

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

**11-12 February 2004
Auditorium
WFP Headquarters, Rome**

Draft Concept Note: Humanitarian Summit, 31 March 2004

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Purpose of the Meeting

The bombing of the UN compound in Iraq on August 19 2003 and subsequent attacks on the International Committee of the Red Cross have served to emphasise that the environment in which humanitarian operations take place have changed significantly. The apparent loss of the protection provided by the symbols of humanitarian action raise a fundamental concern over the acceptance of the role and presence of humanitarian organisation in some areas of crisis. The purpose of the summit will be to define with the broader humanitarian community the key issues for common action that can enhance humanitarian access and presence.

Key Areas for Discussion:

1. Problem Definition:
 - How has the context changed for Humanitarian action and what are the main causes of change:
 - Is there a crisis of perceptions? What are the issues that need to be addressed to improve the perception of humanitarian assistance and gain stronger acceptance of humanitarian activities?
 - How have acts of terrorism and political violence affected the humanitarian operating environment? What are the implications of the loss of emblematic protection? How far have humanitarian organisations become soft targets and a proxy target for political action?
 - What is the capacity for collective response within the humanitarian community? At the operational level, do we have the appropriate framework for a collective response to gross violations of humanitarian principles when dealing with belligerents?
2. Developing a response:
 - Establishing a process for dealing with perceptions through defining the key groups that we should engage in dialogue and the basis for discussion with them.

- Defining the means by which we can increase the common ownership of humanitarian assistance through the engagement of new and non traditional partners.
- Defining the actions for changing the complexion and profile of humanitarian assistance through addressing issues of conduct and operational style
- Developing a framework for common action in response to risks and challenges to humanitarian action through identifying the mechanisms for common action that can be initiated at country level.

Proposed Structure of the meeting:

Introduction: Jan Egeland – 20 mins

Session 1: Defining the problem - 2hrs Panel Discussion

Proposed Panel Members:

Ms Thoraya Obeid UNFPA
Mr Lubbers UNHCR
Director General Iranian Red Crescent
Director General International NGO

Lunch

Session 2: Developing a response – 2hrs Panel Discussion

Mr Malloch Brown UNDP
Mr Brahimi
Representative of Southern International NGO
Mr Gnaediger – Director General ICRC

Summing up and Conclusions - Mr Egeland, Emergency Relief Coordinator