

**INTER – AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE – WORKING GROUP
48th MEETING**

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at

**WFP Headquarters, Rome
Green Tower, Room 6G19**

United Nations Joint Logistics Centre: Background Note

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Summary

On 16 February 2001, the IASC- WG endorsed the concept of officially creating an inter-agency capacity for establishing a United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) at the onset of any large-scale emergency. The IASC-WG designated WFP as the pilot agency for developing the project, given its strong track record in supporting inter-agency logistics activities.

The endorsed concept stipulates that the decision to activate a UNJLC will be taken among participating agencies. The UNJLC will be situated in the crisis region within the operational structure of the Humanitarian Coordinator or the relevant Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA) and logistics support will be in accordance with the priorities established by the Crisis Management Authorities. Depending on the environment and type of emergency, the UNJLC structure will be modularly adapted and staffing will consist of logistics and data management experts of UN Agencies, other humanitarian organisations, donors and, in the case of military involvement, CIMIC trained officers.

While the concept provides a generic framework for activating and operating the UNJLC, it was necessary to develop a Field Operations Manual (FOM) with operational guidelines for the UNJLC staff officers. The first draft FOM was presented to inter-agency logistics experts during a Workshop in Brindisi on 02 September 2001. The workshop recommended the organisation of training sessions for familiarising logistics experts with the Field Operations Manual and agreed with the acquisition a flyaway kit with the necessary tools for rapid deployment.

Following the 11 September disaster and escalation of the Afghanistan regional crisis, UN agencies decided to activate a UNJLC. This decision delayed the organisation of training sessions, which were planned in October and November 2001. Moreover, since at that stage the planned acquisition of the flyaway kit had not been processed, all office and supporting equipment had to be procured, which caused considerable delays in the UNJLC deployment

Experiences and Lessons Learned

Over the past two years, joint logistics centres have been activated in Mozambique (Maputo), East Timor, India (Bhuj) and Afghanistan. The operations occurred in different emergency environments but they all highlighted the importance of a number of essential criteria.

- Particularly in Sudden Onset Disasters, the decision to deploy should be taken immediately after the onset of the emergency. Late deployments undermine the credibility of the concept and complicate the integration of the UNJLC in the Local Emergency Management System.

- The UNJLC was lacking the necessary tools to deploy. The operational efficiency in the early stages of an emergency will highly depend on the available communications and equipment. Such equipment should be readily available at the start of the activation phase.
- The UNJLC could not recruit appropriate expertise at the early stage of the activation process. Agencies should be prepared to support the activities by reacting quickly and providing trained experts in both logistics and data management.
- The UNJLC experienced difficulties with administrative procedures. The UNJLC needs the full support of a dedicated administrative system. Procedures should be developed to recruit experts and acquire the necessary equipment without delay.
- The local humanitarian authorities were not fully aware of the existence of the concept. The UNJLC has to be perceived and acknowledged as the UN humanitarian logistics coordination body. Field representatives, regional humanitarian authorities, IOs, NGOs, national authorities, donors and other humanitarian actors should be informed on the existence of the concept.

Recommended Future Actions

Drawing on the lessons learned of past experiences, it is now appropriate to take a number of actions to fully consolidate the UNJLC concept as an ongoing inter-agency mechanism for logistics coordination. These actions should include:

- Revise the draft Field Operations Manual (FOM) to include activities and procedures applied in the most recent emergencies.
- Draft guidelines on actions required for deciding on UNJLC deployment immediately after the onset of a large-scale emergency.
- Take the necessary actions for acquiring a flyaway kit for supporting UNJLC deployments in an austere environment. Agree on storage and maintenance procedures.
- Organise at least two training sessions for logistics and data management experts of Agencies, other humanitarian organisations and donors.
- Participate in exercises and include UNJLC briefings in CIMIC courses.
- Promote the UNJLC Concept to those authorities that may have responsibilities during humanitarian emergencies.

Proposed Outcome

Agreement by the IASC on full consolidation of the UNJLC concept and on endorsement of the action items stipulated above.