

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

**Item 3.1: Afghanistan
Decision on Divestment Based on Field Consultations**

Input provided by the field
wg/XXXI/3.1.1

98/iasc-

Background

Following the 27 & 28 November 1997 IASC-WG meeting in Geneva, heads of UN Agencies and members of the Afghanistan Task Force, which includes UN, donor and NGO representatives, were fully briefed about the recommendations made by the IASC-WG on divestment issues related to UNOCHA. The general consensus was that UNOCHA should continue to function under the existing arrangements, without any change, and the issue of divestment should be reviewed before the end of 1998. However, WFP and WHO requested a cost analysis of the aircraft operation with a view to see whether a more cost-effective solution could not be found, without sacrificing the existing security arrangements. This exercise is proposed to be conducted after the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) meeting of 5 May 1998 in London.

It is worth noting that the aircraft operation and radio communications projects are essential services that are directly linked with the office of the UN Coordinator in his capacity as the Designated Official for Security. These services form an integral part of a coordinated common support to all agencies and the international community.

The divestment of UNOCHA activities and the change in its mandate will require a decision by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). It will also require freezing of the Afghanistan Emergency Trust Fund (AETF), i.e. freezing the funds that are channelled through the AETF for operating the above services.

It derives from the above that the divestment of UNOCHA is not to be undertaken automatically. It should be the result of a logical framework and a cost-effective and field-driven process. UNOCHA activities may be divested when political developments in Afghanistan will have led to a substantive peace process that would put an end to the on-going conflict. Only then, when the international community representatives at the field level have concluded that emergency operations could be handled without the involvement of UNOCHA, could the latter activities be divested.

For IASC-WG consideration/action

The IASC Secretariat takes note that - in view of the reasons detailed above - the Coordinator has not yet prepared the requested paper with recommendations as to whom common logistic services (logistics, transport, communication) should be divested. It is indicated in the communication from the field that such a paper should be produced after the ASG meeting of 5 May 1998. In the meantime **the IASC-WG is being asked to agree on UNOCHA retaining its current functions previously identified for divestment until the end of 1998 and to re-assess at that time the issue in light of the political and military situation.**