

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
12 March 1998**

**Item 2: Demobilization - Follow-up to ECHA Recommendations on
Responsibility within the UN System**

(Prepared by OCHA)
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This paper was a background paper for the 3 March ECHA Meeting.

I. Overview

In September, the IASC-Working Group reviewed possible institutional arrangements within the United Nations system for responsibility for demobilization. The IASC-WG did not consider it appropriate to entrust one UN entity with overall responsibility for demobilization at both field and Headquarters level.

The IASC-WG agreed that at the Headquarters level there is a need for a capacity to ensure that lessons learned and other studies on demobilization, rosters of experienced personnel and other relevant resources are accessible to staff at the field level. For this purpose, the majority of IASC-WG members agreed that a small headquarters capacity (1-2 professionals) could be set up to act as a resource centre and repository of experience and expertise for the UN system. Such a capacity would not be operational but could provide technical advice to the field.

Noting that demobilization includes political and military, as well as humanitarian and development components, the IASC-WG suggested that ECHA review and recommend to the Secretary-General the appropriate institutional arrangement to be established at the headquarters level.

At the field level, the IASC-WG felt it was appropriate that the overall responsibility for the UN's involvement in demobilization should be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Please see below for details.

II. Background paper

Demobilization in countries recovering from crisis usually takes place in and is part of an extremely volatile political, military, economic and social environment. "Demobilization" (for the purpose of this paper) refers to a wide range of processes and activities including but not limited to planning, coordination and implementation of registration, disarmament, quartering, provision of security for ex-combatants, reinsertion and reintegration, vocational and civic training, assistance to dependents, attention to underage and disabled ex-combatants etc. All of these activities are critical elements of peace-building.

Overall integrated planning, coordination and management of demobilization processes by a multilateral institution, in cooperation with national or transitory authorities and conflicting parties, is often considered an urgent requirement in a post-crease-fire situation. Such planning must take into account the full range of activities list above as well as consider and negotiate post-crisis political and military reality.

A demobilization process therefore requires the participation of the national authorities, the warring parties and a host of other national, and often international, entities in planning and implementation of an integration strategy. The potential list of key actors is lengthy: SRSG, DPA, Member States, military, national army, other warring parties, UN peacekeeping operations, UN humanitarian agencies, UN development organizations, IOM, national and international NGOs, donor governments, and Bretton Woods institutions.

The international community and the UN system should ensure that there is an integrated approach among its different components. However, no multilateral institution is formally mandated to officially take on such a role. Nor, within the United Nations, has any entity been designated as responsible for demobilization. Rather, on a case-by-case basis different entities (e.g. World Bank, DHA/OCHA, DPKO) have either taken or been given the lead in the demobilization process; sometimes with a formal designation, sometimes not.

In consideration what UN institutional arrangements are required to address the various dimensions of demobilization, the ECHA needs to look beyond the demobilization activities in which only the humanitarian and development communities are involved, and consider the overall planning and coordination requirements for the entire “demobilization” process. The ECHA is well placed to consider this issue because of the presence of political, military, humanitarian and development actors on the Committee.

Past experience indicates that different capacities are needed at the Headquarters level and at the field level.

At Headquarters level there is need for an institutional memory and technical expertise. The IASC-WG agreed upon the need to ensure that lessons learned and other materials, research, and studies on past demobilization experiences, rosters of experienced staff, and technical expertise are readily available. Field-based demobilization programmes should have access to such information and resources.

At the field level there is a need for an entity to ensure operational coordination for the demobilization process. One entity must be charged with responsibility for the orchestration of the diverse entities involved in the demobilization process. To ensure the successful reintegration of armed combatants as peaceful, productive and unarmed members of society, the institutional capacity at the field level must:

- (1) ensure early, comprehensive and integrated planning as well as implementation of all phases, activities and aspects of demobilization;
- (2) interface and coordinate with all entities involved (including parties to conflict, member states, UN peacekeepers, UN agencies, NGOs, International Organizations, etc.)
- (3) undertake activities that do not fall within any organization’s mandate, i.e. registration of ex-combatants, political negotiations on provision of assistance; as well as “filling gaps”.

The organization to be responsible for the overall management of a demobilization programme would be designated on a case-by-case basis, depending on which entity in the field is best able to meet the criteria discussed below. Designation of such an organization should be done by ECHA in close consultation with the IASC. In the field, the designated organization would be accountable to the SRSG or the RC/HC as appropriate.

There are a number of important criteria to consider when identifying the appropriate entity to be designated to manage a particular demobilization process. These criteria should be also reviewed when deciding upon the appropriate location for a Headquarters capacity:

- (a) *a civilian-humanitarian/development orientation*: Although demobilization is part of a wider political process and has military and security ramifications, disarmament and demobilization are the beginning of a long, primarily socio-economic process.
- (b) *familiarity with local conditions*: Familiarity with local conditions and with the warring parties and other actors facilitates the early planning and coordination of a complex process.
- (c) *collaboration and partnership*: Planning and coordination of demobilization demands close cooperation and collaboration with a panoply of partners i.e. more consensus than command and control.
- (d) *flexibility*: The entity responsible should have adaptable and flexible administrative, operational and policy procedures and the capacity to support and respond to the field, in order to respond quickly to the inevitable changes in a post-conflict environment.
- (e) *sensitivity to beneficiaries and ability to work with beneficiaries* (includes ex-combatants and accompanying family members)

Action Required by ECHA

Recognizing the political and military components of the overall demobilization process, the IASC-WG recommended that ECHA review and recommend the appropriate institutional arrangements to be established at headquarters. In considering the appropriate location for such a unit, the ECHA might consider the criteria listed above as well as differing mandates and physical location.

The Headquarters capacity could be located in:

- an independent unit within the UN secretariat,
- within DPA (focal point for post-conflict peace-building), OCHA or DPKO
- an interdepartmental unit within the UN secretariat
- a UN organization (e.g. UNDP, UNOPS, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP)
- the World Bank

Regardless of location of the Headquarters unit, the IASC-WG stressed that concerned agencies should ensure that they have the necessary institutional capacity dedicated to servicing the field on demobilization and that such capacities share information amongst themselves. Further, the IASC-WG noted that since demobilization is an inter-agency process, the IASC-WG could serve as the forum on all demobilization matters, including identifying institutional capacities on demobilization.