

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP**  
**29 March 1996, Rome**

**REPORT OF THE INTER-AGENCY MISSION TO SOMALIA,**  
**1-7 February 1996**

**BACKGROUND**

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), at its meeting of 30 October 1995, expressed concern at the conditions affecting humanitarian workers in Somalia and their ability to continue to provide emergency and other assistance in light of the absence of political reconciliation, the deterioration in the security situation and high ancillary operational costs. The IASC decided that a DHA-led inter-agency mission be fielded to review UN humanitarian operations in Somalia and address concerns raised by operational organisations in the country.

The main objectives of the mission were: to agree upon a clear and unified strategy for the humanitarian operations of UN agencies and NGOs in Somalia; to develop a resource mobilisation strategy for Somalia to enable the humanitarian operations to continue in an effective manner; and to resolve a number of important administrative and logistical issues affecting the UN humanitarian programme and the delivery of efficient and cost-effective humanitarian assistance to the people of Somalia.

The Inter-Agency Mission was fielded from 1-7 February 1996 and included representatives of UNDP, WFP, WHO, UNICEF, FAO, IOM, UNHCR, UNV and UNESCO, as well as participants from the NGO consortia, ICVA and INTERACTION. The mission received valuable briefings from the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) on the current political situation in the country. The mission was well-received by representatives of local Somali authorities and the donor and NGO communities, and received the full support of the UN in-country team. The mission was conducted in a spirit of cooperation and was successful in reaching a broad consensus on a wide range of programme and operational activities for the continued provision of humanitarian assistance to Somalia.

**ACTION POINTS**

The IASC-WG is requested to endorse the recommendations of the inter-agency mission report (see Executive Summary attached).

The member agencies of the IASC-WG re requested to instruct their representatives in the field accordingly.

## **INTER-AGENCY MISSION TO SOMALIA, 1-7 February 1996**

### **MISSION REPORT**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Operational agencies in the field have expressed concern at the emergence of indicators pointing to a deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Somalia. The food security situation is expected to deteriorate in 1996, particularly in the southern regions of the country, due to poor harvests in 1995 and a combination of other factors including the closure of the country's principal port at Mogadishu; insecurity and the resultant disruption to agricultural production and supply, widespread unemployment and commodity price increases. Lack of crop protection activities and veterinary services for livestock is an important factor affecting the food security situation in Somalia. In the health sector, Somalia is currently facing a resurgence of high levels of communicable diseases. Low levels of immunization coverage, the emergence of pockets of malnutrition, the scarcity of safe, potable water and poor health services have exacerbated the situation.

The repatriation of thousands of Somali refugees places an additional burden on already fragile local infrastructures. Unless these structures are strengthened and the rehabilitation needs of the returnees, as well as the receiving communities, are properly addressed, repatriation could be interrupted and a reverse trend witnessed. Between an estimated 200,000 and possibly as high as 400,000 IDPs in Somalia remain among the most vulnerable groups in the country. Little direct assistance being provided to these groups. The provision of basic education to vulnerable groups, and particularly to female children, has suffered a setback since the withdrawal of UNOSOM and several international NGOs. The presence of large numbers of uneducated and armed youth carries a future social cost for Somalia.

There is a clear consensus that the current political situation facing the country is at a stalemate with little likelihood of change in the near future. Political instability and the ensuing insecurity are therefore expected to keep Somalia in a high-risk situation. While UN agencies, NGOs and other humanitarian partners consider that the current level of the humanitarian operation may prevent the recurrence of a widespread humanitarian crisis in the short-term, the relief needs of the Somali people are expected to be at least as great in 1996 as at any time during the past two years. A significant decrease of humanitarian aid, or any deterioration in the security environment, has the potential to precipitate a repeat of the humanitarian crisis.

Despite the inherent risks associated with the absence of a formal economy, several parts of Somalia are slowly moving out of emergency situations, enabling the re-activation of business and other economical activities, particularly in the northern regions. Relatively stable conditions in some locations have created conditions conducive for some rehabilitation and development work.

Since the withdrawal of UNOSOM II in March 1995, UN agencies and NGOs have continued to operate in Somalia. Insecurity and the absence of national authorities have been substantial constraints on programme implementation for all sectoral activities in virtually all zones. In this context, it has generally been agreed that the formulation of a unified humanitarian strategy for Somalia as a whole is problematic, given the widely varying political and security conditions currently facing different parts of the country. A dual approach should be pursued whereby rehabilitation/developmental activities are conducted in some areas while the need for concerted action in the provision of emergency relief assistance remains in other operational areas.

## ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **UN Presence in Somalia:** Since the phase-out of UNOSOM II, UN agencies and their international and Somali humanitarian partners have succeeded in delivering substantial assistance to those parts of the country where security conditions permit and in many ways have adapted their humanitarian interventions accordingly. It was recognised, however, that different political and security dynamics affect different regions in Somalia, and as a consequence, humanitarian and other requirements differ significantly from one area to another.

***Recommendation:*** In spite of insecurity and other operational difficulties, the mission concluded that the continued presence of UN agencies in Somalia is essential, not least to prevent any possible recurrence of the humanitarian crisis of 1991/92. In light of the above, the mission agreed that there was an urgent need to formulate a coherent Humanitarian Programme for Somalia, applying a district/regional/zonal methodology. The mission recommended that the UNCT, in partnership with Somali counterparts and aid partners, urgently start the preparation of the Humanitarian Programme. The mission further recommended that the UN Humanitarian Programme for Somalia should be a combination of humanitarian and rehabilitation approaches to the extent possible. The mission endorsed the concept of joint planning and programming. Recognition was also given to the fact that rehabilitation efforts only become sensible when actively supported by local communities.

2. **Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Operations in Somalia:** The *Code of Conduct for International Rehabilitation and Development Assistance to Somalia*, establishing conditions for the delivery of non-emergency international aid, was adopted by the SACB in February 1995. The *Code of Conduct* represents an important achievement, in spite of the fact that it has not always been adhered to by the Somali interlocutors. There are still risks of hostile and extortionary acts against individual humanitarian agencies which may invite, from the international aid community, a collective response entailing loss of non-emergency assistance to local populations, in order to reduce these constraints. On the other hand, the *Code*, as its name implies, was not designed for humanitarian relief interventions in situations of emergency. During the course of the mission, guidelines for the conduct of humanitarian emergency relief operations were drafted, which include, *inter alia*, the issues of prioritisation of target beneficiaries, the principle of neutrality of humanitarian assistance as well as of the operational agencies, and the need to maintain solidarity and unity of purpose in order to present a common front vis-a-vis local counterparts.

**Recommendation:** The mission recommended that UN agencies and their humanitarian partners be guided by the existing Code of Conduct for their rehabilitation and development operations, actively encourage Somali counterparts to adhere to the Code, and pursue efforts to involve local authorities in the provision of security and the prevention of extortion. The mission further recommended that the proposed emergency relief operation guidelines for UN operations be discussed with NGOs and donors within the framework of the SACB in order to reach a common stand on the matter, and that such proposed guidelines should, in the interim, govern the emergency humanitarian relief interventions of UN agencies.

3. **Coordination Arrangements:** Four main coordination structures have been established for humanitarian operations in Somalia: the SACB, UNCT, the international NGO consortium and various sectoral committees. The SACB acts as the forum for interaction between donors, NGOs, and UN agencies, as established by the Addis Ababa Conference in 1993. The mission concluded that the UNCT has functioned well and has played an important role since its creation in 1994, particularly with regards to information-sharing and security. It was recognised, however, that there was room for improvement in operational coordination, particularly at the regional level.

**Recommendation:** The mission agreed that a review of the coordination modalities within the UN be undertaken, with the support of DHA and on the basis of an inter-agency participatory approach. The mission also agreed that a regional approach should be followed in undertaking assessment of needs against which a humanitarian and rehabilitation response will be planned. As such, operational

**coordination should be focused in, but not be limited to, the regions. Specifically, the mission members agreed that, with the support of a strengthened UNCU, both the sectoral and field coordination functions should be reinforced.**

4. **Aircraft Operations:** Three UN agencies have established aircraft operations for Somalia, with a coordinated flight schedule in place. The absence of a common and centralised management system has led to a situation in which capacity has not always been adequate to meet the needs of all UN agencies. (NB: NGOs are relatively well-served by ECHO's air operations for Somalia). During the course of the mission, an inter-agency working group on joint aircraft services was formed and reached a number of agreements, which the mission fully endorsed.

***Recommendation:* The mission recommended that UN agencies, under the leadership of WFP, enter into joint leasing arrangements to consolidate aircraft services, in the interests of maximising cost savings and providing adequate capacity to meet the needs of all UN agencies. The mission further recommended that common leasing/contract arrangements be made between the three current aircraft-leasing agencies (WFP, UNICEF, UNDP), but also be open to others. To this end, the common arrangements will include a management service provision to undertake tasks such as bookings, coordination of itineraries, etc. The mission also recommended the creation of a UN inter-agency aircraft management steering committee to provide oversight of flight management and cost and accounting issues, review needs and capacity, resolve problems and coordinate individual flight schedules. The mission endorsed the recommendation of the working group that individual agencies would continue to retain control over their respective aircraft for a fixed number of flight hours per month, within and above which other agencies would have the right to utilise additional capacity on a fee-paying basis.**

5. **Communications and Security:** Guidelines for the establishment of security arrangements for UN operations in Somalia were issued by UNSECOORD at the end of 1994. UN agencies were cleared to field international staff in six operational sites provided that security officers are present on the ground. Although the UN agencies are not currently operational in all six locations cleared by UNSECOORD, it was generally agreed that the current system was functioning reasonably well with the existing reduced number of security officers. Despite some complaints, many of the agencies felt that current arrangements were workable, although some improvements were necessary. The mission concluded, however, that some problems remained, including funding of security officers and operational costs and the establishment of a clearer chain of command and access to security services. In addition, deficiencies exist in contingency security arrangements, including field security communications systems.

**Recommendation:** A uniform security coordination structure should be established under the direct authority of the Designated Official, and the deployment of security officers should be undertaken on the basis of more equitable cost-sharing arrangements. Decisions on security should take into account the operational requirements of the agencies and be taken following consultations with the agency representatives. Operational costs associated with the functions of the security officers should be an integral part of the cost-sharing arrangements. The mission further recommended that existing security communications systems at the field level be urgently reviewed and upgraded, utilising as much as possible the existing facilities available, and based on inter-agency cost-sharing. The mission recommended that additional contingency measures be discussed and addressed by the UN in-country team.

6. **Common Premises:** The concept of inter-agency regional operation centres at the zonal level in Somalia was viewed by the mission as carrying a number of advantages for a UN humanitarian programme, particularly with regard to greater integration of activity and cost-effectiveness.

**Recommendation:** The mission agreed that the concept of the regional operation centres should be pursued when establishing operations in new locations (for example in Galcayo). As a principle, the centres should be accessible to, and facilitate the work of other partners, wherever possible. Furthermore, it was agreed that a review/survey should be undertaken by the UN in-country team. The review should also include an examination of the potential for the standardisation of rental fees, salaries, arrangements for guards, and other related operational aspects.

7. **Resource Mobilisation:** Resources available for Somalia have diminished. The lack of progress in political reconciliation has been a factor leading to a reduction in donor interest. The mission noted that varied prevailing perceptions of the situation in Somalia within the humanitarian community have undermined attempts at developing a unified and coherent resource mobilisation strategy, which has had particularly negative effects on the operations of some UN specialised agencies.

**Recommendation:** The mission recommended, in consultation with the donor and NGO communities, the preparation of a consolidated UN resource mobilization appeal document for Somalia, using elements of joint programming for humanitarian and rehabilitation needs at the regional level. It was agreed that the document should reflect a common UN strategy, including a short-term emergency contingency plan. In full collaboration with the donor community, a high profile launch and an active and coordinated follow-up campaign should be undertaken to mobilise additional resources.

8. **Non-Governmental Organisations:** International NGOs remain at the forefront of relief and rehabilitation interventions in Somalia. A combination of the precarious security environment, difficult working conditions, diminishing donor resources, and the lack of adequate transportation infrastructures, have all negatively affected their effectiveness.

***Recommendation:*** It is essential that the UN system continue to work closely with local and international NGO communities and fully support their efforts. The UN's programming process should continue to invite the active participation of NGOs.