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**Discussion on Integrated Missions: NGO Discussion Paper**

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**Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to provide the basis for discussion by raising some of the points that concern humanitarian agencies with respect to integrated missions.

**Definition**

An integrated UN mission refers to a UN operation in which the UN actors, including UN humanitarian actors, work together under the SRSG's leadership and coordination.

In this respect, an integrated mission brings together the various parts of the UN system and/or fields of operation, including political, military, humanitarian and development, within one single structure. Since integrated missions have become practice for the UN system, there have been different models with regards to the structures of these missions.

In many of these instances, however, the Humanitarian Coordinator, who is designated by the ERC, following a consultation with the IASC, is also designated as deputy of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG). The Humanitarian Coordinator is expected to represent the humanitarian community, including UN and non-UN humanitarian agencies, whereas the DSRSG is a UN function.

**Views and concerns**

Outside the UN system, within non-UN humanitarian agencies, there are a number of shared concerns with regards to integrated missions. Many of these concerns were voiced at the High-Level Humanitarian Forum in March. In his Chairperson's Summary, the ERC reported:

“There was concern expressed by many participants about the UN's integrated missions, particularly during the conflict phase (rather than post-conflict), and how integrated missions can constrain humanitarian space and access. Integrated missions are perceived as affecting the independence and neutrality of humanitarian assistance by combining political, military and humanitarian objectives. As a result, humanitarian access can be limited, and may also create adverse perceptions of the humanitarian community.”

These concerns are not new. Four years ago, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) provided a paper for the IASC, which took a critical look at the Brahimi report and the possible implications for non-UN humanitarian actors.

The SCHR paper stated:

“The report envisages a monolithic structure, where the Head of the UN Mission has at his or her disposal all manner of tools and assets – military, political and diplomatic, humanitarian and developmental.... Humanitarian action, however, cannot be considered among these appropriate tools. The provision of humanitarian assistance is undertaken based on principles of neutrality and impartiality and cannot be conflated with the efforts of a monolithic peace operation "to divert... political...agendas.”

In this respect, a major concern relates to preserving humanitarian principles, in particular impartiality and independence. In the view of a number of non-UN humanitarian agencies, there is an inherent contradiction between these principles and the concept of integration. At the High-Level Forum, one representative stated:

“Independence, we see as implying that our humanitarian action needs to be distinct – and perceived as so - from political decision-making processes. The reason for this is straightforward: in any conflict, parties will tend to reject humanitarian actors they suspect of having ulterior political motives... However, different types of integrated approaches – combining political, military, reconstruction and humanitarian tools - advocated by the UN on the one hand and a number of states on the other in our view conflict with this principle and the ICRC cannot and will not subscribe to such policies.”

With regards to the need to preserve humanitarian principles, it must be recognized that these principles are not abstract ideas but are necessary conditions for humanitarian response in assisting and protecting all of those in need. As did others at the High-Level Forum, the SCHR Chair raised the issue of security by pointing out that the integrated approach does not only affect independence and neutrality, but also the security of humanitarian field staff.

Another significant concern relates to the implications of integration for the relationship and coordination process between the UN system and non-UN humanitarian agencies, out of the recognition that the greater part of global humanitarian assistance is delivered by agencies that are not part of the UN system. It is feared that the increased use of integrated missions will drive a wedge between the UN and these non-UN agencies. If integration becomes the rule for the UN, and if NGOs perceive these missions as a threat to their identity and security, they can simply walk away, disengage, and go on their own. OCHA and other UN humanitarian agencies, however, cannot, as they are part of the UN system. A rupture and reduction or even cessation of a working relationship between the UN and its partners could quickly become a reality.

In order to ensure that there is not such a divide, the view has been taken to develop structures and firewalls that might ensure a sufficient distinction between the different parts of the mission, in particular, between the political/military parts of the mission

on the one hand, and the humanitarian (and possible development) part(s) on the other hand. In this respect, a hotly debated issue relates to the multi-hattedness of the DSRSG/Humanitarian Coordinator. Which of his hats comes first? And to whom does s/he report? In addition to these questions, the place and function of OCHA has equally been the topic of heated debates in some integrated missions. It should be added here, however, that a focus on structures may draw away attention from the fundamental issue of the blurring of lines between the political and humanitarian fields, as illustrated by research on the DRC and MONUC (see below).

### **Some Practical Views and Experiences**

As integration has taken different forms in different places, there is also a range of different experiences.

UNAMA's mission has been put firmly on the side of the transitional government in Afghanistan and its international supporters. In this respect, the UN could be viewed as being a party to the conflict, or partisan. UNAMA have gone on record as calling for an expansion of ISAF. They use the logistical assets of ISAF and call on the services of the coalition forces in their daily work. There is no OCHA and the absence of their traditional principal UN humanitarian partner was, and, is sorely felt by NGOs, given the range of complex security, access and indeed identity issues that the past two years in Afghanistan have presented the humanitarian community.

The UN mission in Liberia is an integrated mission with a range of political objectives and tasks, including overseeing a cease-fire, demobilising militias, and helping into place a functioning government. At the same time, it is also tasked with facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance and helping to establish the necessary security conditions. In this respect the humanitarian agencies are expected to work hand-in-glove with the UN forces, deploying together – assistance following troop deployment. Whilst there are obvious security concerns, this could easily be interpreted as humanitarian assistance being used as a policy instrument to achieve stability. NGOs have voiced serious concerns with regards to the full integration of humanitarian coordination under a political banner and the risks of humanitarian concerns becoming subservient to the political process.

However, the placing of political interests above humanitarian concerns is not only the result of integrated mission structures as recent research on the DRC has shown. Political interests were placed before humanitarian concerns with disastrous results even though the MONUC structure was weak and non-integrated. At the same time the existence of a "humanitarian cell" within MONUC, which is not linked to the humanitarian UN actors, creates confusion and blurs the lines between the military operations and humanitarian response.

One more positive experience seems to relate to the mission in Sierra Leone according to some NGOs. One researcher concluded: "Not only had the worst fears of the humanitarian agencies not been realised, but humanitarian action had been noticeably more independent from political interference than at any time over the previous seven years." In this mission, which has been termed as "minimalist integration," the OCHA office was kept outside the mission and located physically on the other side of Freetown. Similarly, the view is held that this mission is perceived more positively because of the personalities involved.

### **Issues for Discussion**

One of the major questions that has been raised in the NGO community relates to the possibility of having an impact on the UN system. Some of the missions have been perceived as steamrollers in terms of their planning and preparations and lack of consultations with humanitarian actors. Concerns from the humanitarian side UN and non-UN seem not to have been taken on-board. More generally, NGOs also perceive the attitude of some parts of the UN Secretariat responsible for the planning of integrated missions as not conducive for such consultations.

In this respect, there is also a concern that most of the discussion about the relationship between humanitarian actors and UN integrated missions has taken place within the UN. It is now time to recognize that decisions about integrated mission will have a much larger impact on the whole humanitarian community. The dialogue must move beyond the ECHA core group and also include the IASC as the main mechanism for bringing together the UN system and non-humanitarian agencies. The June 2004 IASC Working Group requested OCHA to consult with the IASC members on the Terms of References of the two joint studies being planned by OCHA and DPKO on integrated missions. The TORs, however, have not yet been circulated.

If there is a more inclusive debate on integrated missions, the question needs to be discussed whether these missions are a fact of life and here to stay or not. If these missions are a reality, non-UN humanitarian agencies will need to make up their mind to disengage with the UN or to push for measures that may minimise the potential harmful implications of integration.

Another question that has come up with regards to integrated missions relates to the benefits (potential gains) and the costs of these missions for humanitarian action. It should be clear, however, that such a comparative analysis will have a different outcome, depending on how the agency views integration and/or coherence. In other words, trade-offs and/or subversion of humanitarian concerns may be valued differently.

#### **Proposed Action Points by the IASC Working Group:**

- Agrees that the IASC is, for the time being, the best suitable mechanism to discuss the implications of integrated missions for humanitarian actors, given its broad and inclusive membership;
- Calls again upon OCHA to circulate the Terms of Reference of the two studies being planned by OCHA and DPKO on integrated missions to the IASC and to consult with the IASC members on these TORs.
- Calls for a study that reviews and examines the impact of integrated missions on humanitarian action, through a broad comparison of various integrated missions. This study, which will be guided by an advisory committee made up of IASC members, will be a complement to the other two studies carried out by OCHA/DPKO;