

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP  
50th MEETING**

**18-19 September 2002**

**Conference Room 9, United Nations Headquarters New York**

**IASC Task Force on Sexual Exploitation:  
Update on IASC Plan of Action on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in  
Humanitarian Crisis**

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1. The Plan of Action on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises established the six core principles to be incorporated into the codes of conduct and staff rules and regulations of member organisations.<sup>1</sup> The Task Force has formally submitted the Plan of Action to OLA for their review and the Co-Chairs have held a number of substantive discussions with their Legal Officers. OLA has recently advised that these principles fall within the existing United Nations Code of Conduct and Staff Rules and Regulations and will not necessitate a formal change to these Rules and Regulations.

2. However, in order to ensure that staff is fully aware of these particular obligations, OLA has proposed that a Secretary-General's Bulletin be issued to further clarify the obligations of staff in this regard. A draft is currently being finalized and should be ready for presentation to the Secretary-General's office by mid-September.

3. These principles will then represent the minimum standards of behavior for United Nations staff members. It is expected that the Bulletin will also encourage their incorporation into contracts with operational partners. Each agency is free to develop their own internal codes of conduct establishing higher standards for their organisation. In addition, humanitarian agencies outside the United Nations system are engaged in similar efforts to adopt or revise their own codes of conduct.

4. During the recent Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Economic and Social Council, Member States welcomed the actions taken by the IASC to address this issue and requested a further report on the topic at next year's Segment. In particular, donors and other Member States have expressed general agreement with the core principles for codes of conduct. The United

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- <sup>1</sup> Sexual exploitation constitutes gross misconduct and is grounds for dismissal;
  - Sexual activity with persons under 18 is prohibited;
  - Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex is prohibited;
  - Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged;
  - There is an obligation to report concerns about possible abuses by co-workers;
  - An environment, which prevents sexual exploitation, must be created, and managers have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems, which maintain this environment

States Government has already indicated its commitment to incorporating the core principles into their own agreements with operational partners as is encouraged by the Plan of Action.

5. The Task Force is continuing to work with OHRM regarding the appropriate disciplinary procedures to be followed in the event of breach of these principles. In most cases, existing procedures can be adapted to address these kinds of transgressions. Once these are clarified, they will also be widely disseminated to staff. These efforts are being complemented by developing clear reporting lines for staff when exploitation and abuse occur and establishing appropriate mechanisms for recourse by beneficiaries.

6. The Task Force is also currently finalizing the Terms of Reference for the field missions foreseen by the Plan of Action, the first of which will most probably be to West Africa to share information and experiences and determine to what extent the models already developed there may be applied in other country situations.

7. It is expected that the report of the OIOS investigation into the allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation emerging from West Africa will be presented to the General Assembly in the coming weeks. The Task Force has revitalized its Communications Sub-Group in order to prepare a common media strategy to deal with the media interest in the issue that is likely to arise from the release of the report.

**Proposed action/decision taken by the IASC WG:**

- Endorsement of the work of the Task Force to date and proposed next steps
- Guidance on the key issues of designating responsibility and accountability and monitoring and evaluating agreed actions.