

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
60th MEETING**

**21-22 March 2005
WFP Rome**

French Proposal for an International Humanitarian Force

Update for the IASC Working Group

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1. On 5 January 2005, French President Chirac in a letter to the Secretary-General proposed the establishment of an "International Humanitarian Force" (IHF), consisting of civilian experts with a broad range of expertise (engineers, medical personnel, water sanitation experts, etc), who would be available for the UN to be rapidly deployed in response to natural disasters. Although the IHF would not be a military force, involvement of military and/or military assets – in particular for logistical tasks – could also be part of it. According to the French the IHF would not be a new organization but rather a network complementary to existing mechanisms. It would also include experts from the developing countries that are most disaster prone and in need of a strengthening of their local response capacities. The IHF would aim at assisting governments of affected countries to mobilise rapidly. The French MFA is now in charge to work out the technical details of the proposal.

2. The SG responded to President Chirac, welcoming the French initiative and proposing that the initiative should be further explored at the working level. In his response letter, the SG also informed the French about the ongoing HRR and the scope and terms of the study and encouraged Paris to participate in and contribute to the HRR.

3. Since then the French continued to promote their initiative on different levels (GVA and NY), and showed also interest to learn more about the HRR. According to the French Mission in NY, there will be bilateral meetings between Paris and the team of Ms Adinolfi during March.

Proposed Actions by the IASC WG members:

- Take note of the French proposal to establish an "International Humanitarian Force"
- Request OCHA to follow this issue