions was being reintroduced. She stated that the WG would receive an update of ongoing and outstanding action points from previous meetings electronically.

# The Role of Inter-Agency Evaluations: System-Wide Evaluations

Darlene Tymo, WFP (facilitator), noted the importance of evaluations and the need to look at inter-agency evaluations in a TA context. Kelly David, OCHA, and Matthew Varghese, UNICEF, presented a brief history of inter-agency evaluations and a proposed way forward. With the 2005 humanitarian reform process, real-time evaluations (RTEs) were conducted by the IASC; while they contributed to the foundations of the TA, timeliness and follow-up were not always adequate and many did not appreciate having external evaluators make judgements without grasping operational constraints.

To address perceived RTE shortcomings, two types of assessments were agreed under the TA: operational peer reviews (OPRs), to be conducted within the first 90 days of an L3 declaration; and independent inter-agency humanitarian evaluations (IAHEs), to be conducted later in an L3 response. OPRs provide course correctors with real-time feedback to Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and HCs from peers, while IAHEs promote accountability for the collective response and strategic learning, and are publically available. The IAHE Steering Group has been developing guidelines for IAHEs, which will focus on a limited number of high-level questions to ensure more methodological rigour. The proposed questions would focus the evaluation on the results achieved; the impact of coordination; adherence to humanitarian principles; whether capacities were strengthened; and accountability to affected people. The Steering Group proposed that an L3 declaration automatically triggers an IAHE, conducted within 9-12 months (in line with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) Reference Module), with the report presented to the IASC Principals for consideration and follow-up. The evaluation would also enable findings to feed into the next revision of the Strategic Response Plan (SRP).

During the discussion, the relationship between OPRs and IAHEs was discussed. Some felt that OPRs should focus not only on coordination, but also on the effectiveness of the humanitarian intervention and if results are being achieved; however, others noted that this addition could make them heavier and increase the burden on the field, at a time when they should be focusing on emergency response. If an OPR took place now in South Sudan, according to strict dates in the protocols, any proposed changes would be difficult to implement until well after the rainy season in a few months. In mid-2014, based on the experience with OPRs, the guidance is to be reviewed and revised by the EDG. It would be useful for the IAHEs to include an indicator as to whether OPRs made a difference to the response. The recommendations proposed in OPRs and in IAHEs should be clear, crisp and action-oriented.

There was agreement that independent IAHEs should be automatically triggered in L3s, but the timing should be more flexible than strictly between 9-12 months, based on the context. There were questions around whether each IAHE should have the same questions, or if they should be modified based on the context (e.g. disaster versus conflict situation) and it was suggested that the Steering Group consider this point in the guidelines. An organization’s prerogative to conduct its own independent evaluations was emphasized, which should in no way be subject to oversight by OCHA nor be negatively impacted by any inter-agency evaluations. It was clarified that the HPC Steering Group should not have oversight of inter-agency evaluations (as could be interpreted from its draft terms of reference and work plan), but should only ensure coherence between the guidelines and other guidance related to the HPC, and its work plan should be modified to reflect this point. The four proposed questions for IAHEs conflated a number of issues and should be divided up further. The audience and involvement of affected populations in the evaluation process should also be clarified in the guidance. The question of funding the evaluations was raised and it was suggested that they be included in SRPs. How a management response should be developed was discussed, with the suggestion that either OCHA, as the Chair of the IAHE Steering Group, or the IASC Secretariat should lead its preparation, involving the WG as necessary. [Kelly David subsequently informed the IASC Secretariat that the evaluation group would not endorse the former option, in order to not blur the lines between evaluation and management response.]

***Action Points:***

1. The WG reaffirmed that the declaration of L3s should automatically trigger an independent inter-agency evaluation, and recommended that the findings be presented to the IASC Principals for their management response. The WG requested the inter-agency humanitarian evaluations (IAHE) Steering Group to finalize the guidelines on inter-agency evaluations, which should include the IASC Secretariat supporting the development of a proposed management response for the IASC Principals. (Action by: *IAHE Steering Group by 1 May 2014 for IAHE guidelines*)
2. The WG requested that recommendations from any future OPRs and inter-agency evaluations should be concise and action-oriented. (Action by: *IAHE Steering Group by 1 May 2014 for IAHE guidelines and HPC Steering Group in the OPR guidelines by 1 July 2014*)

# Priority: Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action: Integrated Missions

Brian Tisdall, ICRC (facilitator), outlined two schools of thought around integration: integrated missions reduce the ability of humanitarians to operate and to respect humanitarian principles; or, integration does not change matters in terms of perception. Jenny McAvoy, InterAction, provided a general overview, while Antoine Gerard, OCHA, looked at the case of South Sudan, and Patrick Duplat, International Rescue Committee, provided reflections on Mali. The UN’s Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP, April 2013) provides ample room for humanitarians to engage in decision-making processes and allows for humanitarian operations to maintain an independent position. Integration is a principle, not a structure. Yet there is a lack of institutional understanding on the part of humanitarians of the IAP policy and the IASC guidance (July 2013). Several issues, such as the use of armed escorts, security management, the use of mission assets, and civ-mil coordination, are often conflated with integration. The leadership expectations of triple-hatted HCs may require further clarification to ensure an appropriate humanitarian voice. In South Sudan, following the outbreak of violence in December 2013, UNMISS’ decision – the first ever for a UN peacekeeping mission – to open its gates to IDPs seeking protection in its compounds saved tens of thousands of lives. As the mission’s mandate changes, it will be critical for the HC and HCT to work strategically with the mission to ensure protection of civilians continues, as well as to be able to negotiate access with the parties. In Mali, not all the challenges facing humanitarians can be linked to integration and there is a need to better communicate that different actors have different objectives. In order to increase the level of knowledge of all actors when an integrated mission is established, training or some kind of tool kit is needed for mission staff and NGOs. Instead of talking about humanitarian space, talking about acceptance may be more helpful.

During the discussion, it was suggested that there is a need to identify opportunities in an integrated mission and build on those, such as the triple-hatted HC. The disconnect between field and headquarters discussions on integrated missions was noted, particularly in CAR. Lessons from DRC should be considered, looking at what we feared and what has happened. Dealing with the challenges faced when a new mission is being developed is quite different than those faced in an on-going operation, where very concrete operational solutions are required. Current guidance is more suited to the first situation, whereas more practical situations are not as adequately addressed. Questions around the logistical capacity of humanitarians and the use of mission assets were raised. How humanitarians had previously gained access through negotiations should be looked at, as now, the use of mission assets is being seen more as a first, rather than a last, resort.

The general lack of awareness and understanding of what integration means, let alone the integration policy, was underscored. This gap in understanding is not only at the field level, but also at the headquarters level. There was some divergence on the best way to increase the knowledge of actors on the ground: a kit was not seen as practical enough, whereas a simple 2-pager explaining integration was suggested. Others felt that pulling together a number of practical case studies or examples from practitioners to be used by others would be more useful. Having advisers support colleagues in an integrated setting was also suggested. Another view was that it was not about providing briefing notes to staff, but ensuring that the leadership in a mission kept people informed and engaged. Whatever option is chosen, it was proposed that it be framed in a way that focuses on ‘what do I need to know’ for field staff.

Overall, it was felt that the guidance and policy provide sufficient room to support principled humanitarian action in an integrated mission setting, but does not provide enough support for day-to-day decision-making. As humanitarians, there is a need to take responsibility, look at the risks and the opportunities, and not simply blame DPA or DPKO. There is a need to not conflate separate, but related, issues – such as armed escorts – with integrated missions. Instead of providing new guidance, something short, based on case studies, which provides options for colleagues would be useful. If there is a need to support HCs and HCTs, particularly in an L3 where empowered leadership is essential, a recommendation could be made by the EDG to have OCHA and experts mobilized from IASC organizations to provide such support on an ad hoc basis.

***Action Points:***

1. The IASC WG requested the development of a short set of possible options, based on practitioners’ experience and case studies, for humanitarians, HCs, and HCTs working in integrated mission contexts to consider. (Action by: *Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action Task Team, with the support of practitioners identified by WG members, by 31 December 2014*)

# Joint Discussion with the EDG

Following opening remarks by the Chairs of the WG, Kyung-wha Kang, and the EDG, John Ging, the facilitator, Kate Halff, SCHR, expressed the hope that some process issues would be addressed through the substantive discussions. The session was divided into three sections, with the first addressing the TA protocols and whether they needed to be refined in light of the OPR findings and the recent L3s, as requested by the Principals; the second looking into what could be done better to respond collectively in slow-onset crises, protracted and unfolding crises prior to having to declare an L3 response, also based on a request from the Principals; and finally a review of the policy issues requiring further work put forward by the EDG to the WG.

**OPRs, TA Protocols and the 'Hybrid Group'/HPC Steering Group**

Panos Moumtzis, head of the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT), reflected on the OPRs for the Philippines and the Central African Republic (CAR), where the HCs and HCTs were integral in identifying areas of improvement (‘’course correctors). In both cases, the need to find the right balance between coordination and delivery came up, as did the need to clarify the composition and decision-making processes of the HCT. The link between HCTs and inter-cluster coordination was quite weak and strategic issues were not adequately discussed between the two. While the SRP may be a useful tool for donors, it still has to be made useful to the country teams themselves. The humanitarian programme cycle concept needs to be adapted to the context and driven by the field – not by headquarters or donors. While there were advisers on accountability to affected populations (AAP) in both operations, AAP needs to be operationalized from early in the response. The STAIT will develop a work plan until the end of 2014 to further rollout the TA.

Andy Wyllie, OCHA, provided an update on the ‘Hybrid Group,’ which brings together members of both the EDG and WG to work on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) Reference Module. The Hybrid Group suggested changing its name to the HPC Steering Group (SG) to better reflect its work as it follows up on the WG’s request to develop Version 2.0 of the HPC Reference Module and to ensure the development and coherence of its associated guidance. The role of the HPC SG with the EDG and WG required clarification, given that it would address operational and policy issues. While the WG at its October 2013 meeting had requested Version 2.0 of the HPC Reference Module by April 2014, given the amount of guidance required, and in order to adequately take into account the learning from the L3s, a revised deadline of July 2014 was requested by the HPC SG.

During the discussion, concerns were raised about the TA’s disproportionate emphasis on coordination over delivery, noting that any activity that fundamentally diverts efforts from the protection and assistance response is not useful, particularly in the early phases of response. There was a call for the TA protocols to be revisited in light of the need to ensure delivery and humanitarian results, and not just coordination: operations and response have to be at the centre, with coordination facilitating that work. While the TA had focused on inter-agency cooperation, particularly at the field level, there is still too much flag-waving. Any revision of the protocols should look at how standards, such as Sphere, are incorporated to ensure we are providing quality response, rather than only process.

Others felt that it was too early to revisit the protocols because they had not been satifactorily disseminated to the field and so are not understood or adequately used. Some HCTs are being assessed against protocols they have yet to receive. Frustration was expressed that, despite agreement at the October WG, the protocols were not officially endorsed by the Principals and then disseminated. The March 2013 rollout plan for the TA protocols needs to be put into practice to push out the protocols, ensure that operational organizations also roll them out, and then review the protocols over time, following their use. Some suggested early autumn 2014 as a possible time to review the protocols, following their rollout. In disseminating the TA protocols, it should be conveyed that they are living documents. The original spirit of the protocols and tools was to give teams useful tools to plan and steer the humanitarian response, but implementation is being done in a manner that field colleagues view it as ‘feeding the beast’ and producing for headquarters and donors.

Recognizing that the STAIT is a time-bound group, it was proposed that this function be mainstreamed within OCHA in 2015, supported by an inter-agency network of practitioners as resource persons, as they focus on TA implementation and support its rollout. It was clarified that IASC organizations can still propose candidates to the STAIT. A longer-term strategy to ensure that HCs and HCTs are supported over time to implement the TA is needed.

National actors need to be included earlier in the response. While some operational agencies may have existing partnerships, the capacity of clusters to assess national capacity early in a response was raised. Bringing in the preparedness of national actors into the preparedness phase was also suggested.

It was agreed that the HPC SG should refer issues back to both the WG and EDG and that it should be time-bound. Comments made on the HPC SG draft TORs included making the TOR lighter, as another secretariat seems heavy, and to ensure that IASC Task Teams continued to report to the WG, and not to the HPC SG. It was agreed that as the HPC SG finalizes its work plan, it should clarify which specific areas of work are to be endorsed by the EDG and which by the WG, to ensure clarity.

On the TA protocols, it was agreed that there is a need for the Principals to endorse them as soon as possible by convening the Principals Steering Group (PSG), to allow their official dissemination and for the STAIT to then work on an intense period of rolling out the protocols. It was agreed that this rollout of the TA should not only be mission-based, but should include a range of dissemination approaches to reach a broad audience and support HC/HCT leadership in shifting the culture of practice. The HPC Reference Module Version 1.0 should also be endorsed by the PSG and disseminated, even while the HPC SG works on Version 2.0 and its related guidance for the WG’s endorsement. Future revisions of the HPC Reference Module Version 2.0 or later should go to the EDG for endorsement, prior to the PSG. Agencies should develop their own complementary internal rollout plans in support of the STAIT’s plan, as soon as the latter is disseminated.

***Action Points:***

1. The WG and EDG agreed to send the four TA protocols – AAP, IARRM, the revised empowered leadership, and the HPC Reference Module Version 1.0 – to the Principals Steering Group (PSG) for sign-off/endorsement. (Action by: *PSG by 15 April 2014*)
2. Following the PSG’s endorsement of the four TA protocols, the WG and EDG requested the dissemination and rollout of the TA by the EDG, with support from the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT), in line with their work plan. IASC organizations would complement the STAIT’s work plan with their own internal dissemination and rollout of the protocols. (Action by: *STAIT by 31 March 2014; IASC organizations by 30 April 2014*)
3. The WG and EDG adopted the HPC Steering Group’s terms of reference, with the incorporation of the changes proposed by the WG, and requested that its draft work plan be clarified to delineate whether items are to be referred to the WG or to the EDG for endorsement. (Action by: *HPC Steering Group by 15 April 2014*)
4. The WG and EDG requested the HPC Steering Group to develop Version 2.0 of the HPC Reference Module and the associated technical guidance by July 2014, for the WG’s endorsement prior to referring it to the PSG for approval and then dissemination. (Action by: *HPC Steering Group by 31 July 2014*)

**Slow-Onset/Unfolding Crises**

The session was opened with the facilitator asking whether we declare L3s to categorize a situation or to categorize a response, and what can be done to better collectively respond to a crisis as it is unfolding, before having to declare an L3. She expressed concern that we did not have a common understanding of when and why L3s should be declared in unfolding situations and that we risked the routine activation of L3s in large-scale crises. Such declarations would most likely be setting ourselves up to fail, by creating expectations of delivery that we could not necessarily meet and by resulting in less commitments by the UN to invest in L3s in the longer run. John Ging provided some reflections to frame the discussion. He described the improvements that have been made since the TA began, in areas such as leadership; the relationship with UNDP on the Resident Coordinator (RC)/HC appointments; and the ability to mobilize the system to respond quickly, as was seen in the Philippines. However, there is still more progress to be made. L3s are declared when we need to change gears and surge in a different calibre of leadership, more capacity for coordination and operations, and ensure additional money for the response. In a slow-onset crisis, we need to bring in the measures, but it is not always possible, as was the case in Syria where scaling up was blocked. At the same time, the deployment of an L3-capable HC happened only after the L3 was declared. In CAR, there was a deficit of political support in responding, even when it was clear that mobilizing the resources and scaling up the response would prevent an L3 crisis. We are currently not prepared to prioritize the prevention of an L3 as a system, including donors: we only go in when the money arrives. However, if the Principals decide a slow-onset is a priority, they have the space to lead a scale-up before an L3 needs to be declared.

The discussion opened with the added dimension of how the TA could be adapted to address slow-onset natural disasters, such as droughts. There are a number of factors to be addressed in such crises, including closer collaboration between the humanitarian and development communities; intensified advocacy arising from early warning information systems; contingency planning; and greater focus on coordination. A progressive escalation of humanitarian activities could be triggered to enhance leadership and collective response. Among the available options are reprogramming longer-term funding, reinforcement of information management, and increased donor dialogue, all prior to declaring an L3. Clusters may not need to be activated if existing (development) structures could be used. The system we set up was not really for slow-onsets, but we have adapted it and need to recognize that difference. The TA could be further adapted to recognize slow-onset natural disasters and to ensure the necessary leadership, coordination and accountability are in place. Rights Up Front is another means by which to draw attention to slow-onset crises. The broader political system needs to be mobilized to prevent an L3. Slow-onsets are where collective efforts need to be made to ensure we come up with the best, integrated analysis.

When the TA first started, the intention of an L3 was to address a deficiency in ability to respond, but now it has become more about raising visibility, resources and mobilizing political will. The L3 is not about the size of the crisis, but the lack of adequate capacity to respond in the current configuration: it cannot only be about the magnitude of the crisis, as came up during discussions around South Sudan, nor address a solution to ‘triple-hatting’, which some hoped it would be. The declaration of CAR and South Sudan helped some organizations internally and externally to galvanize, given the global and organizational focus had been on Syria.

There is a need to get HCs/HCTs to understand that they have options available well in advance of an L3 declaration and should build their capacities as a situation deteriorates. They should not want to be categorized as an L3: they need to be convinced that the last thing they want is to say that they cannot manage the crisis. In order to help teams scale up the response, some of the current and pending monitoring tools may help provide a strong analytical and evidence base.

There is a need to revisit the system’s ability to manage and sustain multiple L3s, in terms of funding and the multiple deployments of IARRM teams. The international response structure is still inadequate at linking with the national response, whether by government or by organizations on the ground. OPR findings show that surge staff at the senior level often end up displacing an existing team, leading to a lack of clarity in terms of responsibility. When the surge leaves, the situation often returns to its previous state, which does not fix underlying capacity weaknesses. There is a need to work with donors in looking at gearing up in a slow-onset to avoid reaching an L3 level. For the L3s that exist in slow-onsets, consideration must be given to how to go about deactivating or sustaining the momentum.

It was agreed that the narrative around the declaration of L3s must be urgently clarified amongst humanitarians (given the varying views amongst, and within, organizations), and also in relation to donors and governments, as there are clearly different views around why an L3 is declared. The original intention was that an L3 declaration is about the response required from humanitarians, not about the situation itself, which is beyond our control. Categorizing a crisis as an L3 marks a deficiency or a gap in terms of the response of humanitarians and should be used when the accompanying measures need to be mobilized. If the L3 declaration is overused, it will have consequences for other responses. By clarifying the narrative around L3s, our analysis will improve, which will help our advocacy with Principals and donors to convince them of the need to respond in a slow-onset crisis.

***Action Points:***

1. In order to ensure better advocacy resulting in changes in the response to slow-onset crises (both conflict and natural disasters), a subset of the WG will work to (a) clarify how L3s are described and (b) outline what measures can be taken collectively prior to the emergence of the necessity of the declaration of an L3. In parallel, the EDG will suggest ways to link up with other parts of the broader system, including Rights Up Front, to ensure a sound analysis of areas of potential risk in future, which will inform decision-making and ensure appropriate responses. (Action by: *WG by 15 April 2014; EDG by 15 April 2014 with recommended ways on ensuring the links; WG and EDG to craft recommendations for the Principals by 1 May 2014*)

**Priority Policy Issues for the WG**

The WG had received the list of potential policy issues to take forward from the EDG. It was suggested that an initial selection of priority issues be made, with organizations then consulting internally to ensure agreement.

Following some discussion, it was agreed that a number of the issues are being, or will be, addressed by different bodies already, including the WG or IASC Task Teams. On the gender marker, the proposed changes would be brought by the HPC Steering Group to the WG as part of the package of guidance to accompany the HPC Reference Module Version 2.0.

It was agreed that the preliminary list of priority issues would be reduced to four, which organizations would consult on internally and propose any alternative suggestions. The first priority was remote operations. The focus of strengthening national NGO capacity and CBO capacity was combined with strengthening national disaster management authority (NDMA) capacity, given they are linked as part of preparedness and response. It was suggested to look more broadly beyond simply 'Gulf countries and partners' and instead look at global rising humanitarian actors. Work on applying the TA to slow-onset and protracted crises, following the WG/EDG discussion, was already underway, but needed more focus particularly in terms of looking at what can be done in order to prevent the declaration of an L3.

To help describe the issues, WG members would volunteer to clarify the problem statement in a one-pager to guide further discussion at an ad hoc WG. In future, when issues arise from the EDG or the WG, in order to allow organizations to better understand what the issue fully entails, it was agreed that OCHA could capture and flesh out these, and future, issues in a page or two, and transmit them to the WG to address.

***Action Points:***

1. The WG agreed to prioritize four policy issues proposed by the EDG for follow up (remote operations; strengthening national NGO capacity and CBOs and NDMAs; working with Gulf countries and partners; and applying the TA to slow-onset and protracted crises). 1) WG members would consult within their organizations to confirm endorsement of these four issues as priority policy issues for further work by the WG in 2014. 2) WG members would volunteer to lead the articulation of the problem statement in a (maximum) one page for each of the agreed topics prior to further work in the WG. (Action by: *WG members by 1) 31 March 2014; 2) 30 April 2014*)
2. The WG requested that future policy issues arising from the EDG or WG be elaborated by OCHA in one-two pages (maximum) for the WG to address. (Action by: *OCHA, ongoing)*

# Protection in Humanitarian Crises: Engaging with Rights Up Front as the IASC

Andrew Gilmour, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, provided an update on the Rights Up Front initiative, which is a methodology or approach for the UN to prevent serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. When that fails, then Rights Up Front emphasizes the obligation to protect civilians. The Internal Review Panel headed by Charles Petrie found systemic failure on the part of the UN, which led to the Rights Up Front programme of change. It provides mechanisms for the UN to act early in response to potential or actual human rights violations, as they are often warning signs of things to come. It also emphasizes that human rights and the causes of their violations are so complex, that the UN as a whole must take responsibility, not just OHCHR. The plan has six elements: a cultural shift among UN staff; telling States what they need to hear; improving UN action at the country level; streamlining headquarters procedures; strengthening human rights capacity; and ensuring a common UN information system on violations. While there are early warning mechanisms, they are not clearly linked to crisis response. The Deputy Secretary-General has asked for a consolidated crisis response mechanism for all Mission and non-Mission settings to be developed by this summer by a DPKO/DPA/DSS/DFS working group on crisis response procedures. The model would align, but not impact or dictate to, the IASC’s processes and procedures, but it would ensure the same predictability in response from non-humanitarian actors in crises as the humanitarian community.

While Rights Up Front was designed with non-Mission settings in mind, its most senior mechanism, the Senior Action Group (SAG), has been activated in CAR and South Sudan, which has contributed to human rights and protection of civilians being promoted in the response. The opening up of UNMISS compounds saved thousands of lives. He highlighted that human rights advocates understand the need for the respect of humanitarian principles, and called for humanitarians not to keep human rights actors at arm’s length during crises, as has happened at times in South Sudan and Mali.

During the discussion, WG members welcomed the initiative and asked for ways to be able to better link with Rights Up Front. There were pleas for it not to be too focused on process, with a remark that it should be more an attitude than an activity. The lack of an integrated protection strategy in CAR was raised, as was the disconnect between various parts of the UN system. There is a need to streamline processes, to avoid the situation in Sri Lanka where too many headquarters groups were giving instructions to the field. More briefings and information sharing on Rights Up Front is needed with NGOs, as well as within the UN system. Many noted a general lack of guidance about, and understanding of, what Rights Up Front is. It would be helpful for information to be focused on what it means for field colleagues and how it will improve field operations. Information sharing between the different parts of the system will be essential, but there is the challenge of ensuring confidentiality and getting departments to share information is often difficult, given that knowledge is power. Collaboration between the IASC’s review on protection and Rights Up Front was welcomed, as the IASC’s work on a protection review could contribute to better understanding how field-based protection clusters could contribute to broader system efforts.

***Action Points:***

1. The IASC WG requested the Centrality of Protection statement to be disseminated by the ERC to HCs and HCTs, along with the two-page December 2013 summary of Rights Up Front (Action by: *ERC by 28 March 2014*)

# IASC Priorities

WG Sponsors presented brief updates on the work of Task Teams (TTs). The Preparedness and Resilience TT is working on more details for each specific objective by early April and subsequently, a chapeau of the TT’s overall work objectives. The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) had designated its own task team, internal to the GPC, to deliver on the Protection in Humanitarian Crises priority and they are currently working on the terms of reference of the independent study on the whole of system review. The AAP/PSEA priority will have ActionAid join as a Co-Chair and the PSEA community-based complaints mechanism project has finally been preselected for ECHO funding. The Humanitarian Financing TT’s work plan was circulated to the WG for review and as no comments were received, it is considered approved. When preparing the work plan, IASC organizations had been requested to prioritize the activities, which could be a best practice to replicate with the other TTs’ work plans. Such a prioritization may also help TTs stay focused on priorities as the WG assigns new issues. The Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action TT provided an update of activities, which was shared electronically with the WG following the meeting.

The Chair of the WG noted that the new IASC Terms of Reference commit OCHA to supporting IASC bodies and that she would work with OCHA colleagues to ensure the TTs are sufficiently serviced. The complementarity paper was seen as useful, but the TTs will need to be followed closely to ensure that overlap does not occur. Some frustration was raised about the relationship between Sponsors and TT Co-Chairs. The approach of Co-Chairs and the lack of clarity on the Sponsors’ role vis-à-vis the TT were contributing factors. It was suggested that some parameters could be set to ensure efficiency. There was agreement that the WG needed to have links with the TTs to avoid them spinning off, as had happened before, but when Sponsors and Co-Chairs are not from the same organization, it becomes more challenging.

***Action Points:***

1. IASC organizations to review the TT work plans and prioritize activities. (Action by: *WG by 15 April 2014*)
2. IASC Secretariat to draft a short statement clarifying mutual expectations between Sponsors and Co-Chairs. (Action by: *IASC Secretariat by 31 March 2014*)

# World Humanitarian Summit

The facilitator, George Deikun, UN-HABITAT, asked what the IASC wants to get out of the WHS and how it should interface with the WHS. Gwi-Yeop Son, OCHA, asked the WG to look at the risks associated with the initiative; opportunities; expected outcomes; and what are some of the cross-cutting issues to consider, such as humanitarian principles.

On risks, humanitarian principles, international humanitarian law (IHL), and Resolution 46/182 were seen as being core to the WHS, but there was a risk that they would get lost. The challenges of engaging different actors and partners posed a risk, which could potentially lead to a more polarized community and decreased humanitarian space. Formal links between the different secretariats would help to avoid diverging processes. By having a strong vision of what the outcomes should be, a ‘watchdog mechanism’ could allow the IASC to share concerns around risks arising so as to mitigate them.

Opportunities included: building on Rights Up Front; rethinking current paradigms (i.e. Mission versus non-Mission settings); overcoming budget constraints and looking for new financing mechanisms; creating a new ‘public’; getting countries to open up humanitarian access; having the development and humanitarian approaches work better together; challenging some of the humanitarian dogmas; and giving a stronger voice to practitioners. WG members also encouraged the WHS Secretariat to interface with the secretariats for other global conferences, including the GA-mandated Third Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urbanisation and the Second Hyogo Framework Conference, as opportunities to mainstream humanitarian challenges and approaches for broader linkages between humanitarian and development-oriented initiatives and agencies.

Given that the Summit is relatively soon, there is a need to be realistic about what can be achieved. Possible outcomes to the Summit included: working on the preparedness agenda to get real national ownership, while moving beyond the rhetoric; strengthening IHL; getting a common understanding of humanitarian principles; being fit for the future by ensuring humanitarians are better able to operate together; creating a new vision of humanitarianism; looking for a potential common view of the humanitarian architecture; defining the minimum standards to get buy-in across cultures; and better defining complementarities amongst humanitarian actors.

Some of the cross-cutting issues to involve throughout the WHS process included: supporting the central role of national/local actors (‘flipping the system’); being accountable to multiple stakeholders, including from an age, gender, and diversity perspective; promoting humanitarian principles; the experiences and voices of affected populations; and responding in a diversity of contexts, including urban contexts and the increasing vulnerabilities. Engaging as a collective IASC was seen as difficult, given the lack of clarity on outcomes. A compelling narrative is needed to engage with the WHS because now it is about engaging with a meeting/process.

There was a clear feeling that the architecture needs to change and be more inclusive. In order to do so, the IASC needs to be clear what it is bringing to the process, to look at the big picture and be ready to look at a different structural configuration if we are really looking for a system that is fit for purpose beyond 2016. The IASC can come together with a common vision to feed into each of their constituencies and at various levels of the WHS process to ensure common language and to bring the IASC’s experiences to the table.

IASC organizations were asked to nominate candidates for the thematic teams, but also to ensure advocacy and communication within organizations to encourage staff to engage with the WHS. There are also opportunities for IASC organizations to engage in the themes, as standby experts, and facilitators of on-line conversations are being sought. Finally, there was a request for IASC organizations to reach out to partners and stakeholders to provide a multiplier effect.

Some organizations felt that given the desire for direct engagement by IASC organizations with the WHS, there was not a specific role for the IASC as a body in the WHS, whereas others felt there should be a specific role for the IASC in the WHS. There is a need to regularly share information on the themes and substance, which will be done by WG organizations. Developing common messages on particular themes could help to amplify those messages through individual organization’s engagement throughout the WHS process. A small number of WG members would be identified to be part of an informal advisory group to provide critical advice to the WHS secretariat.

***Action Points:***

1. In order to ensure that common concerns and issues are taken forward in the WHS process, WG organizations agreed to regularly share messages and themes related to the WHS to allow for the amplification of voices. Where possible, common messages will be developed for IASC organizations to take forward individually in the WHS process. A small group of interested IASC organizations will join the informal advisory group to the WHS secretariat. (Action by: *IASC organizations to volunteer for the informal advisory group by 21 March 2014; WG to share messages and themes on WHS, on-going until 2016*)

# Any Other Business

**WG Meetings**

The Chair proposed that the WG meet in more ad hoc meetings on specific topics, such as following up on the narrative around slow-onset crises and L3s. She suggested that there should be some threshold for deciding when such meetings should be held. Some WG members underlined the importance of meeting in person more than once a year, even if on an ad hoc basis, and to ensure that these face-to-face meetings are scheduled well in advance to maximize participation.

***Action Points:***

1. The WG Chair, with Secretariat support, to draft some criteria to trigger the convening of ad hoc WG meetings. (Action by: *WG Chair with IASC Secretariat support by 7 April 2014*)

**Engaging with Member States and Donors**

The Chair noted that there have been a number of requests from donors to engage with the IASC and IASC bodies. There is also a need to engage with Member States on specific issues. However, such briefings should not become too burdensome. It was suggested by several that the EDG forum with donors twice a year could potentially be expanded to discuss both operational and policy issues. The Good Humanitarian Donorship group was also suggested as a suitable entry point for the WG and TTs to engage. There are a number of interfaces with donors, particularly through the Task Teams that are so technical that there is a risk of losing the bigger picture. Engaging with the G77 is also critical. A mapping of the various donor and Member State bodies should be conducted to allow a discussion at the next WG meeting to further discuss engagement with Member States.

***Action Points:***

1. A mapping of donor and Member State forums where the IASC WG could engage, and where TTs are already engaging, should be conducted to aid a discussion of future engagement at a next WG meeting (Action by: *IASC Secretariat in consultation with WG members by 30 April 2014*)