

IASC Weekly Meeting
12 January 2005
Notes



1: Update on the preparations for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, including the Early Warning component
(by Helena Molin-Valdes, Deputy Director of the Secretariat for the International Strategy of Disaster Reduction (ISDR))

The World Conference on Disaster Reduction will be held on 18-22 January 2005 in the Kobe, Japan. Since 2001, UN has reviewed the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World with a view to updating the guiding framework on disaster reduction for the 21st century. In December 2003, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to convene the World Conference to conclude the review of the Yokohama Strategy. The Conference is to be held on the occasion of 10th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

The conference, expecting over 4000 participants in total, is divided into three key segments: 1) the Intergovernmental Segment; 2) the Thematic Segment and; 3) the Public Forum

The Intergovernmental Segment of the conference, with participation of over 50 ministers including a few prime minister will be invited to take action on the draft review of the Yokohama Strategy as well as adopt a Framework for action 2005-2015

The Thematic Segment includes three high-level round-tables, five thematic panels, a special thematic session on the Tsunami, as well as a regional session.

The purpose of the thematic segment is (a) to exchange experiences and good practices in order to enhance the implementation of the program outcome, and to identify issues requiring further discussion at the international, regional, national and community levels, and (b) to launch specific initiatives or partnerships to support the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

The Conference will hear a report on various activities undertaken in the thematic segment.

The public forum consists of workshops, poster sessions and over 1500 exhibition booths. The forum will provide an opportunity for organizations to promote their own activities and to engage in open debates, seminars and a variety of other events.

The Conference will hear a report on various activities undertaken in the public forum.

11 heads of agencies including Mr. Jan Egeland, USG/ERC will be participating. UN SG will not be present in Kobe but deliver a video-speech to the conference.

2: Briefing on main humanitarian issues in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
(by Michel Kassa, Chief a.i. of OCHA's Africa I Section)

Returned from mission to the DRC from 6 to 14 December Mr. Kassa focused his briefing on the issue of violence (on civilians and humanitarian actors) with the example of the region Grand Nord Kivu.

At least 150.000 persons fled the area in early December 2004, and are returning albeit slowly. A major issue is that the buffer zone created by MONUC since mid-December does not provide enough security along the axes.

There are humanitarian actors and stocks available, but the fear of getting terrorised and roped prevents would-be beneficiaries from showing up to collect and the basic conditions for a massive and durable return of civilians is not there.

In Goma and North Kivu there is tension between on one hand a core-group in possession of means of economic power and armed violence, and extremely concerned about their collective fate as a community because of their background as immigrants. On the other hand a population of Kivutiens of a wide range of origins who wants to reunite with Kinshasa. Further away the population wants their country to remain one and tend to overlook the complexity of the situation.

In Katanga, there is a continuing tension among disenchanted Mayi Mayi groups many of whom know they have missed the chance to enrol in the integrated army.

Ituri remains a dangerous place, emphasized by the enduring existence of a displaced camp in Bunia, the kidnapping of the only national doctor available for up to 500.000 patients in Mahagi/Kwnadroma, and the killing of NGO staff on the road. So far, 2000 militiamen have been registered in DDR camps, half of whom are children.

The youth (students in urban areas) may become the most volatile factor in the whole process. They are anxious and cannot wait longer and do not want compromises neither on coming elections nor on the matter of unity/integrity of the country.

De facto state structure on the ground is deeply divided between the three main armed forces. The presidential circle (backed by a fairly large network of stakeholders notably Katangese), JP Bemba's movement and the RCD, which is itself seriously fractured.

In North Kivu, the national authorities are trying to get through negotiation what could not happen through confrontation between FARDC and the FDLR's Hutu militia. From the MONUC's side the establishment of a buffer zone and the deployment of four brigades in the Kivu and more crucially, the deployment of a riverine force on the Lake Kivu and more air capacities, may help exert a tighter control of the flow of arms and soldiers.

From a humanitarian point of view it is sad that advocacy for the promotion of basic humanitarian principles has to start from zero all over again, despite the fact that many officers are very knowledgeable about these rules.

Following the briefing there was some discussion on the difficulties of repatriation. UNHCR mentioned that they hope to deploy personnel from Tanzania and Congo Brazzaville into the Kivu region to prepare for the return of refugees. Also the perception of the UN in the region especially in the light the sexual abuses was discussed.

3: Any other business (by Michel Kassa, OCHA)

- Establishment of OCHA Offices in the Republic of Congo (RoC) and Central African Republic (CAR):

OCHA wants to set up offices in RoC and CAR. By this it is the hopes to attract UN-agencies and other actors (both humanitarian and development) to establish in the countries. Many NGOs are leaving both countries because funding from ECHO has ended and new funding from the European Commission is not yet in place. OCHA presence in both RoC and CAR is not foreseen to last longer than a year.

- Alarming signals from Zimbabwe:

Reports from Zimbabwe reveal a worrying food situation. Rains in some parts of the country have been extremely late, other areas suffered of a late seed distribution. The outside world is still suffering of a lack of information and transparency from the government on the food availability and accessibility for the most vulnerable. Also some of the worst hit areas regarding food security are not the areas in support of the president, which makes their situation even more difficult.

4: IASC Standard Briefing (by Kirsi Madi, IASC Secretariat)

- The IASC Taskforce on Assistance to Tsunami affected communities is currently meeting on a daily basis, until anything else is decided.
The meeting takes place daily at 1700 hrs Geneva time, 1100 hrs NYT. Arrangements will be made for video and audio linkage between Geneva and New York as well as other IASC focal points from various locations.
Suggestions for the agenda of the day should be sent to the IASC Secretariat (korreborg@un.org and gentzel@un.org) by 9h00 each day.
- The IASC TF on Darfur will meet on Tuesday, 18 January at 1500hrs Geneva time. Kevin Kennedy, Chief of OCHA's Coordination and Response Division will chair the meeting. The agenda as well as the exact venue will be sent to TF Members by e-Mail.
- The reference group for the IASC Reference Group on the Humanitarian Response Review will meet on Monday 3 February at 1100 hrs Geneva time.

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List of Participants**



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