

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

INFORMATION NOTE

from the UN Task Force on the Use of Military and Civil Defence (M/CD) Assets in Support of Humanitarian Operations

I BACKGROUND

1.1 In April 1994, the IASC approved a paper on the protection of Humanitarian Mandates in Conflict Situations. That paper makes reference to the role of the military in support of humanitarian operations

1.2 On 30 November 1994, the IASC-WG discussed further how best to ensure the most effective use of civilian and military assets in support of humanitarian operations, drawing on a paper prepared by DHA which set out a number of operational issues which needed to be addressed. The Working Group agreed that a paper should be put before the next IASC meeting.

1.3 At the 9 December 1994 IASC meeting the IASC WG was requested to take the matter forward and report back to the IASC on a common framework for the use of military and civil defence assets in support of all humanitarian operations. The IASC, taking into account inter alia the opinions expressed by the HLWG meeting of 21 November 1994 on this subject, noted the work of UNHCR on Service Packages for refugee emergencies and the MCDA project.

1.4 On 15 February 1995, an Inter-Agency consultation of the members of the IASC-WG proposed that DHA convene a working group to undertake the task of establishing the framework. A common strategy and approach was also agreed for the 27-28 February 1995 DHA-MCDA Round Table on Military Support for Humanitarian Operations. Participants at the Round Table emphasised the need for the UN system to streamline relative concepts and procedures, and supported the establishment of a UN Task Force on that subject, in line with the recommendations of the IASC.

1.5 ON 3 April 1995 UNHCR presented its concept paper on Service Packages, prepared at the request of its Executive Committee, to a meeting of governments,

intergovernmental agencies and NGO's. Many member states reiterated their support for the Task Force.

II THE TASK FORCE

2.1 The Task Force (TF), chaired by DHA, is composed of operational agencies of the UN system: UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, WFP and DPKO. It draws on the experience of other humanitarian partners and relevant institutions.

2.2 The TF works under the aegis of the IASC, reports to the IASC-WG through information notes and discussion papers as appropriate. It is expected to be in a position to present its conclusions to the WG and the IASC for approval by July 1995.

2.3 The TF focuses its efforts on the overall concept of using M/CD assets in support of humanitarian operations. Security issues and peace-keeping operations are not included in its work.

2.4 Objective of the TF is to increase the effectiveness in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in emergency situations not covered by existing arrangements on the use of military and civilian assets (e.g. UNHCR Service Packages for refugee crisis and DHA-MCDA Project for peace-time emergencies, notably natural, technological and environmental disasters). To that end, the TF will develop a common framework and Standard Operating Procedures, including a management system, for the use of these resources. The TF will also identify and assess existing assets, resource requirements, gaps and therefore strategies to meet shortfalls. As part of its work, the TF will cover all emergency phases from contingency planning to phasing out of any assets mobilized and/or deployed.

III TF ACTION PLAN AND SCHEDULE

3.1 Responsibilities of the TF include:

- (i) Elaboration of Guiding and Operating Principles (UNHCR by 15.05.95);
- (ii) Review of current use of M/CD assets by humanitarian organizations, including impact of the use of these assets on the operations of the agencies (TF members by 31.05.95);
- (iii) Review of requirements, resources, Gaps and identification of ways of meeting shortfalls (TF members by 31.05.95);

(iv) Elaboration of coordination principles and framework SOPs (DHA, June 1995)

3.2 The coordination and preparation of the various issues are shared among the members who organize working sessions with other participants, as well as agencies and institutions outside the TF as required.

3.3 The TF met for the first time on 29 March 1995. On that occasion the group reviewed and agreed upon proposed Terms of Reference, Tasks and Deadlines. The meeting was preceded by a preliminary, view-sharing discussion which took place on 13 March 1995.

3.4 On 28 April, at the request of some participants, DHA provided the TF with a presentation on Project DPR 213/3 MCDA on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief.

3.5 The TF will meet again on 18 May 1995 to review achievements to-date and discuss possible models of M/CD management system.