INTER–AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
***Ad Hoc* PRINCIPALS' MEETING**
"Strengthening Humanitarian Response"

12 September 2005

10h00 – 13h00 (Rafael Salas Conference Room, 19th Floor), followed by

13h00-15h00 Principals only luncheon (Nafis Sadik Conference Room, 19th Floor)

Venue: UNFPA Headquarters, New York

DRAFT STATEMENT BY IASC PRINCIPALS
submitted by the 62nd IASC Working Group

Circulated: 8 September 2005

This document reflects recommendations from the 62nd IASC Working Group. They are presented as a draft statement to be made by IASC Principals in the context of the Humanitarian Response Review and the Intergovernmental Discussion on Reforms of the UN Humanitarian System. The statement reflects - primarily - commitments that Working Group members would like to be made by UN agency heads: it is fully supported by Working Group members from other organizations represented in the IASC. All recognize that if these arrangements are taken forward as intended, they will substantially improve the humanitarian contribution of all constituencies within the IASC membership

1. **Effective humanitarian response is our common goal.** Despite progress to date, this response is falling short in some circumstances of meeting the needs of all the people and communities affected by crises.

2. **We have carefully considered the current situation** and proposed specific actions to improve the predictability, timeliness and effectiveness of a comprehensive response to humanitarian crises while also contributing to the foundation for recovery. The focus of these actions will be to strengthen leadership and accountability in key sectors of humanitarian response. We will also endeavour to support the process recommended by the IASC Working Group to address the following key dimensions of humanitarian reform, as stated in the attached Annex:

   ➤ **Ensuring Linkages between Humanitarian Reform and the Broader UN Reform Process**
   ➤ **More predictable Funding for Humanitarian Action:**
   ➤ **Capacity building of emergency response at regional and national level**
   ➤ **Deployment of qualified humanitarian personnel**
   ➤ **Benchmarking for collective standards and indicators**
   ➤ **Safeguarding Humanitarian Space and Multi-dimensional Peace-building Missions**
   ➤ **Improving the Humanitarian Coordinator System**

3. **We will take measures to enhance the response** for all affected populations, including IDPs, in sectors where critical gaps have been identified, in both complex emergencies and natural disasters. We will strengthen existing collaborative approaches with a system of enhanced accountability.

4. **In considering the recommendations of the HRR and other reviews and reform initiatives,** we identified the critical sectors as protection, emergency shelter, camp coordination/management, water and sanitation, nutrition and feeding, health, logistics, telecommunications and early recovery. We will establish clusters for these areas: they include clusters that are primarily concerned with service provision (e.g. telecommunications and logistics), with provision of relief and assistance to beneficiaries (e.g. nutrition and feeding, water and sanitation, camp coordination/management, emergency shelter and health) and those that cover a broad range of cross cutting issues (such as protection and early recovery). Other areas important to effective humanitarian action have been identified. WFP leads for food aid but cluster arrangements may be needed for education. Similarly, the initiative is not aimed at refugee situations, where UNHCR has a specific mandate.

5. **Following a series of working group processes**, we have decided to designate a lead for each of the clusters where systemic and critical gaps have been identified. The cluster lead will be accountable for ensuring preparedness and response that is both adequate and predictable. It will work with relevant actors and agencies with expertise and capacities in that area. At the field level, the clusters provide support to the Humanitarian Coordinators who are able to call upon cluster leads for support as required. The cluster lead will not carry out all of the activities itself, but will be responsible for ensuring that these activities are carried out and will act as the provider of last resort.

6. **We want to be sure** that this process adds value for the beneficiaries of humanitarian action. It is primarily designed to enhance humanitarian co-operation, and underpin an improved, collective, response to new crises: it should also improve response in current major emergencies. It is not intended to undermine existing arrangements when they are effective. Both the process - and its benefits - will be reviewed after two years

7. **We designate the following cluster leads:**

    - ➢ **Nutrition and Feeding:**   **UNICEF**
    - ➢ **Water and Sanitation:**   **UNICEF**
    - ➢ **Health:**   **WHO**
    - ➢ **Camp Coordination and Management:**   **UNHCR** (For conflict-generated IDPs)
    - ➢ **Emergency Shelter:**   **UNHCR** (ditto)
    - ➢ **Protection:**   **UNHCR** (ditto)
    - ➢ **Logistics:**   **WFP**
    - ➢ **Telecoms:**   **OCHA** for overall Process Owner
                                                      UNICEF for common data services
                                                      WFP for common security telecommunications service
    - ➢ **Early Recovery:**   **UNDP**

8. **No cluster lead** has been proposed for camp coordination/management, protection and emergency shelter for persons affected by natural disasters. Further consideration is being given to camp co-ordination/management and emergency shelter in these settings by IOM and IFRC. The protection cluster will also consider the needs of civilians in complex situations who are not displaced, within the context of the discussion on the broader dimensions of protection.

9. **The cluster lead, at the global level,** will take all necessary actions to ensure adequate and effective responses to new crises, as well as to certain current crises (including essential support for local and national risk assessment, vulnerability reduction and preparedness).

10. **The cluster lead** is responsible for (a) taking forward capacity assessments and developing capacity within the cluster, (b) securing and following up on commitments to contribute to these functions, and (c) sustaining mechanisms through which the cluster as a whole can deliver on its overall commitments, and the contribution of individual entities within it.

11. **Functions at global level** include up to date assessments of the overall needs for human, financial and institutional capacity in the cluster area, and in linkages with other cluster areas - including preparedness measures and long term planning, standards and best practices, advocacy and resource mobilization; reviews of currently available capacities and means for their utilization; taking action to ensure that vitally needed capacities and mechanisms (including rosters for surge capacity) are put in place (through training and system development) at local, national, regional and international levels as appropriate, with the use of existing resources where possible.

12. **The cluster lead, at the country level,** will take all necessary actions to ensure fulfilment of commonly accepted standards for timely, adequate and effective humanitarian action that achieves the required impact in relation to the specific cluster area. This must be done in ways that ensure the complementarities of the various stakeholders' actions, strengthen the involvement of national and local institutions, and make the best use of available resources for adequate and effective results - in ways that are well co-ordinated, do no harm and are complementary.

13. **These obligations** imply that the cluster lead would be responsible for (a) predictable action within the cluster for analysis of needs, addressing priorities and identifying gaps in the cluster area, (b) securing and following up on commitments from the cluster to contribute to responding to needs and filling the gaps, (c) sustaining mechanisms through which the cluster as a whole, and individual participants, both assesses its performance and delivers effectively.

14. **The cluster lead** ensures that needs assessments and responses are based on participatory and community based approaches which integrate cross cutting issues (such as human rights; gender, age and diversity; and HIV/AIDS), ensuring synergies and effective links with other clusters, risk reduction, monitoring and adjustment of the response, and acting as the provider of last resort.

15. **Overall commitments:** Cluster leads should commit to fulfil their functions in a way that contributes to the overall effectiveness of the cluster, and is additional to their work as humanitarian agencies. Participants within each cluster are encouraged to work collectively - building the operational capacity for the functions agreed within each cluster.

16. **Accountability:** Participants working within each cluster area have obligations to each other relating to the fulfilment of their commitments. In addition, the cluster leads also have mutual obligations, and are accountable to humanitarian co-ordinators (at country level), and globally to the ERC - in his or her capacity as chair of the IASC.

17. **IASC members will now prepare to implement this approach at the global level during 2006, beginning with two or three major new emergencies with up to 500,000 beneficiaries each**. All necessary actions to ensure delivery through this cluster approach should be in place, using a phased approach, within the next two years.

18. **The clusters will move forward at varying speeds:** all acting at a global level, but needing an initial focus on implementation in a limited number of countries. We propose that in 2006, IASC members work with Humanitarian Coordinators to map key ongoing emergencies, identify gaps in the response, and then agree to address the gaps with the most serious consequences.

19. While the need to make the most effective use of existing resources within all our organizations is essential, **clusters leads have recognized the need for varying levels of additional human and financial resources to fulfil their clusters' obligations.**

20. The focus of these efforts will be on delivery at the field level and on ensuring global preparedness. The **involvement of organisations active in field settings** is critical for the further development of these arrangements. We will encourage ownership of the process at the field level, with adoption at both global and country levels. At all levels, the decision to apply cluster lead arrangements should enable more effective participation of all actors, while respecting their individual mandates and programme priorities.

21. **Clusters leads will undertake the following priority actions**, between September and December 2005:

    * Decide how the cluster will substantially improve the humanitarian response within the sector for new emergencies
    * Complete assessment of capacities and gaps in the sector
    * Carry out specific capacity mapping and response planning in consultation with the Humanitarian Coordinators to improve response in a selected number of existing emergencies
    * Improve non-UN actor involvement in the process, building on regional/national capacities
    * Ensure integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender, age and diversity; HIV/AIDS; human rights
    * Undertake coordinated response planning and preparedness measures, build links between clusters and prevent duplication with other structures
    * Prioritize actionable recommendations for 2006 implementation
    * Develop recommendations on outstanding cluster specific issues, such as the broader protection framework
    * Develop a plan for a phased introduction
    * Prepare cluster-specific resource requirements

    IASC members are asked to give active support to the leads in the above tasks.

22. To ensure that this initiative adds value, **all stakeholders** must be involved in its implementation. Critical among these are the Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators. We will issue a **single message** on the aims and expected benefits of this initiative, situating it in the context of the broad range of ongoing UN reform. The IASC's advocacy and outreach strategy will engage member states constructively and be supported by measurable progress in the field. Recognising the different governance structures of IASC members and the differing implications of this initiative for those organisations, we will engage in mutually supportive efforts to convey the common message. The Emergency Relief Coordinator has a key role to play in advocacy.

ANNEX TO THE DRAFT STATEMENT BY IASC PRINCIPALS

PROCESS RECOMMENDED BY THE IASC WORKING GROUP TO ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING KEY DIMENSIONS OF HUMANITARIAN REFORM

1. **Ensuring Linkages between Humanitarian Reform and the Broader UN Reform Process:** Recognising the importance of the current reform process, the IASC Working Group was concerned about its status and progress to date and recognized therefore that most of the reform issues would be negotiated in the General Assembly following the Summit. Humanitarian reform may be influenced by the GA Resolution on Humanitarian issues scheduled for discussion in mid-November. Agreement is still to be reached as to whether there will be a separate resolution on the upgraded CERF.

   Action Point: The IASC WG therefore recommended that there should be an IASC Consultative process to support the drafting process of these resolutions. OCHA to facilitate the IASC input.

2. **More Predictable Funding for Humanitarian Action:** There was consensus within the IASC Working Group that there are major financial implications for all elements of the humanitarian community in developing a more predictable response capacity. It was further agreed that it would be impossible to reform and adequately improve response capacity within existing resources.

   The IASC Working Group recommended that there should be an overall paper outlining the financial implications for implementing the cluster lead system. This paper would be provided to donors to assist in resource mobilization for individual agency and cluster needs that could not be covered through existing resources. The IASC Working Group further recognized that a common paper should only be developed after the various clusters had better identified the actions and their financial costs that would lead to an improved response.

   Action Point: The IASC Working Group therefore proposed that a joint position paper should be prepared and be made be available for the IASC Principals December 2005 meeting.

3. **Capacity Building of Emergency Response at Regional and National Level:** The IASC Working Group agrees that an informal consultative group of all concerned IASC members that would be led by the IFRC would prepare a paper which would include an action plan for the IASC, clusters, and other relevant fora to identify measures needed to strengthen of local, national and regional capacities for humanitarian response.

   Action Point: Paper to be presented to the 63rd IASC Working Group meeting in November 2005.

4. **Deployment of Qualified Humanitarian Personnel**: A key challenge facing the ability of humanitarian agencies to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies is the lack of qualified and experienced humanitarian personnel, particularly at a senior level who can be deployed for a significant period of time.

   Action Point: The IASC should look into ways of sharing experiences and exploring options so that the pool of qualified personnel can be enhanced and expanded to better enable humanitarian agencies – at the local, national, and regional levels – to respond to crises. Additionally, models of deployment could be explored so as to also contribute to an enhanced and timely response.

5. **Benchmarking for Collective Standards and Indicators:**   Much has been accomplished in recent years to equip the humanitarian community with benchmarks, such as the Sphere Minimum Standards and SMART, which contribute to an operational framework for good practices and accountability in different spheres of activity. However, the IASC Working Group identified various weaknesses, particularly in terms of ability to measure overall performance and outcomes as well as preparedness, planning and process benchmarking.

In this connection, the IASC Working Group takes note of the GHD-related initiative on benchmarks.

Action Point: The IASC Working Group encourages the participation in the consultative process on the global benchmarking exercise, including the WHO November meeting and agrees to review the draft products at the next appropriate IASC Working Group meeting (when drafts are available for review and consideration).

6. **Safeguarding Humanitarian Space and Multi-dimensional Peace-building Missions:** A core challenge confronting humanitarian actors in conflict settings and, to a lesser extent in slow- and sudden-onset disasters, is their ability to safeguard humanitarian space. Different environments present diverse challenges and opportunities to humanitarian actors to meet their objectives in a principled, timely, and effective manner. The issue of humanitarian space, including attitudes to, and degree of association with UN-led peace-building missions, has arisen on numerous occasions within the IASC given concerns about an agreed IASC policy position and the implications of this in peace-building environments.

The Working Group re-affirmed that safeguarding humanitarian space is of critical importance to the IASC and effective humanitarian action and is conscious that that the humanitarian reform agenda is dependent on the full participation of IASC non-UN members.

Action Point: The IASC Working Group thus proposes that the IASC Principals agrees to establish a mechanism for regular dialogue on issues of mutual concern amongst the IASC and for the IASC to act as an interlocutor with other key UN entities.

7. **Improving the HC System:** The IASC Working Group stressed the importance of ensuring a good preparation for the IASC Principals December meeting, where the issue of Humanitarian Coordinators (selection, appointment, training) will be discussed. The expected outcome of the IASC Principals meeting will be: system of selection to be improved, with clear understanding of function and position (IASC function); criteria and decision making process to be clarified, with clearer and more efficient consultative process for the recruitment and appointment of Humanitarian Coordinators.

Action Points: Actionable recommendations prior to the December IASC Principals meeting:
- Organization of a meeting by the IASC Secretariat dedicated to better understanding the process (IASC agencies, IAAP experts). End of Sept-mid October 2005.
- ICVA paper as a background document for the November IASC WG and the December IASC Principals.
- OCHA to provide a paper to the November IASC WG on progress to-date and proposals for next steps following consultation with the IASC.