

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
PRINCIPALS MEETING

**Strengthening the
Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) System**

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Summary

This note outlines progress achieved at the 63rd IASC Working Group (21-22 November 2005) on the Humanitarian Coordinator System, and proposes concrete actions in the short and medium term to achieve a more effective and participatory Humanitarian Coordinator System.

I A pool of 20 Pre-certified Humanitarian Coordinators – The short term

Building on discussions and decisions made at the IASC in 1994, in 1997, at the IASC Principals Meeting in April 2005, and at the IASC Working Group Retreat in September 2005; the 63rd IASC Working Group in November 2005, agreed to the proposal of establishing a pool of 20 readily deployable “pre-certified”¹ Humanitarian Coordinators and set up an *Ad Hoc* Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) Group to achieve this objective. The IASC Working Group also agreed that the pool will include nominations of individuals from the non-UN partners of the IASC.

A process has been set in place by the IASC *Ad Hoc* Group on HCs to agree on nominations for the pool and to identify candidates, who are non-UN staff members, to be recommended for the RC assessment. OCHA will sponsor two candidates from non-UN IASC partners to undergo the RC Assessment and strongly encourages other UN agencies to consider doing the same.

It is expected that the IASC Working Group, at its *Ad Hoc* meeting on 24 January 2006, will agree on a list of 20 “pre-certified” HCs. The list will draw from: rostered RCs with strong humanitarian experience, currently serving HCs that the IASC may wish to recommend again for appointment in another country, recent retirees who have served as HCs², and most importantly, individuals currently serving with non-UN IASC partners who have been nominated by their organizations for consideration of inclusion in this pool.

¹ By Pre-certified it is intended candidates who are or will be on the Resident Coordinators (RCs) Roster and as such are readily deployable.

² In consideration of the restrictions in the employment of retired staff, retirees would be considered only for short-term assignments.

The creation of this pool of 20 “pre-certified” HCs, is going to fill an existing gap and will greatly improve the ability of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to propose for HC positions, individuals whose skills, performance and background meet the expectations of leadership and experience of the IASC.

In order to further expand the pool as well as the profile of potential candidates, further discussions will be necessary to explore ways to tap from governmental and private sector human resources.

Specific training and induction programs will be designed involving all the stakeholders for the selected pool of 20 candidates. UN specific induction programs will be tailored for non-UN candidates, as appropriate.

II Priority Countries for Humanitarian Coordinators – The short term

The prevailing practice of appointing a serving RC as HC has – at times – resulted in concerns, on part of the humanitarian community, about the limited humanitarian experience in the background of the RC. Whilst it may not be practical or realistic to expect that all RCs have strong humanitarian background and skills, it is important to ensure that such experience be considered a requirement for the RC appointment in countries prone to natural disasters, on the verge of a political crisis with potential humanitarian repercussions, or both. Only candidates with appropriate humanitarian experience should be appointed to serve as Resident Coordinators in these countries. In this connection, it is crucial to identify criteria and principles that define what it is expected by “appropriate experience”.

It is proposed that the IASC Working Group, on the recommendation of its Sub Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning, submit a list of such countries to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The ERC would then submit this list to the UNDP Administrator with a recommendation that only candidates with appropriate humanitarian backgrounds and skills be considered for selection as Resident Coordinators to these countries.

III Training – The short and medium term

Recognizing the importance of improving the quality of existing RC/HCs, OCHA and DGO are actively collaborating to institute regular training for Humanitarian Coordinators. Efforts are also underway to ensure that the current RC/HC induction be modified to extend humanitarian related training from the one-half day currently in effect to one-and-a-half days of the 10 day training. In addition, two humanitarian coordination workshops have been held for currently serving RCs to increase their exposure to major humanitarian coordination challenges. One workshop is scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2006.

IV Coordination Support Tools – The short and medium term

Strengthening and further improvement of coordination support tools for Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators is central to humanitarian coordination. To this aim, OCHA is developing a specific Humanitarian Coordination website to service the Humanitarian Coordinators with coordination tools, information and documental base, contact details, *fora* for peer discussions, and other services, including links to other relevant sites. As soon as the first

model is ready for testing, access to the site will be shared and further improved with the assistance of Humanitarian Coordinators and other relevant stakeholders.

V A Strategy with Concrete Actions – The medium and longer term

The IASC will need to develop a multi-year strategy to ensure that the humanitarian community, as represented by the IASC, is able, collectively, to identify, mentor, select, train and appoint individuals that can effectively deliver the best possible leadership in humanitarian emergencies. The strategy should cover a multi-year period and reflect concrete actions and benchmarks of achievement.

It is proposed that the IASC WG be tasked to develop such a strategy for discussion and endorsement at the next IASC Principals meeting in April 2006. The IASC Principals will review progress made in the implementation of the strategy on a regular basis.

VI Proposed Actions by the IASC Principals

1. Approve the creation of a stand-by pool of 20 “pre-certified” Humanitarian Coordinators.
2. Task the IASC Working Group, and its Early Warning and Early Action Sub-working Group to maintain a list of countries where only candidates with appropriate humanitarian experience should be appointed to serve as Resident Coordinators.
3. Task the IASC WG to develop a multi-year strategy on the Humanitarian Coordinators’ System for consideration at the IASC Principals Meeting in April 2006.

Prepared by OCHA