

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
PLENARY MEETING**

24 April 2003

**UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
11.30 – 13.30 hrs, Room VI**

**Background Note: Briefing on the Work of the Joint
UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition**

Circulated: 15 April 2003

Policy Framework

Since November 2002, the Working Group on Transition Issues- comprising the UN Development Group and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Action- has been working to respond to:

- ECOSOC Resolution E/2002/32 of July 2002, which calls on the UN system to: “address the funding and strategic planning gap between relief and development activities in the context of natural disasters and complex emergencies” and to continue “to strengthen the consolidated appeals process as a coordination and strategic planning tool for the provision of humanitarian assistance and transition from relief to development.”
- Action Point 14 of the SGs report on “Strengthening of the UN: an Agenda for Further Change,” which states that: “The UNDG will develop, by September 2003, an implementation plan to strengthen the effectiveness of the organisation’s presence in developing countries. This plan will include such features as integrated planning, budgeting and resource mobilization tools for countries emerging from conflict.”
- The scope of the Working Group also builds on the recommendations pertaining to transition in the context of UN peace operations, as outlined in the “Brahimi Report.”

Conceptual Issues

While transition is dynamic and often unpredictable, common characteristics include situations where conflict is no longer raging or has subsided, but peace is not yet consolidated. Instability persists and a relapse into violence remains a real possibility. The fragility of the peace generally precludes the types of development investments that require a more stable and predictable environment. Transition processes are neither linear nor unidirectional. Rather, different facets of the transition co-exist simultaneously, at changing levels of intensity, and susceptibility to reversals and opportunities. Operational response capacity has to be flexible and be able to simultaneously address relief, recovery and development needs. There is an interdependence of humanitarian, recovery and development actions which should be under-pinned by peace-building objectives.

Starting with this common understanding of transition, the Working Group aims to:

- Identify the nature of “gaps” that exist which affect country teams' abilities to effectively respond to situations of transition, including with durable solutions to population displacement and refugee return.
- Clarify the UN's role relative to other major actors (e.g. NGOs, bilateral donors, the World Bank, government authorities) in responding to different types of transition situations, and in differentiating among short, medium and longer-term responses.
- Clarify donors' roles in transition, including methods and flexibility of funding.
- Identify UNCT successes and innovations in response to transition situations, including those that reflect integrated planning, programme coherence, modifications made to existing methodological tools, approaches or resource mobilization and budgeting strategies.

First background document for Briefing on the Work of the Joint UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition Issues

- Identify how existing processes, mechanisms and tools might be strengthened or made more flexible, and how Headquarters can better support and provide guidance to country teams.
- Propose measures that would help strengthen the capacity of the country teams to respond to the challenges of managing transition, including further development or adaptation of assessment, planning and monitoring tools; as well as resource mobilization strategies and funding mechanisms.

Methodology for Review of Transition Situations

In order to review a range of UN responses in transition situations, the Working Group is studying experiences in: Afghanistan, Angola, Great Lakes (including Burundi, DRC, Rwanda and Tanzania), Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Timor Leste. While several other cases could have also been studied, these eight situations captured the key issues relating to Security Council-mandated peace operations; formal transitional governments; challenges to peacebuilding; complicating regional dimensions; and use of supporting tools and funding mechanisms such as the CAP, CCA/UNDAF or other adapted, hybrid instruments and processes by the UN Country teams.

The methodology provides the opportunity for wide-ranging views to be brought to bear on strengthening the UN's approach in transition contexts. The study includes three key areas:

1. A review of existing literature, evaluations and lessons learned concerning the eight transition situations, including the World Bank's work and experiences with trust funds, LICUS portfolios and I-PRSPs/PRSPs; the OECD/DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation; DAC Guidelines on conflict prevention and partnerships; various Communications from the Commission of the European Communities, as well as experiences drawn from NGO partners.
2. Structured interviews with DSRSGs/RCs/HCs and agency-specific interviews, consolidated inputs from UNCTs, NGO partners and the Red Cross Movement in the eight selected transition situations, as well as those views of other experts and practitioners with working experience in transitional contexts.
3. Consultations with Member States, multilateral institutions and departments of the UN Secretariat.

Current Status/Progress

- The studies of the eight transition situations have been prepared in draft.
- Two (Angola and ROC) were reviewed by the members of the Working Group on 16 April, and feedback will be used to make the appropriate revisions in all eight drafts. These will be shared with the UNCTs in each country for additional feedback. A paper presenting the key issues and lessons from each of these transition situations will be prepared, as a basis for developing the "implementation strategy" requested by the Secretary General.
- Consultations with Member States: Humanitarian Liaison Working Group (25 February) and the G 77 (April 17). Further dialogue is planned.
- Consultations with the World Bank: preliminary (24 January) and follow up (in April). Transition studies will be shared with the World Bank, which has undertaken to provide feedback as well.
- Briefing of ECHA and UNDG/Ex-Com (4, 5 March)
- Preparation for ECOSOC: contribution to Secretary General's report to the Humanitarian Segment; panel discussion bringing together humanitarian and development Member State representatives to ECOSOC.