**Discussion paper: Towards a sunset of the IASC Task Force on Climate Change[[1]](#footnote-2)**

Anna Zinecker, IASC Task Force on Climate Change Secretariat

Daniel Kull, IFRC

Madeleen Helmer, RC/RC Climate Centre

September 2010

**Background:**

In June 2008 the IASC Working Group established the informal Task Force on climate change. This was motivated by the recognition of the “human dimension” of climate change and its impact on the work of humanitarian agencies. The UNFCCC Bali Action Plan (BAP) of December 2007 provided the negotiation mandate for a new global climate change agreement to be adopted at the UN Climate Conference COP 15 in Copenhagen. The BAP included a full chapter addressing adaptation to the unavoidable impacts of climate change, including disaster risk management as an important element of adaptation.

The informal IASC Task Force on Climate Change (TF) was therefore established with the mandate to provide inputs into the UNFCCC negotiation process and to provide guidance on integrating climate risk management into agency policies, operations and relevant IASC guidelines and tools. IFRC was asked and subsequently agreed to chair and host the secretariat. Since September 2008 the TF has met on a monthly basis with a participation of 20-35 people and a mailing list of currently 150 people. UNISDR was invited from the beginning and accepted to participate and to work collectively, in particular in the UNFCCC context.

In 2008 and 2009, much of the work focused on the climate change negotiations. It was felt that a coordinated input to the UNFCCC workshop for government delegations on risk management and risk sharing at COP14 would be the most effective representation of both the humanitarian and DRR communities. A joint paper on disaster risk management with active input from IASC members and UNISDR was presented and well received by governments and the UNFCCC. At the same time, the IOM/UNHCR-led sub-group worked on migration and displacement.

In 2009 the IASC TF continued meeting on a regular basis, with IASC members appreciating the catalytic role of the TF. Through the network systematic information-sharing of colleagues and experts working on similar issues the TF contributed to capacity-building in IASC agencies and development of an IASC policy framework. The TF helped agencies coordinate their advocacy efforts and facilitated the preparation of several papers for the negotiation process on subthemes including health, migration, food security and local adaptation strategies.

**Current situation:**

The TF has been very successful in contributing to the integration of DRR and CCA in policy development at the global level by using the “window of opportunity” that was open after the adoption of the BAP. Much of the language in the relevant chapter of UNFCCC negotiation documents reflects the vision and proposals of the IASC TF. This is also the case in related documents like regional strategies and donor countries strategies.

However, already before COP 15 in Copenhagen it was felt that this advocacy role was coming to a natural end and that the TF should shift its focus from advocacy towards the second part of its mandate, i.e. guidance for policy implementation at the local, national and regional levels in developing countries. The lack of progress of COP 15 provided further impetus for adopting such a strategy.

The provision of policy guidance proved to be more difficult. On the one hand, two thematic TF meetings on vulnerability and risk assessment tools and coordination processes at country-level were very well attended and the related documentation frequently requested. At the same time it is very difficult to develop generic global guidance to colleagues in the field. A “quick guide” in the form of an accessible 8-pager providing basic information and guidance on further resources is well received; nevertheless it is felt that “heavier” guidance might not be the right approach.

On-going experience is demonstrating that the conditions in countries are very diverse. In one country there may be no interest or policy to address climate-related risks, while in another it is dependent on the personal engagement of government officials or the permanent UN Representative. Depending on the “champion” of climate change on the national level, the direction of policies and programmes can have different sectoral orientations such as agriculture, water, etc. Therefore, programme implementation needs a context-relevant approach by individual (but coordinated) agencies.

These observations have led to the following conclusions regarding the mandate of the IASC Task Force on Climate Change:

There is a great need for continued mutual knowledge-sharing and support for national and regional initiatives for DRR/CCA, but collective products of a generic nature are not the most relevant and/or useful.

Therefore, a ***network approach*** where experiences can be shared seems to be a more appropriate form for the near future. As such the IASC TF’s mandate should not be extended beyond its current expiry date of January 2011.

**Suggested Way forward:**

**1. From TF to network**

Now that the general policy conditions are more or less set for addressing the humanitarian consequences of climate change and financial modalities are improving to implement these policies, agencies are integrating climate risk management into their operations. To build on these experiences, it is of the essence that IASC member agencies continue to strengthen their capacities to develop and implement strategies and programmes to reduce climate-related risks for the most vulnerable people.

Information-sharing supports “learning by doing” and coordination. The IASC TF has been appreciated by its members as a helpful source of information and knowledge sharing among a wide range of actors. This function should be maintained and potentially further developed along two tracks:

1. An **active e-mail list-server and website** to exchange relevant information and developments and find coalitions for possible joint activities.
2. **Half-yearly seminars** on capacity development and central climate change themes

**2. Finding an “institutional home”**

After the end of the mandate of the TF, it is suggested that part of its work is taken up by other bodies, e.g. the IASC SWG on Preparedness, and integrated into agency policy and operations. In addition to that, the IASC could work closely with the UNISDR for the coordination of the proposed activities**.** The IASC TF has been instrumental in coming to a balanced position between different communities to address the human consequences of climate change, and there is a big overlap in membership between these two networks. UNISDR is therefore well positioned to facilitate these processes, as well as to engage development actors in this mutual effort.

**3. Humanitarian day at the COPs**

To keep the momentum and focus of the interaction between IASC members, it is suggested to maintain the initiative of humanitarian day at the COPs. It is suggested that this should regularly be the Tuesday before the Ministerial meeting at the COP. Different activities can highlight our concerns, experiences and proposals. Appropriate alliances between IASC members to prepare a certain activity can be established.

1. This paper has been drafted by IFRC as a basis for discussion at the IASC TF on CC meeting, 17 Sept. 2010. A paper reflecting the outcomes of the discussion will be presented to the 78th IASC WG meeting, 10-12 Nov. 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)