

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP**  
**8 September 1997**

**Item 3.3 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

**Background.**

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are a global problem which still needs a coherent and organised response, although various steps have been taken over the years to strengthen the capacities of UN agencies and partner organizations. A Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs was appointed in 1992, in response to the Resolution of the Commission on Human Rights 92/73. The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) was nominated as the reference point for all issues related to IDPs in an agreed conclusion of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 1993.

In December 1994, the IASC recommended the establishment of an Inter-Agency Task Force on IDPs to review internal displacement situations and provide recommendations to the ERC and through him to the IASC. In 1996 the IASC put forward recommendations concerning, inter alia, IDPs in response to ECOSOC Resolution 1995/56 on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

Most recently, the Secretary-General in his Report on UN Reform highlighted, among the core functions of the ERC, the need for strengthening policy development and coordination on matters which fall in gaps of existing mandates of agencies, "such as protection and assistance for internally displaced persons".

**Issues and Recommended Actions:**

In its review of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance, as requested by ECOSOC resolution 1995/56, the IASC has stressed some of the major issues still to be addressed and made recommendations accordingly. The ECHA-WG, in defining the functions and structure of the new Office of the ERC, recommended that arrangements for assistance and protection of IDPs be referred to the IASC.

1. **HQ Arrangements.** The IASC recommended that the ERC, as Chairman of the IASC, be the focal point at Headquarters level for the inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance to IDPs. Subject to IASC agreement on the Terms of Reference, this responsibility would normally include: (i) global advocacy on both assistance and

protection requirements; (ii) resource mobilization and the identification of gaps in resources; (iii) management of global information on IDPs, including monitoring and issuance of periodic situation reports; and (iv) support to the field on IDP-related humanitarian issues, including negotiation of access to IDPs. A mechanism at the Headquarters level should provide support to the Office of the ERC in its inter-agency coordination function for assistance and protection of IDPs.

**Based on the recommendation, concurrence is sought on:**

- i) the above mentioned Terms of Reference on IDPs for the ERC;*
- ii) establishing procedures to ensure that the IASC and IASC-WG include systematic inter-agency consultation on IDP issues, advice to the ERC and support to the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs;*
- iii) the option of re-establishing a time-bound Inter-Agency Task Force on IDPs with clearly defined Terms of Reference focusing on specific assignments and products.*

- 2) **Field coordination.** The IASC recommended that at the field level the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (R/HC) will, in full consultation with the inter-agency country teams, be responsible for the strategic coordination of assistance to IDPs. This responsibility will include addressing IDP humanitarian requirements before, during and after an emergency, serving as an advocate for the assistance and protection of IDPs, as well as recommending division of responsibility among agencies to the ERC. The R/HC may recommend to the ERC, in consultation with the in-country team and on a case-by-case basis, a lead agency from among the relevant humanitarian organizations to be designated by the IASC to assume operational responsibility for IDPs, including camp management where appropriate. In the recommendation of ECHA-WG, the Office of the ERC will not have any operational responsibility for IDPs. The IASC will allocate responsibility for the care and protection of IDPs on a country-specific basis.

**IASC-WG guidance is sought on:**

- i) harmonising the recommendations of the IASC on the role of the R/HC in the arrangements for field coordination for IDPs with the ECHA-WG recommendation;*
- ii) establishing criteria and procedures for the designation of a lead agency to respond to the assistance and protection needs of IDPs.*

- 3) **Clarification of the role of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.** The IASC has agreed upon the full participation of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in the IASC activities as a permanent invitee to the IASC meetings and is committed to strengthening the continued participation on an ad hoc basis of the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs with the aim of consolidating the communication and cooperation between the human rights mechanisms and the humanitarian partners.

*Concurrence of IASC-WG is sought on extending an invitation to the High Commissioner for Human Rights to give guidance to IASC on the full integration of human rights/protection perspectives into assistance programmes for IDPs.*

- 4) **Guidelines for Better Practices** have been recommended by the IASC. They will be aimed at enhancing the synergy between assistance and protection of IDPs and should be based on consolidation of existing best practice experiences of individual agencies.

*IASC-WG's guidance is needed in order to define the scope and content of such guidelines and identify the support needed for their preparation.*

- 5) **Information Management.** Whereas valuable information on IDPs exists in several institutions, no database has been developed as a depository for a comprehensive reference point in this group. The Office of ERC could be tasked with the responsibility to ensure that a database is established on information on IDPs, accessible to the humanitarian community.

*IASC-WG concurrence is sought in encouraging the Office of ERC to work closely with relevant institutions/agencies to establish a database on IDPs linked to and accessible to the international humanitarian community.*