

IASC Weekly Meeting
16 March 2005
Notes



1: Briefing on the latest developments in Togo
(by Marcel Mikala, OCHA)

Mr. Marcel Mikala, Humanitarian Affairs Officer in Africa I Section, OCHA briefed on the latest developments in Togo. The briefing was a follow-up to Mr. Mikala's briefing on Togo in the Weekly meeting on 16 February.

On the political front Mr. Mikala underlined the risk of a violent transition period threatening to destabilise the country and to affect neighbouring Ghana, Benin and Burkina Faso following the death of president Gnassingbé Eyadema on 5 February 2005 and the subsequent "coup d'Etat familial", whereby the constitution was changed to allow the late president's son Faure Gnassingbé to become new head of State.

International pressure combined with sanctions from Economic Community for West Africa (ECOWAS), African Union and European Union has succeeded, on 25 February in forcing the new president and his tribal entourage to step down and organise general elections within 60 days as recommended by the constitution. Elections will take place on 24 April.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, Mr Mikala outlined the possibility that a struggle for political power triggering an ethnic conflict between northern Kabié and southern Ewé tribes, which could result in internal displacements and influx of Togolese refugees into neighbouring countries.

As a response to the situation a sub-regional workshop took place on 9th March in Cotonou (Benin) to define a common approach in matter of response and early warning. A sub-regional inter-agency contingency plan is being consolidated in preparation of such an event.

Furthermore, OCHA has conducted assessment missions in Togo.

In the discussion following the briefing focus was on the risk of deterioration of the situation including the possible effects on the region. Furthermore the coming presidential election was discussed including the reactions from the military depending on the outcome.

2: Briefing on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) meeting in Nigeria from 8 to 10 March 2005
(by Marcel Mikala, OCHA)

Mr. Marcel Mikala briefed on an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) meeting of experts on disaster prevention and management which was held from 8th to 10th March in Abuja (Nigeria).

The meeting examined the modalities for the establishment of a West African disaster management mechanism. The deliberations were focused on four main issues including: i) institutional and legal framework; ii) common policy; iii) operational framework; and iv) resource mobilisation.

Various recommendations were made for assistance to be sought from the UN in carrying forward this process, particularly obtaining technical assistance in the setting up of the mechanism.

Following the briefing there was a short discussion focusing on the funding as well as the institutional setup of the mechanism.

3: Briefing on South Sudan (by Rudolph Muller, OCHA)

Mr. Rudolph Muller, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Africa II Section, OCHA briefed on his recent mission to South Sudan. Mr. Muller will shortly be returning to the region to head the new OCHA office in Rumbek.

After the peace agreement was signed in early January between the Government of Sudan and the rebel movement in the South, people have begun returning to South Sudan. Approximately ½ a million have returned and another ½ a million is expected over the next 6 months. The return is happening in a very spontaneous manner.

In response to this development the international community is reinforcing their presence in the region, including OCHA.

The objective is to provide the returnees with basic services as well as assuring the appropriate level of protection. Considering the large amount of returnees, the aim for 2005 is more or less to just to maintain the current level services. Another important goal in the 2005 work plan is to improve the infrastructure of the region as well as de-mining.

The Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, has encouraged agencies, who have until now been reluctant to set up offices in the South, to establish themselves in the region by mid 2005. OCHA has a total of 8 offices in the South. A major constraint is access – all equipment and personnel have to be flown in because of the poor conditions of the roads. At present, there is furthermore a time constraint, because the rainy season starts in about two months, making access even more difficult.

Regarding funding Mr Muller pointed out that there is a general lack of funding for the UN and Partners Work Plan 2005, with only about 10% of the appeals pledged, and only about 5% actually contributed.

In the discussion following the briefing, focus was on the IDPs and their return as well as the funding situation. On the latter, Mr. Muller mentioned, that a donor conference on Sudan would be held in Oslo on 11-12 April 2005, which will look at funding for both relief efforts as well as development issues.

4: IASC Standard Briefing
(by Marilena Viviani, IASC Secretariat)

- The IASC Task Force on the Tsunami will meet on Wednesday, 16 March from 17h00 – 18h00 in Room III of the Palais des Nations. Briefings will be given by OCHA on the Mid Term Review preparations and by ILO on their response to the Tsunami.
- The Humanitarian Coordinators annual retreat is starting this evening (16 March) and will go on until Friday 18 March mid morning.
- The IASC Working Group will meet in Rome at WFP HQs on Monday and Tuesday 21-22 March.

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List of Participants**



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