

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WORKING GROUP XVIIITH MEETING
8 May 1995, IOM, Geneva**

SIERRA LEONE

Agenda Item No. 3(a)

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I BACKGROUND

- 1.0 The crisis in Sierra Leone remains serious. Clashes between the army and rebel forces continue. As recently as 1 May, fighting was reported to have broken out in the Waterloo district - only 25 miles from Freetown. Against this background of sporadic fighting and heightened insecurity, the Government has taken steps to encourage political dialogue, only to be rejected or ignored by the rebels.
- 1.2 Suffering is widespread. Large numbers of innocent civilians in rural provinces have been displaced. Where populations have concentrated, infrastructure is badly overburdened. While no credible census has been carried out, current estimates are that 1.5 - 2 million Sierra Leoneans have been internally displaced. Between 700,000 and 800,000 internally displaced persons are now in Freetown, which remains essentially cut-off from the rest of the country.
- 1.3 At its meeting of 24 March, the IASC reached agreement on the fact that this situation reflected all the elements of a complex emergency. In this context and at that same meeting, UNDP indicated its intention to dispatch an emergency information officer to support the UN Resident Coordinator's office in Freetown. Subsequently, and at the direction of the IASC, the IASC-WG decided that a consolidated appeal was required to meet additional unmet needs of accessible populations. The appeal included a request for resources required to establish mechanisms required for a sustained and coordinated response to the crisis.

II OBSERVATIONS

- 2.1 The question of sufficiently strengthening the office of the Resident Coordinator to carry out coordination activities remains a preoccupation. UNDP has therefore undertaken an evaluation of the capacity of the office of the Resident Coordinator

to respond to the situation. Resultant proposals include an appropriate re-orientation of the work of the office; and increase in its staff strength; and an improvement in emergency information management techniques. The outcome of ongoing consultations between UNDP and DHA on this subject will be shared with the IASC shortly. At such time consideration will be given to any additional actions that may be required.

III RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The IASC-WG may wish to:

(i) Monitor the implementation of the proposals mentioned above.

(ii) Recommend that the ERC request that the UN Resident Coordinator develop, in full collaboration with the in-country disaster management team, a contingency plan to be implemented in the event that operations in the western area are impeded.