

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
4 June 1996, Washington, D.C.**

**PROTECTION OF HUMANITARIAN MANDATE
IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS
Information Note**

Background

On April 1993 at the ACC meeting in Rome, Mme. Ogata (UNHCR), Mr. Jolly (UNICEF) and Mr. Eliasson (DHA) raised the need to clarify certain issues relating to humanitarian mandate in conflict situations. Subsequently, during the IASC Session in July 1993 an informal working group was established. After long consultations in Geneva and New York, a paper consisting of a set of principles and an annex containing "operational" guidelines relating to the provisions of humanitarian assistance in conflict situations was drafted. The principles paper (Part I) was approved by the IASC at its meeting in Geneva on 13 April 1994. There were intense consultations on the "Operational Guidelines" which was finally considered by the IASC-WG at its meeting in New York on 27 June 1994. The Working Group suggested that the paper be placed again on the agenda of the IASC at a later date in order "to provide the IASC members more opportunity to review it in the light of experiences gained and unfolding development".

Present Status of the Inter-Agency Consultations

An inter-agency consultation on the draft document was initiated by DHA at the end of 1995 to clarify the issues at stake. Agencies agreed on the need to come up with a reference paper based on a common understanding of the fundamental concerns of the various actors involved in complex emergencies. It was also agreed that agencies were to provide DHA with new comments and inputs.

A first inter-agency meeting was held in Geneva on 29 May 1996 to discuss and update the purposes and content of the paper on Protection of Humanitarian Mandate. At this meeting, the following were discussed:

1. The Purposes of the Paper

It was mentioned that the need for a reference document on the subject still remained. The paper should be used for educational purposes within and outside of the UN system, and in this respect should serve as:

- a) A training tool to improve interaction and cooperation between the military and humanitarian components both in the UN Secretariat and in the field.
- b) An informative guide addressed to the Member States, Security Council and the General Assembly to draw their attention on humanitarian imperatives.

2. **Revision of the Paper**

All participants agreed that more time was needed in order for the paper to reach its final form and that its discussion in the IASC-WG meeting in Washington was premature. In that respect, the participants attached importance to the fact that further attention should be paid to the following:

- a) The title should reflect the purpose of the paper in a more appropriate and understandable way
- b) The term "Humanitarian Mandate" should clearly be defined
- c) The entire text should be sharpened in order to have stronger impact
- d) A consensus should be reached on the key issues listed below:

The proper role of the military with regard to humanitarian operations
The interaction of diplomacy and humanitarian action
Whose decision whether humanitarian assistance should be delivered or not
(independence of action)
The inclusion of the operational agencies in and out of the UN system with regard to policy formulation and discussions on programme planning by Departments in New York such as DHA, DPA and DPKO
What is expected of relief programmes in the development field
The question of "neutrality" when political, military and humanitarian dimensions interrelate
The problems arising from joint training of military and humanitarian personnel

It was decided that all agencies will send their comments on the above issues to DHA (IASU) by 14 June 1996. DHA (IASU) will circulate these comments to the agencies in preparation for a meeting to be arranged on the week of 23 June 1996.