

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
56th MEETING**

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**Preparations for the 2004 ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment:
Background Note**

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Background:

The ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment held in 2003 was well received by Member States, many of whom indicated that it was the most successful segment to date. Delegations welcomed the usefulness of the Segment as it addressed real interests and common concerns of the stakeholders especially on “Good Donorship” and transition. It is therefore important to build on the success of the past year both in relation to the organization of the segment as well as for the drafting of the SG’s report for 2004.

There are two key areas that will help guide preparations for the 2004 humanitarian segment. First is the follow-up to the ECOSOC resolution 2003/5 and General Assembly Resolution 58/114 on “Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”. The second key area for discussion is the proposal for the 2004 theme for the Humanitarian Affairs Segment.

Follow-up to the Resolutions:

In addition to reporting on the theme for the humanitarian segment, the 2004 report of the Secretary-General should also provide information on the follow-up actions requested by Member States as reflected in the above-mentioned resolutions. Some of these follow-up actions have already begun to take shape.

In the area of humanitarian financing, work is underway to apply good donorship principles using Burundi as a pilot case. Issues related to humanitarian assistance definitions are also being addressed. At the inter-agency level, the IASC is working to develop common needs assessment approaches. While, transition issues are being addressed through the UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transitional Issues.

Next Steps – Theme for the 2004 Humanitarian Affairs Segment of ECOSOC:

The final decision on the theme for the humanitarian segment remains the prerogative of Member States, who are expected to begin negotiations on a theme to

be proposed by the Vice-President of the Humanitarian Affairs Segment. The Vice-President should be appointed during the first week of February. Notwithstanding, the above, proposals can be provided informally to the ECOSOC Bureau. Below are some suggestions:

- Humanitarian accountability was a theme proposed last year. The focus could be on promoting mechanisms for accountability to beneficiaries. Consideration could also be given to taking forward some elements from the Good Donorship initiative.
- Consideration could also be given to formulating a substantial theme related to natural disasters. The theme could focus on preparedness and response efforts and the opportunity could be taken to provide a critique on the existing disaster management tools (UNDAC, RDRAs etc) with a view to strengthening them.
- The option for developing a theme related to humanitarian staff security could also be useful. The focus of such a theme could revolve around ongoing inter-agency efforts to maintain humanitarian presence in acute crises situations by promoting the concept of risk management instead of risk aversion.

Proposed Joint ECOSOC Meeting on Transition:

- Both the ECOSOC Resolution and the follow-up GA Resolution 58/114 recommended the holding of a joint ECOSOC segment “ in the near future”. In this regard a joint meeting of the humanitarian and operational segments would bring together stakeholders from the humanitarian and development spheres to discuss the issue of transition. Informal consultations with some delegations indicate that some would like to see this happen sooner than later. This issue will be placed on the agenda of the ECOSOC Bureau in early February.

Proposed Action Points/Decisions by IASC-WG:

- To review and agree on the next steps for preparing for the 2004 ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment including reporting on the theme for the humanitarian segment and the 2004 report of the Secretary-General.

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