

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
29 March 1996

**FOLLOW-UP TO ECOSOC RESOLUTION 1995/56 ENTITLED "STRENGTHENING OF THE
COORDINATION OF EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED
NATIONS"**

BACKGROUND

The 1995 session of the Economic and Social Council adopted Resolution 1995/56 on The Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations.

The resolution noted *the differences and limitations in the capacity of agencies organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system to address effectively and in a comprehensive and coordinated manner the need for preparedness and humanitarian response as well as prevention, rehabilitation recovery and development in accordance with their mandates.* and recognised *the need to review and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance.*

Inter-Agency discussions on achieving a co-ordinated follow-up to the resolution led to the proposal to establish an Inter-Agency Task Force. This proposal was endorsed at the meeting of the IASC on 30 October 1995. Full meetings of the Task Force have been held on 12 December 1995 and 9 February 1996 and an informal session of members of the major operational agencies of the UN system met on 15 January 1996. Deliberations during these sessions focused on developing a coordinated process for responding to the requirements of the resolution as outlined below:

REQUIREMENTS OF RESOLUTION 1995/56

I. Para 2b

To urge the governing bodies of relevant organizations of the United Nations system to review, during the period from 1995 - 1997, issues concerning the role and operational responsibilities, as well as the operative and financial capacities, of their respective organizations to respond, within their mandates, in the context of broad and comprehensive humanitarian programmes, bearing in mind section VII of the annex to

General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the indicative list of issues contained in the annex to the present resolution.

Progress

In responding to the above requirements the Task Force:

- i. Addressed the differences and limitations in the capacity of agencies bearing in mind the indicative list of issues.

A review of the indicative list of issues was undertaken and the TF concluded that the principle systemic differences and limitations in capacity were to be found in the following substantive areas:

1. Coordination
2. Resource mobilisation
3. Human resources development and staff security
4. Evaluation
5. Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
6. Internally Displaced Persons
7. Strengthening capacity and local coping mechanisms

At the request of the Task Force DHA prepared background papers outlining the key problems to be addressed. These papers were reviewed and members concluded that while generic policy and strategic issues would continue to be debated in the Task Force forum, the task of resolving gaps and inconsistencies at the operational level should be delegated to a series of informal consultations to be convened by DHA with member agencies.

The proposals emanating from these consultations would be submitted to the IASC/IASC-WG as appropriate for decision. The Task Force would be kept informed of progress. A schedule outlining the workplans for these consultations and the timeframe is being coordinated by DHA bearing in mind the workplan of the IASC and its Working Group for the biennium 1996-97.

- ii. Agency Dialogue with Governing Bodies.

The Task Force agreed to the common format proposed by DHA for reporting to DHA on this item. A status report on the dialogue between agencies and their governing bodies is attached to this note as Annex II.

The Chair of the Task Force has been invited by UNHCR to report on the work of the Task Force as well as debate in other governing body sessions at the April session of its Standing Committee. Task Force members decided that in order to promote a consistent and coordinated approach to the dialogue with governing bodies each agency would consider adopting this approach.

II. Para 2c

Requests the Secretary-General and relevant agencies, organizations programmes and fund of the United Nations system to include in their reports to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1996 a section on the progress achieved in the review of those issues and on the full implementation of GA Resolution 46/182.

Progress

It was agreed that the report of the Task Force to the IASC would provide inputs to DHA's sector of the report of the Secretary-General on this issue. Members also concluded that each agency should consider sharing its draft report to the ECOSOC session 1996 with the Task Force in order to ensure a cohesive approach.

III. Para 3

Calls upon the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, in this context, to convene regular, informal and open information meetings with Member states, observer States and relevant intergovernmental and other organizations on the review of the above-mentioned issues so as to ensure they are coherently addressed and appropriately reflected in the report of the Secretary-General.

Progress

In addition to convening the IASC ECOSOC Task Force to follow up on ECOSOC Resolution 1995/56, DHA intends to convene two meetings with Member states, observer states and intergovernmental and other organisations. The first took place on March 22 to brief stakeholders on the progress of ECOSOC follow-up. The second meeting is planned for mid-April for a discussion of the Secretary General's Report.

Action Points

Approve the extended and revised TOR (see Annex I).

Agree to the process whereby agencies will provide the TF with the drafts of their reports to ECOSOC 1996.

Agree to the proposal that the Chair of the TF should brief the sessions of Governing Bodies on a regular basis on the progress of the follow up to Resolution 1995/56.

Annex I

THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON ECOSOC RESOLUTIONS AND RELATED MATTER

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

1. At its substantive session of 1995 the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1995/56 entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations". A paper on the follow-up to this resolution was discussed at the IASC-WG meeting of 27 September. The IASC-WG decided to recommend to the IASC the establishment of an Inter-Agency Task Force to discuss a common approach to the resolution and to propose recommendations to the IASC or its Working Group as appropriate.

Objectives

2. The objectives of the Task Force are:

To facilitate the development of a common, effective and timely inter-agency response to the requirements of ECOSOC Resolution 1995/56.

3. The Tasks identified to fulfil the objectives are:

- i. To coordinate UN response and exchange views on measures which agencies should take at the level of their governing bodies in order to comply with this ECOSOC Resolution.
- ii. To analyse the outcome of the governing bodies' deliberations relating to the main recommendations as well as to the indicative list of issues attached to the 1995/56 resolution.
- iii. To initiate a coherent dialogue with respective governing bodies on the progress of the work of the Task Force towards addressing issues raised by the ECOSOC Resolution.

- iv. To consolidate inputs to DHA in order to facilitate the preparation of the Secretary-General's report.
- v. To ensure a coherent response from individual agencies to ECOSOC regarding the Resolution.
- vi. To consider, if necessary, topics to be added to those on the indicative list of issues annexed to the ECOSOC Resolution.
- vii. To review other proposals which may impact on the capacity of the system in the humanitarian field.

Membership

- 3. The TF will be composed of representatives of those agencies who are requested to respond to para 2c and those whose governing bodies are requested to respond to para 2b of this resolution, namely:

(to be defined)
- 4. The other participants of the IASC will be invited to attend the TF meetings as appropriate. The TF will meet in Geneva and will be chaired by DHA.

Functions

- 4. The revised workplan (attached) is based on the proposed follow-up action and will be submitted to the IASC-WG meeting on 29 March 1996.
- 5. The mandate of the Task Force will in principle be extended to the end of 1997 unless decisions emanating from ECOSOC 1996 indicate otherwise.
- 6. The Task Force will review the work of the Working Groups within three months, scheduling meetings as appropriate.

ECOSOC TASK FORCE DRAFT WORKPLAN

Background

In August 1995, DHA addressed letters the Member States drawing their attention to the provisions of paragraph 2(a) of Council resolution 1995/56.

DHA also addressed letters to Executive Heads of relevant organizations of the UN system, requesting them to invite their respective governing bodies to address, in particular, paragraph 2(b) of Council resolution 1995/56. A Task Force was established by the IASC-WG on 27 September to deal with the follow-up to this resolution.

Schedule

October 1995 - May 1996

Consideration by relevant governing bodies of the ECOSOC resolution:

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| (a) | UNDP Executive Board | - 15 - 19 January 1996
25 - 29 March 1996
20 - 31 May 1996 (annual session) |
| (b) | UNICEF Executive Board | - 22 - 26 January 1996
08 - 12 April 1996
03 - 07 June 1996 (annual session) |
| (c) | UNHCR Executive Committee | - one week in October 1995 |
| (d) | WFP Committee on Food Aid
WFP Executive Board | - 13 - 17 November 1995
to be determined 1996 |
| (e) | FAO Council | - 17 - 19 October 1995
19 - 28 November 1995 |
| (f) | WHO Executive Board
World Health Assembly
WHO Executive Board | - 15 - 24 January 1996
20 - 25 May 1996
27 - 28 May 1996 |

(g) UNESCO Executive Board - May/June 1996

October 1995

Hold Inter-agency consultations on the Terms of Reference of the Task Force and submit it to the IASC meeting on 30 October 1995 for endorsement.

November 1995 - February 1996

First meeting of the Task Force to adopt the Workplan of the Task Force.

DHA to hold informal meetings with some Member States and relevant Organizations. The purpose is to brief Member States on follow-up actions.

March 1996

DHA to circulate a first draft of the report of the Secretary-General for comments by Agencies.

DHA to convene a second informal meeting with Member States and relevant Organizations on 12 March to brief Member States on progress made. Representatives of Organizations of the system will report on the status of the consideration of their respective governing bodies at this meeting.

DHA to establish Working Groups to deal with each indicative issue, to identify focal points for each Working Group from within DHA and to establish outline Terms of Reference for each Working Group. The focal points to initiate meetings and establish workplans for their respective Working Groups.

April 1996

DHA to circulate a final draft of the report for comments, incorporating to the extent possible, the outcome of the deliberations of governing bodies.

May 1996

DHA to convene a third informal meeting with Member States and relevant Organization to brief Member States on the report of the Secretary-General. Organizations will report on progress of the deliberations of relevant governing bodies. Participants will be invited to exchange views on possible action by ECOSOC.

June 1996

DHA may convene a fourth informal meeting with Member States and relevant Organizations, if significant developments will have taken place since the May meeting. DHA will update delegations on deliberations of governing bodies and exchange views on possible action by ECOSOC.

Annex II

REVIEW BY GOVERNING BODIES OF UN AGENCIES OF CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

Resolution 1995/56 did not specify agencies responsible for responding to ECOSOC Resolution. However, the following UN bodies, programmes or specialized agencies with either direct reporting links to or through ECOSOC: WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, or with indirect links through art. 63 of the Charter: UNDP (UNV, UNFPA), FAO, WHO consider themselves to be part of this ECOSOC process.

A: Introduction and general Summary of Progress.

The assessment of the process of the dialogue between agencies and governing bodies shows that progress has been made in the coordinated response to Resolution 1995/56. This is evolving through agencies' participation in the ECOSOC Task Force. The IASC is expected to endorse the process whereby the Chair of the Task Force will report on progress in the Task Force at the appropriate sessions of each agency's governing body.

The current status of the response of agencies to their governing bodies is of course regulated by the established schedule of meetings, thus some agencies are further advanced in the process than others. In general, however, it can be considered that by the end of May all agencies will have outlined for their governing bodies how they intend to address the process and will have submitted a number of substantive papers. The structure of the approach and the related clustering of issues differs from agency to agency. While this reflects a natural difference in priorities, deriving from differing mandates, it will be important to achieve consistency in the decisions adopted by governing bodies.

Decisions adopted by Governing Bodies.

Decisions have been adopted in the governing body meetings of UNDP (referring also to UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP), UNICEF and WHO. These decisions note reports presented, and urge agencies to facilitate the response in a coordinated manner, as well as adopt common formats and structures for their reports to the 1996 session of ECOSOC. UNHCR is, in

principle, planning to present items for decision to the September meeting of its Standing Committee and subsequently to the Executive Committee in October.

B: Assessment of Governing Bodies Activities/Progress (by Agency)

UNDP

In accordance with the process adopted by the IATF, UNDP has submitted to DHA all documents on matters relating to ECOSOC resolution 1995/56 which have so far been presented to its Executive Board in 1996, namely document DP/1996/9. Paragraph 21 of document DP/1996/9 outlined UNDP's plan of action for reviewing its role, operational responsibilities and financial capacities to respond to the needs of countries in "special situations".

The review has as its basis UNDP's strategy paper, entitled "UNDP's Response to Man-Made Disasters and Emergencies". In formulating a conceptual policy for action aimed at securing preventive and curative development, achieved through development initiatives in humanitarian emergency situations, the strategy paper has been widely shared with agencies and remains central to UNDP's on-going dialogue with UN system partners concerning preparedness, humanitarian response, as well as prevention, rehabilitation, recovery and development in accordance with UNDP's mandate.

Pursuant to UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board decision EB/95/23 (1995), which set aside 5 per cent of core resource for development in countries in special situations, and in line with paragraph 21 of DP/1996/9, UNDP is formulating operational guidelines for the utilization of these resources. These guidelines will be submitted to the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board at its annual session (6 - 17 May) in 1996. The document will subsequently be submitted to DHA and the IATF for its review, with the aim of contributing to the improvement of coordination and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance in the UN system.

At its session of 19 January 1996, the UNDP Executive Board adopted a text (1996/05) which referring i.a to Resolution 1995/56 noted the reports submitted, and requested the executive heads of UNDP/UNFPA to report fully to the 1996 Session of ECOSOC in a manner which would permit the council to compare achievements made by each organization and to identify problems and recommend appropriate action. The text also requested the Executive Heads of UNDP, UNFPA, WFP and UNICEF, to agree on a common format and structure for their reports for the Economic and Social Council substantive session 1996.

UNHCR

UNHCR has presented DHA with all documentation submitted to the Standing Committee of its Executive Committee. At the January meeting of the Standing Committee, UNHCR's strategy for addressing the requirements of ECOSOC Resolution 1995/56 was presented. As outlined in its paper Consideration of ECOSOC Resolution 1995/56 (EC/46/SC/CRP.12), which provided a general framework for discussion on the ECOSOC Resolution, UNHCR has adopted a three-pronged approach, under which the items on the indicative list, as well as other relevant substantive issues, will be dealt with.

The January meeting focused on emergency response. Papers were presented on the Operational and Financial Capacity of UNHCR in view of its Mandate and Role (EC/46/SC/CRP.7), Information Note on the Development of Operative Memoranda of Understanding (EC/46/SC/CRP.8) and Consolidated Appeals (EC/46/SC/CRP.9). The April meeting will address issues related to solutions, including the continuum from relief to development and other aspects of country of origin operations, including protection considerations. The June meeting will take a closer look at prevention, while leaving some of the over-arching issues of capacity and coordination for consideration at the September session.

UNHCR indicated that it would continue to participate actively in the inter-agency ECOSOC Task Force and invited DHA to address the Standing Committee at its April meeting.

Although no items were presented for decision at the January session, most delegations who took the floor on this item broadly agreed with UNHCR's approach. Participation in the ECOSOC Task Force was welcomed. One delegation cited the need for a more detailed analysis of the lead agency concept. On the question of appeals, delegations, while acknowledging certain drawbacks from UNHCR's perspective, stressed the usefulness of consolidated appeals. One delegation favoured aligning them with the calendar year. Regarding internally displaced persons, one delegation thought that ECOSOC should examine the role of DHA as a coordinator, at the headquarters level. The importance of timing in the consideration of the ECOSOC resolution was mooted, with one delegation emphasizing the importance of presenting to the 1996 ECOSOC session a solid document on the topic.

UNICEF

During the first regular session of the Executive Board, 22-25 January 1996 most of the issues on the indicative list were discussed. At this meeting, UNICEF was commended for the support demonstrated towards DHA and inter-agency coordination. As a basis for discussion, UNICEF presented two complementary papers "UNICEF Emergency Services: Missions and Strategies" (E/ICEF/1996/4) and "UNICEF Emergency Operations" (E/ICEF/1996/7) outlining UNICEF's role in emergencies. Based on the recommendations of the Executive Board, UNICEF will present a two-page conceptual framework, including the guiding principles for UNICEF

emergency intervention, at the June 1996 regular session of the Executive Board. UNICEF will also present to the subsequent sessions of the Executive Board, during 1996 and 1997, a number of operational papers which will address and be complementary to the items on the indicative list of issues.

The relevant decision (1996/2) adopted at the January session of the Executive Board urged UNICEF in cooperation with DHA and other relevant agencies and organizations of the system to facilitate the implementation of Resolution 1995/56 through coordinated reporting to the 1996 session of ECOSOC.

WFP

WFP initiated the dialogue on Resolution 1995/56 with the CFA at its session of 13-17 Nov 1995 (Agenda Item No 9) in which it indicated its intention to participate in the inter-agency ECOSOC Task Force. WFP intends to continue the dialogue with its Executive Board at the May and October sessions. In May, the discussions will focus on Role and Operational Responsibilities under which items 1, 2, 4 and 6 from the indicative list will be clustered. The October session will review Capacity and Resources, (indicative list items 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10).

WHO

At the January Session, the Executive Board endorsed the text of a resolution (EB97/SR/13) to be submitted to the 49th World Health Assembly in May 1996. This resolution welcomed resolution 1995/56 and requested the Director-General, in response to paragraph 2(b) of that resolution, to draw the attention of the Council to the relevant measures proposed to the Health Assembly and endorsed in resolution WHA 48.2 in the areas of emergency preparedness and disaster reduction, emergency response and humanitarian action, and humanitarian advocacy. It further requested the Director-General, in response to paragraph 2(c) of the resolution, to emphasize in his contribution to the Council's report further progress made by the Organization in defining (1) its role and operational responsibilities in the field of emergency humanitarian action; and (2) its operative and financial capacities to discharge them.

The three-pronged approach of Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Reduction, Emergency Response and Humanitarian Action, and Humanitarian Advocacy adopted in Resolution. WHA 48.2, para 7, provides the framework for addressing the ECOSOC Resolution indicative list of issues.

UNV

UNV will first address its response to Resolution 1995/56 at the Executive Board session of UNDP in May 1996. A UNV Report has been prepared (DP/1996/22), which is still a draft. UNV will forward this report to DHA when finalized.

FAO

As a specialised agency, FAO does not have formal reporting obligations to ECOSOC. However, as a member of the IASC and the ECOSOC Task Force, FAO is required to participate in the system-wide response to addressing the differences and limitations in the response to humanitarian emergencies. The first meeting of FAO's governing body is in November 1996.