

Inter-Agency Standing Committee

**Rome, 9 April 2002
FAO Headquarters**

IASC Membership

1. Current IASC Membership

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), ensures inter-organizational cooperation and decision-making in response to complex emergencies. The IASC is comprised of the executive heads of leading agencies and NGO consortia.

At present the IASC consists of 8 full members: UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, FAO, WFP, WHO and OCHA. There are also 9 standing invitees: World Bank, ICRC, IFRC, IOM, UNHCHR, InterAction, SCHR, ICVA and the RSG on IDPs.

2. Requests to join the IASC

During the past two years, the ERC has received several requests from UN agencies seeking to join the IASC. In 2001, both ILO and UNESCO formally requested to join the IASC. ILO stated that it was mandated to promote socio-economic reintegration of groups that were affected by the emergencies that the IASC addressed. UNESCO pointed out that its recent structural and functional reforms had clarified its role with regard to armed conflict and natural disasters.

Members of the IASC were consulted by the ERC regarding ILO and UNESCO's requests. The responses varied. While some agencies supported the admission of ILO and UNESCO, others expressed concern that the IASC's membership was growing too large to be properly managed. They pointed out that the IASC was in danger of turning into an information-sharing forum, rather than one focusing on operational matters. Some felt that adding non-operational agencies would weaken the effectiveness of the IASC. The IASC did not reach a common position on this issue.

3. IASC Membership Criteria

These requests to join the IASC underline the need to have a coherent set of criteria on membership and on standing invitations. General Assembly Resolution 46/182, which led to the creation of the IASC, states: "*an Inter-Agency Standing Committee...should be established under the chairmanship of the high-level official with the participation of all operational organisations ...*"

In November 2001, the IASC Working Group discussed the issue of IASC membership, with the aim to agree on a mechanism and criteria to determine requests for IASC membership. Agencies suggested that prospective members should have a proven track record of operational capacity, and, further, should also have contributed to the work of IASC subsidiary bodies on an ad hoc basis before their membership request would be considered.

4. Comment and Actions

It is suggested that the IASC Plenary endorse the recommendation of the Working Group that prospective members be invited to participate in IASC subsidiary bodies on an ad hoc basis as a first step to determining whether or not they should join the IASC. The operational nature of the requesting agency should also be a factor in determining its membership.

If this recommendation were endorsed, ILO and UNESCO would be invited to participate in the IASC subsidiary bodies on an ad hoc basis in the coming months, and their request for membership would be reviewed at a later date.