

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP  
50<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

**18-19 September 2002**

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

**Revision of the Terms of Reference of Humanitarian Coordinator:  
Summary record of the preliminary meetings of the inter-agency group  
overseeing the revision of the Terms of Reference for the  
Humanitarian Coordinator**

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## **1) Introduction**

The inter-agency group, composed of representatives from ICVA, OCHA, SCHR, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP and with the participation of the IASC Secretariat, convened in Geneva on 29 August and 3 September 2002 for a first round of discussion concerning the revision of the ToR for the HC.

The discussion was held on the basis of the issue paper presented to the IASC WG in July 2002 and was aimed at identifying the major areas where the existing ToR should be revised to reflect recent developments in humanitarian policy.

Several of these areas were identified and are briefly outlined below. During the discussion, a number of unresolved issues emerged that had implications for the process of revising the ToR for the HC for which the attention of and action by the IASC is required. They are listed in the final part of this document.

## **2) The way ahead**

Based on the guidance provided by the inter-agency group, and on any additional comments provided during the IASC WG meeting of 18-19 September, the independent consultant tasked with facilitating this process will start drafting language for the revised ToR (rToR). An early draft should be ready by early October and will be submitted to agencies for comments. The process of revision of the document will be carried out mainly through a Web-based discussion board, until an advanced draft is ready. The advanced draft will be discussed in a meeting of the inter-agency group before a final draft is presented to the IASC WG meeting in November.

## **3) Issues**

### **3.1) Joint Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator functions**

Participants in the meeting concurred that the merging of the two functions may occasionally give rise to problems, but agreed that no mention should be made in the revised ToR (rToR) as such. Instead, it was agreed that specific potential problems should be addressed one by one under the various headings of the rToR.

It was also agreed that, in the introduction to the rToR, recommendations should be made concerning the mechanisms for the selection and appointment of the Humanitarian Coordinators. The introduction should also contain an outline of the possible scenarios in which Humanitarian Coordinators are likely to work (separate HC, joint RC/HC, regional HC, deputy-SRSG for humanitarian affairs, etceteras).

### **3.2) “Field IASC”**

The concept that the humanitarian community active in response to complex emergencies and natural disasters is larger than the UNDMT, and that therefore any coordination arrangements should include all the relevant actors, was strongly maintained by the participants. A number of points require further discussion:

- The definition of “field IASC” is appropriate but perhaps not indicative of the fact that other actors, such as bilaterals and possibly the government should be involved.
- It must be borne in mind that participation in coordination mechanisms is voluntary. The IASC field humanitarian community forum being anticipated is therefore a “coalition of the willing”, and decisions are taken by consensus.
- The HC should therefore be responsible for creating this “willingness”, for building commitment and for reaching out to operational agencies to ensure that coordination arrangements are appropriately inclusive. Criteria for participation should be defined so that the HC is guided in his/her reach out efforts.

### **3.3) Protection**

The issue of whether or not the HC should be given a role in the coordination – in the context described above – of the protection activities of the various agencies was the subject of considerable debate.

It was finally agreed that the HC should indeed facilitate the coordination among agencies of protection activities, aimed at avoiding gaps and overlapping, but that the rToR should be very carefully formulated on this specific point in order not to infringe on existing mandates of the various agencies.

It was also agreed that protection issues would also be mentioned in the Advocacy, Good Practices and Humanitarian Accountability sections of the rToR.

### **3.4) IDP**

Participants agreed that the substance of the IASC Policy on protection /assistance to IDP should be incorporated in the rToR. Whether this should be the subject of a separate heading, or should come under Humanitarian Accountability remains to be discussed.

### **3.5) Humanitarian Accountability**

The idea of “grouping” a number of provisions of the rToR concerning cross-sectoral issues under a broad heading of Humanitarian Accountability was proposed during the meeting and was endorsed by the participants.

Under this heading provisions should be grouped that deal with policy issues, particularly those for which norms and standards already exist (e.g. gender, sexual exploitation, minimum standards, codes of conduct, etceteras.).

The HC should be given the responsibility of advocating for and promoting these policies and standards, ensuring that they are applied and reporting on progress and non-compliance.

### **3.6) Advocacy**

The HC speaks on behalf of the victims and of the humanitarian community not only in his/her dealings with the host Government and, as required, with the parties to a conflict, as well as with policy makers, donors and with the public domain at large. The HC’s responsibility of engaging in advocacy activities, through a variety of channels not limited to local and international media, should be specified in the revised rTOR.

### **3.7) CAP**

The rToR should reconfirm and strengthen the leadership role of the HC in the process of formulating a Common Humanitarian Action Plan and in preparing the inputs for the Consolidated Appeal document. The HC should also be given responsibility for clearly identifying priorities for funding and for contributing to the mobilisation of resources.

### **3.8) Information management**

It was agreed that collecting and disseminating timely, accurate, detailed, reliable and up-to-date information on the humanitarian situation and on the relief efforts is one of the most (possibly *the* most) crucial activities that could lead to better coordination among such diverse partners as those forming the humanitarian community. The HC’s responsibility of discharging this function efficiently and effectively should therefore be mentioned in the revised TOR. The revised TOR could also outline what kind of support the HC should be able to count upon, mainly but not exclusively from OCHA, to fulfil this task.

### **3.9) Common services**

The responsibilities of the HC vis-à-vis the provision of common services such as logistics (typically WFP’s Joint Logistics Coordination Unit), telecommunication or security should be mentioned in the rToR.

#### 4) Outstanding issues

As mentioned earlier, it was agreed that, in the margins of the process of revising the ToR for the HC, a number of outstanding issues emerged during the discussion that should be gathered and flagged for future IASC attention.

- Definition of “leadership” and “coordination”. Although in the “trade” of humanitarian coordination the meaning of the two terms is unequivocal (both refer to coordination by facilitation/consensus and have no executive connotation whatsoever), it is evident that within the humanitarian community a measure of misunderstanding still exists. The IASC could consider revisiting the issue, and issuing formal guidance on the subject.
- OCHA Field Offices. It was mentioned that the definition of “OCHA Country Office” is improper, and that there is some confusion in the definition (and, possibly, Terms of Reference) for the OCHA offices in the field. It was suggested that the nomenclature should be unified (possibly adopting “Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator”) and strictly adhered to. OCHA expressed its point of view.
- Although it was decided not to make specific mention to the problems possibly arising from the merging of the RC and HC functions in the rToR for the HC, the meeting agreed that a number of issues related to this subject remain unresolved and recommended that the IASC should continue the discussion on the subject.
- It was recommended that the processes of revision of the ToR for the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, which are being carried out in parallel, should “cross fertilise”. In particular, during the discussion, a number of issues emerged that stem from the humanitarian and post-emergency environment that have a significant bearing on the work of the Resident Coordinator (e.g.: demining, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, transitional issues). It was recommended that UNDG closely consult with the IASC to make sure that the views of the “humanitarians” are taken into account in drafting the rToR for the RC.
- It post-emergency situations, the possible role of the RC vis-à-vis a “modified UNDAF” should be analysed in light of the role assigned to HC vis-à-vis the CAP.

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

- The IASC WG is invited to provide additional inputs on the outstanding issues
- To endorse the proposed way forward.