

1: Briefing on an inter-agency mission to Côte d'Ivoire
(by Joël Boutroue, OCHA)

Mr. Joël Boutroue, Deputy Director of OCHA's Coordination and Response Division (CRD) briefed on his inter-agency mission to Côte d'Ivoire (Cdl) which took place from 3 to 7 April 2005. He outlined some of the observations and recommendations included in the mission report. Mission report will be sent to the ERC who will share it with IASC Principals for comment.

The main purpose of the mission was to assess conditions following the violence in November 2004 as well as the follow-up to commitments made at the inter-agency meeting on contingency planning, emergency preparedness and response for Cdl in November 2004 in Dakar.

By mentioning the difficulties to ensure participation in the mission, especially from NGOs, Mr. Boutroue highlighted the general lack of attention for Cdl and West Africa.

Although the humanitarian appeal for Cdl is quite small with around 39 Mio. \$, it is still heavily under-funded. As this is also the case for the regional appeal for West Africa, Mr. Boutroue stressed the need for increased advocacy and awareness.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in the West and North of the country is deteriorating. The lack of state structure in the northern part of the country is of major concern. In general, the country suffers from a lack of supplies of water and electricity, often caused by bureaucratic delays.

There is a growing "ethnicisation" of the militias, which is sharpening tensions. Economically, there are trends towards a "war economy", with illegal arms trafficking and illegal exploitations prevailing. The lack of protection and widespread impunity is a major problem especially in the buffer zone between the rebel controlled and government area.

On coordination of humanitarian affairs, Mr. Boutroue underlined the need for better cross-border cooperation in the West Africa region, also stressing the need for improved contingency planning and preparing for the worst-case scenario of war. Countries that have been quite stable so far are destabilized by the neighbouring countries. Presidential elections in many West African countries taking place over the year 2005 could easily increase tensions in the whole region. In this context, Mr. Boutroue highlighted the importance of ensured follow-up to the "Dakar Statement".

The discussion following the briefing focussed on funding and contingency planning as well as the need for better strategies on Cdl and West Africa.

2: Briefing on a joint UNHCR/ OCHA mission in Azerbaijan
(by Dusan Zupka, OCHA and Pablo Mateu, UNHCR)

Mr. Dusan Zupka, Humanitarian Affairs Officer of OCHA's Europe, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa Section (ECAMENA) and Mr. Pablo Mateu from UNHCR briefed on their joint mission in Azerbaijan where they particularly looked at the country's IDP situation.

There are about half a million IDPs in Azerbaijan, which moved because of the conflict with Armenia over the Nagorno Karabakh region. At the same time, the humanitarian community has moved beyond humanitarian assistance towards poverty reduction and development efforts. However, the Government of Azerbaijan still sees outstanding humanitarian needs, and therefore encouraged UNHCR's mission, which was joined by OCHA.

The purposes of the mission were to assess the situation regarding IDPs on the ground, to see where the Country Team (CT) and other partners stand, to meet with stakeholders and to issue recommendations to the CT and UNHCR. The mission then met with all stakeholders in the country including IDP representatives, the Government, UN agencies, NGOs, donors, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

In 2004 WFP made a survey for the country's vulnerability report, which states that the situation of the IDPs is not necessarily worse than that of the rest of the population because the government is providing them with assistance and subsidies. Mr. Mateu stated the need for a new vulnerability study on the IDPs and furthermore pointed out the different conditions for the IDPs living in rural or urban settings respectively, with better employment opportunities but poorer living condition in the urban areas and the opposite situation often being the case in the rural areas.

Regarding employment, the World Bank, UNDP and other international actors are advocating for local integration of the IDPs. This conflicts with a presidential decree from 2004, which states that the IDPs should not be integrated locally but return to their place of origin. The issue is sensitive to the GoA, because local reintegration of the IDPs can be interpreted as acknowledgment of the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan territory. Potential employment opportunities in the agricultural sector are hampered by the often very poor quality of the soil caused by deforestation and subsequent irrigation. UNEP and FAO were asked to look at the problem.

Regarding coordination, Mr. Zupka pointed out that the UN Country Team is meeting on a monthly basis as are the NGOs. Also the Government clearly acknowledges its role vis-à-vis the IDPs. Representatives from all three clusters are attending each other's meetings, but Mr. Zupka stressed the need for enhanced cooperation and the need for more international awareness on the IDP situation in Azerbaijan. IOM was encouraged to increase their presence in the country.

Following the briefing the issue of awareness rising was discussed. Also, Mr. Robert Robinson, Deputy Director of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe, underlined the need to see Azerbaijan and IDPs in the country in its regional context, which implies longstanding tensions between neighboring countries including Russia (6000-10000 Chechnyan refugees are presently situated in Azerbaijan). The findings of rich oil resources in Azerbaijan could further increase the tensions.

Action points:

- The mission report will be shared among IASC members.

3: AOB

- Update on the strengthened dialogue with Islamic NGOs (by Jamie McGoldrick, OCHA)

Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, Chief of OCHA's Europe, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa Section (ECAMENA) gave a short update on OCHA's efforts to strengthen partnerships with Islamic NGOs.

Mr. McGoldrick informed participants that OCHA together with ICVA had met with Islamic Relief in late March 2005 to discuss preparations for the Cairo Conference. The Conference is now put on hold and will instead be held at a smaller scale in Cairo in June 2005. In May, a preparation meeting will be held in London to try to identify issues to be discussed at the Cairo event. The idea of this meeting is also to have a broader NGO participation from the Islamic World.

Furthermore, Mr. McGoldrick referred participants to two recent reports: *One Big Prison – Freedom of Movement to and from the Gaza Strip on the Eve of the Disengagement Plan*, issued by the Hamoked Centre for the Defence of the Individual (March 2005), and the UNDP *Arab Human Development Report 2004: Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, (April 2005). On the latter, Mr McGoldrick noticed the change of langue in the recent report compared to the 2003 edition, which came out just before the invasion of Iraq.

Action points:

- The annotated agenda for the London meeting will be circulated to IASC as soon as it is set.

4: IASC Standard Briefing

(by Marilena Viviani, IASC Secretariat)

- Update on the IASC Principals Meeting: The IASC Principals Meeting took place last Thursday, 7 April from 9h30 – 13h00, followed by the Principals Only Lunch from 13h00 – 15h00. Agenda items were the following:
 - Responding to the Tsunami Disaster: Lessons from the Humanitarian Response

- Addressing the Protection Crisis in Humanitarian Situations
- Reform of the Humanitarian System

- The IASC Task Force on the Tsunami will meet on Wednesday, 13 April from 17h00 – 18h00 in Room 3 of the Palais des Nations. The agenda items include a briefing on the outcomes of the IASC principals meeting in regard of the Tsunami Response, a briefing on FAO's activities, an update on the Nias earthquake as well as the UN-DSS safety and security briefing.

- The next meeting of the IASC CAP SWG will take place on Tuesday, 19 April from 15h00 – 16h30 in Room 3 of the Palais des Nations. Invitations have already been sent out to the members of the SWG.

**IASC Weekly Meeting
13 April 2005
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