

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WEEKLY MEETING

Summary Note

18 April 2007
Geneva

I Madagascar - Debriefing on the Humanitarian Situation

Mr. Dusan Zupka (OCHA), Chief of Surge Capacity Section, Emergency Services Branch

Based on his recent mission to Madagascar, Mr. Dusan Zupka briefed on the humanitarian response following the recent floods and cyclones.

While Madagascar is prone to natural disasters, including endemic drought, flooding and recurrent cyclones, six cyclones in a period of five months (December 2006 to April 2007) are extraordinary and have had serious consequences for the island that was already troubled by heavy seasonal rains. Close to 500,000 people have been affected, 90 persons have been killed, 13,000 houses have been destroyed and 40,000 IDPs are living in precarious shelters. Moreover, the situation risks deteriorating further, as the cyclone season is expected to last for another six weeks. The humanitarian implications of these various natural disasters are particularly significant, as Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking number 143 on the Human Development Index out of 177 countries.

Given these circumstances, it was the objective of the OCHA Mission to enhance humanitarian coordination mechanisms, including establishing appropriate linkage between the IASC Country Team and the Government's Office of National Service dealing with natural disasters, and advise the IASC CT and Resident Coordinator in establishing a coherent strategy for emergency response. OCHA also assisted in organising workshops on humanitarian reform and supported the introduction of the Cluster Approach, which the IASC CT has agreed to adopt. Following up on CERF proposals were also undertaken by OCHA, as many operational agencies have been under too much pressure to meet the application requirements.

In mid-March, a Flash Appeal for US\$ 9.6 million was launched to request international assistance, but although the international community has responded generously, 44% of the Appeal remains unfunded. As the cyclone season is not over yet, it is anticipated that recent and potential future destructions will increase humanitarian needs. Consequently, the IASC CT is preparing an updated need assessment aiming at revising the Flash Appeal.

On ways forward, Mr. Zupka pointed to the ongoing revision of the Flash Appeal, just as he stressed the need for initiating recovery actions and a rapid designation of a new UN Resident Coordinator, as there currently only is an acting RC. Moreover, all UN humanitarian agencies and partners were encouraged to provide additional support to field structures, as existing structures are heavily overloaded.

On a question posed on the nutrition situation in the South, Mr. Zupka responded that while the rain first improved the situation in the draught tormented area, the food and agriculture situation

is still critical. FAO has, consequently, sent a needs assessment mission to identify needs and prepare a proposal on how to address this issue. Other participants raised questions related to partnerships with NGOs. Mr. Zupka explained that NGOs are invited to the regular coordination meetings, but also said that NGOs, in particular international NGOs in Madagascar, are not numerous. Among the very active NGOs are CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, Médecins du Monde and Medair. The latter has particularly been of great importance, as the cyclones, heavy rains and flooding have destroyed large parts of the country's infrastructure, hindering humanitarian assistance among others.

With regard to questions on the status of the preparedness and contingency plan, Mr. Zupka explained that a participatory process was established and a draft plan was under preparation until the work was interrupted by the early arrival of the cyclone season. Several questions were also raised concerning a potential evaluation of the emergency response in Madagascar. While Mr. Zupka acknowledged the importance of such an evaluation, in particular a minor real-time evaluation, he stressed that the time is not right for thorough evaluations at this point, as the cyclone seasons is not over yet and agencies will need to commit all resources to assist the population.

One of the last issues raised at the meeting was related to the possible link between climate change and the fact that the cyclone season started much earlier this year, just as the cyclones have struck the country with an intensity not seen before. While there is no proof of such linkages, Mr. Zupka and Mr. Nabeta (OCHA) referred to that it is acknowledged by many experts that the raise in temperature by 1°C in the Indian Ocean has caused increased rainfalls, cyclones and flooding.

II Participants

	Name	Organization	Email
1	Ms. Louise Johannsen	IASC Secretariat	johannsen@un.org
2	Mr. Norwin Schafferer	IASC Secretariat	schafferer@un.org
3	Ms. Marilena Viviani	IASC Secretariat	viviani@un.org
4	Ms. Lisa Carl	ICRC	lcarl@icrc.org
5	Mr. Niels Scott	IFRC	niels.scott@ifrc.org
6	Mr. Ivane Bochorishvili	OCHA	bochorishvili@un.org
7	Ms. Julie Breen	OCHA	breen@un.org
8	Ms. Katarina Chebenova	OCHA	chebenova@un.org
9	Ms. Asa Claesson	OCHA	claesson@un.org
10	Mr. Thierry Delbreuve	OCHA	delbreuve@un.org
11	Mr. Thierry Delbreuve	OCHA	delbreuve@un.org
12	Ms. Katja Laurila	OCHA	laurilak@un.org
13	Ms. Anna Maria Mandorff	OCHA	mandorf@un.org
14	Mr. Alfred Nabeta	OCHA	nabeta@un.org
15	Mr. Ousmane Watt	OCHA	watto@un.org
16	Mr. Dusan Zupka	OCHA	zupka@un.org
17	Ms. Maliza Van Eeden	UNEP	maliza.vaneeden@unep.ch
18	Ms. Miriam Azar	UNICEF	miazar@unicef.org
19	Mr. Olivier van Damme	UNITAR	olivier.vandamme@unosat.org
20	Ms. Sophie Sutrich	UNRWA	gunwra@unog.ch
21	Ms. Olivia Bessat	WFP	olivia.bessat@wfp.org
22	Mr. Serge Koller	WFP	geneva.guest1@wfp.org