INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

PRINCIPALS MEETING

Cluster Working Group on Logistics Executive Summary

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I   Executive Summary

1.1   How to Improve Humanitarian Response in the Cluster Area

On 12 September 2005, the IASC endorsed the proposal to designate WFP as the Logistics Cluster lead agency, with primary managerial responsibility and accountability for logistics.

In the IASC Principals' meeting of 12 September 2005, Cluster Leads were divided into three categories according to their product delivery: service provision, relief and assistance to beneficiaries and broad range of cross-cutting issues. The Logistics Cluster Lead falls within the category of service provision, namely a service to UN and NGO entities.

It is acknowledged that any and all parties involved in responding to an emergency shall be free to identify and flag the issue of a supply chain problem possibly requiring lead cluster assistance, reporting the existence of any such problems to the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator.

1.2   Capacities and Gaps

With a view to improving surge capacity, the Logistics Working Group identified areas where improvements were needed (sub-groups were formed to look at each issue), particularly to ensure better logistics preparedness and response, and to facilitate improved interagency interoperability through the pooling of resources.

1.3   Response in Selected Existing Emergencies

N/A

1.4 Cross-Cutting Issues

The Logistics Cluster has developed its workplan on the assumption that other sectors (shelter, water and sanitation, food, health) will manage their own logistics as part of an integrated supply chain approach in most circumstances. This assumption needs to be verified as it has obvious budgetary implications. The Cluster lead would provide inter-agency logistics services as a "last resort" when the size and magnitude of the logistics challenges require more robust inter-agency coordination and action. Requests from other agencies/cluster leads, vetted through the HC/CT, would be the basis of considering providing such "last resort" services.

1.5 Response Planning and Preparedness Measures

(a)   Generic criteria for applying the Logistics Cluster concept have been developed and agreed. The Logistics Cluster Working Group shall agree on the protocol for requesting support of the Logistics Cluster Lead Agency and logistics common services (such as UNJLC and UNHAS).

(b)   While the preparedness and contingency planning of the individual agencies is relatively strong, integration needs to be strengthened and logistics aspects included to ensure better inter-agency planning. The Logistics Cluster Working Group has identified actions needed for improved humanitarian contingency planning for both man made and natural disasters.

(c)   The Humanitarian Response Network (HRN) initiative is based on existing inter-agency work to develop a global network of logistics facilities from which to launch emergency response operations. The overall aim is to provide significantly better integrated supplies information and coordination to both preparedness initiatives and responses to large-scale emergencies. In particular, NGOs without the capacity to build on-site warehouses would capitalise on this initiative.

(d)   The Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) has recommended to "expand global mapping of relief stocks", through which agencies are to report on "quantity, values, geographical positioning, availability and access" of its stockpiles of relief goods. The Logistics Cluster has decided to use the Register of Emergency Stockpiles as a base for the stockpile mapping exercise, and agreed to collaborate on the up-dating of data and to include quantities of goods in stocks. The Cluster has also recommended to list in the Register the most frequently stocked items and to establish common NFI denominators for each sector. The respective Cluster Working Groups are to provide their inputs on the common NFI denominators. The preparedness for, and use of, integrated Cluster sector stockpiles will be coordinated by the Logistics Cluster.

(e)   There exists a need for the UN agencies to assess and act instantly in large-scale emergencies. The Inter-Agency Logistics Response Team (LRT) concept is based on the need to improve coordinated response time. A fully self-sustaining LRT will be deployed within hours of any large-scale emergency and such team will have the expertise and training to ensure that they are able to act decisively. In essence, the LRT would initiate active logistics operations, thus setting the stage and giving the UN time to activate its machinery and bring the necessary resources to the operation. It is acknowledged that inter-agency staff in the LRT may be required to undertake activities for which their parent agencies are the Cluster lead, concurrent

to their logistics related activities. This will ensure streamlined and efficient use of the Cluster concept and assist in inter-operability between the Clusters themselves.

(f)   In order to ensure that the Logistics Cluster is prepared and able to meet any eventuality, the Lead Agency shall immediately establish a Support Cell. The rationale for such a Support Cell is that several actions need to be taken in advance of a large-scale emergency and inter-operability between the members of the Cluster needs to be established to facilitate a streamlined and efficient response. It is acknowledged that all staff members attached to the Support Cell will undertake tasks exclusively for the benefit of the inter-agency Logistics Cluster and for the interoperability of each other Cluster. The functions and terms of reference of such staff members will be determined by consensus of the Logistics Cluster Working Group.

(g)   The establishment of humanitarian logistics priorities is essential to improve the efficiency of humanitarian assistance. This is particularly true in the case of bottlenecks. When the concept of using common transport is applied, the Logistics Cluster recognises that procedures should be established to ensure correct and objective sharing of the available assets.

(h)   It is acknowledged that use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) should be strictly in accordance with the prescribed guidelines. An awareness campaign is needed within the humanitarian community and with donors to recommend the correct use of MCDA. It is acknowledged by the Logistics Cluster that experts to manage MCDA air assets need to be deployed at the onset of a large-scale natural disaster.

(i)   The problem of airfield congestion during large-scale natural disasters is common. The consequent delays to arrival of rescue teams and relief commodities cause loss of life and a waste of resources. The Logistics Cluster recommends the establishment of a system and procedures to create a UN Air Management System at the onset of large-scale emergencies.

(j)   The UNJLC is considered to be an integral part of the Logistics Cluster and will continue to execute its well established and agreed function of coordination, information sharing, preparedness planning and cargo prioritisation as and when required. It is envisaged that UNJLC's particular expertise may be called upon by the Logistics Cluster, or other Cluster Leads, and with the approval of the IASC.

1.6   Plan for a Phased Introduction and Recommendations for 2006 Implementation

While certain actions can be taken before the end of 2005, the major efforts to comply with the recommendations of the Cluster should take place during the first semester 2006. Actions should be consolidated and practiced during the second half of 2006. A phased implementation of the recommendations of the Cluster is set out in the matrix attached to the Report.

1.7   Recommendations on Outstanding Cluster Specific Issues

The Logistics Cluster identified major gaps in the availability, readiness and skills of logistics experts at the onset of large-scale emergencies. The Cluster members agreed that logistics is mostly undervalued and under-resourced. Therefore it should be considered to augment logistics staff and introduce specific common training programmes to broaden the field of expertise and improve responsiveness. It is proposed to deploy an inter-agency Logistics Response Team (LRT) at the onset of large-scale emergencies. Mechanics and procedures for smooth integration of such teams in the existing on-site structures have to be developed. Additionally, the Logistics

Cluster recommends improvement in the availability of ICT and other equipment to support the logistics operations in the early deployment phase.

1.8 Budget and Fund-Raising

Improving humanitarian responsiveness is not possible without making the necessary investments in recruitment, training and procurement of necessary equipment. Additionally, the pre-positioning of vehicles will require important investments. Sufficient budgets should be made available to allow unimpeded and independent deployment of teams and equipment at the onset of large-scale emergencies.

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