

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
XXXIIth Meeting
3 June 1998, Geneva**

Item 3: Afghanistan: Assistance Strategy

Paper prepared by UNOCHA

1998/iasc-wg/XXXII/3

**Making a reality of
Principled Common Programming**

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1. Introduction and context

The overall objective of common programming is to devise a means whereby the collective impact of assistance activities on beneficiaries can be improved in a timely, principled and resource efficient manner.

This document addresses some of the current problems and constraints in providing coordinated assistance in Afghanistan, not least in securing Afghan engagement in and eventual ownership of assistance activities. It proposes a mechanism which can be immediately useful in addressing and resolving these – whether they be policy or operational. Realistic and practical ways are proposed for filling in current gaps – whether in information, sharing of acquired knowledge, supporting individual agencies’ programming objectives and obligations, or in overall coordination.

In preparing the document, every attempt has been made to take into account the views and suggestions of stakeholders involved in the strategic framework process. These have been elicited in reaction to the various documents that have been generated both in the field and at headquarters. It has not been possible to incorporate all of them, not least as some are incompatible.

In the region, opinions were solicited both inside Afghanistan and in Peshawar and Islamabad on the value, purpose and expectations of a common programming document. There was broad consensus on a number of points, including that any new document should not be philosophical but should:

- define what common programming is;
- show in practical terms how common programming can add value to the activities of all stakeholders, including donors, the UN and NGOs;
- suggest where the connections between the international community’s peace and assistance efforts lie and how in practical terms they can support each other;
- suggest cost effective mechanisms that can support common programming;
- build upon what has already been discussed, agreed and achieved in the last 18 months;
- build upon and if necessary adapt existing mechanisms rather than create new ones.
- set out the steps that need to be taken, by whom, in the near and medium term future;
- be unambiguous, easy to read and concise.

This document attempts to meet these expectations. It has been drafted in response to requests, not least by the members of the Afghan Support Group of donors at their New York meeting in December 1997, for greater clarity as to how the draft assistance strategy will be translated into practice. For an explanation of the relationship between the Strategic Framework, Assistance Strategy and common programming, see Annex B.

It will be submitted to assistance actors including the UN family, NGOs, donors and Afghans, for review and revision during May and June 1998. On May 5th, it will be discussed at the Afghan Support Group of donors meeting in London.

Context

In March 1998, the Secretary General of the United Nations reaffirmed the fundamental importance of strengthening the capacity of the UN system to act in a mutually reinforcing and integrated way in crisis situations. Such efforts are regarded as an integral part of ongoing work to reform the UN system.

The Secretary-General has encouraged UN agencies, funds and programmes to support the work underway in Afghanistan. This has focused on translating into practical action a collective commitment to coordinated action not only by the UN but also by a whole range of actors, including donors, NGOs and civil society.

This document proposes organisational arrangements for the assistance community which could make a practical reality of this commitment. It includes proposals which are innovative but does not shy away from the controversial. These are premised upon the willingness of assistance actors to review and consider a practical revision of the way we do business in the interests of serving beneficiaries - the people of Afghanistan.

The goal of this document is not to prioritise objectives of the assistance community, nor to make judgements regarding the goals and principles of providing assistance in Afghanistan. It offers something more durable: a cost effective mechanism whereby policies and priorities might be agreed and how decisions could be taken to translate principles into practice. Above all, it is intended to provide a means for allowing assistance actors to address and resolve the very practical problems that confront them with a view to making their work easier, not least in facilitating their own programming activities.

2. Common programming

2.1 Definition

Common Programming is a mechanism for establishing the assistance community's priorities, programmes and projects, based upon agreed goals, principles and the expressed needs of Afghans.

Overall goals and principles are derived from the Strategic Framework process. The goal of international assistance is to empower Afghans to build sustainable livelihoods; this includes emergency assistance to vulnerable populations, reintegration assistance to returnees, and appropriate assistance to achieve social and economic recovery thereby contributing to the sustainability of peace.

2.2 Purpose

The purpose of common programming is to ensure that needs identified in close consultation with Afghan constituencies are translated into coherent, principled and cost-effective programmes, and to ensure that these are based upon agreed goals and principles and implemented in accordance with the capacities of the international assistance community. In developing new or stronger partnerships between and among both Afghans and external actors, common programming could support and energise broader efforts to build sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

2.3 The basic elements

At its most basic, the proposed programming mechanism rests on the following formula:

- a) All assistance activities and projects will be clearly attached/related to specific programmes.
- b) Prioritisation of programmes will be informed by research and analysis of the current situation and of the expressed needs of beneficiaries, female and male.
- c) Programmes will demonstrate that they embody agreed principles and operational norms.
- d) Priorities will be determined at the regional and national levels on the basis of
 - understanding and analysis of the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation, including the condition of women and children.
 - clarity about Afghan and external actors' implementation capacities.
 - Clarity about mandates.
 - common policies.
 - impact assessment.

The institutional arrangements being proposed (see 4 below) are intended as a cost and time effective means of making this possible.

For an analysis of the current situation, see Annex A. Further work is clearly needed in a number of areas, notably under d) above. Nevertheless, as long as current deficiencies are explicitly recognised and steps are being taken to address them, and once stakeholders have had an opportunity to react to and improve upon these proposals from their individual perspectives, immediate steps can be taken to make a reality of common programming. It will some time before common programming is fully developed, but this document contains several proposals which, if implemented, could have an immediate impact in improving the delivery of principle assistance to Afghanistan.

2.4 Benefits

Common programming is intended to yield the following benefits:

- a. **Policy clarity.** Currently, enormous time, human and financial resources are used and exhausted in addressing policy issues, and yet clarity remains elusive. Common programming is intended to provide a mechanism for achieving policy clarity within and on behalf of the assistance community.
- b. **Greater programming efficiency.** Common programming will clarify the ground rules regarding the preparation of projects and the basis on which they will be funded. This is intended to ensure that programming is demand rather than supply driven and that the limited resources available to the assistance community are allocated in the most efficient manner between and within sectors and regions in response to identified needs.
- c. **Stronger coordination.** The proposed mechanism will make coordination opportunities and responsibilities much more explicit. The assistance community can benefit from the common services that will be provided through the good offices of the UN Coordinator.
- d. **Clarity about impact.** The overall purpose of common programming is to devise a means whereby the collective impact of assistance activities on beneficiaries can be evaluated and improved.
- e. **Transparency.** Common programming will promote mutual understanding and greater cross fertilisation within and between aid constituencies – donors, UN, NGOs and Afghan partners. It is hoped that this will

break down suspicion and mutual ignorance and improve collaborative skills and collective delivery capacities.

- f. **Lessons.** Experience – mistakes and successes – will be gained that can be applied to other complex emergency situations.
- g. **Peace building potential.** Common programming may have the effect of promoting greater dialogue within and between Afghan communities; in so doing, it may help them address wider issues which go beyond the limits of a village, a valley, a district or even a province.

2.5 Agreeing the ground rules

A major function of the mechanisms being proposed under common programming is to translate principles and norms into policy clarity; to arbitrate on differences of opinion and to ensure that agreed ground rules are adhered to (see role of Afghan Programming Board 4.4 below).

It is proposed that a major effort be undertaken in the coming months to support current efforts to clarify a) the basis upon which the international community engages with presumptive authorities and b) the ground rules by which assistance will be provided.

Regarding the latter, the experience of the UN and its partners in other complex emergencies may prove valuable. Structured negotiations are required with authorities on all sides of the conflict to hammer out a set of ground rules, cast in clear and simple language which makes sense to Afghan constituencies, based upon the principles set out in this document.

Agreeing on these ground rules may take time – both within the international community and in securing understanding with Afghan authorities. The process whereby they are negotiated and agreed may prove as valuable as the resulting product. If and when agreement is reached between the international community and Afghan authorities, the result needs to be promoted by all possible means.

3. Principles and operating guidelines

The principles and operating guidelines listed below have been derived from consultations within the assistance community over the last year or more. They should be an integral part of future assistance programmes and are the basis for policies that will be part of common programming.

Principles

1. International assistance to Afghanistan shall be in pursuit of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and all UN human rights covenants and conventions.
2. All assistance to Afghanistan presumes the sovereignty of the Afghan state and will work to build the country as a whole.

3. Assistance programmes must work to address structural discriminations – by gender, tribe, ethnicity, language or political affiliation – and to ensure that these are neither created or perpetuated by design or implication, in the provision of assistance.
4. International assistance providers must ensure that all those who participate in its programmes are protected from the arbitrary use of force.
5. International assistance shall be provided with complete impartiality.
6. Assistance shall be provided as part of an overall effort to achieve peace in Afghanistan.

Operational guidelines

1. To ensure that the founding principles of the United Nations are respected, assistance will involve the participation of all members of Afghan communities, including women. Assistance will be organised in pursuit of the overall goal of achieving gender equity. Individual projects which do not immediately benefit men and women equally in participation and results must clearly demonstrate how they complement other projects, or contribute towards broader programmes, that do so.
2. Domestic resources – material and human – will have primacy of place when initiating and executing programmes.
3. Assistance will be based on transparent processes of initiation, design, execution and evaluation.
4. All programmes will exemplify coherence through co-ordination and complementarity in all sectors, and for all executing agencies and NGOs.
5. In pursuit of common principles and programming, the assistance community will subscribe to commonly agreed programme monitoring and evaluation standards and practices.

4. Institutional arrangements

4.1 Overview

The following paragraphs explain the structure of Common Programming. The charts in Annex C attempt to summarise the arrangement being proposed. Common programming entails the conversion of current coordinating arrangements - for example, the Afghan Task Force at the national level and various coordination fora at the regional level - into a unified structure comprised of:

- _ Regional Coordination Bodies (RCBs) at the field level, and
- _ an Afghan Programming Board (APB) at the national level.

The general task of the RCBs will be to animate the formulation of programme proposals and to review these for inclusion into the Consolidated Appeal. Given the situation in Afghanistan and the marked differences between regions, these are the appropriate level for detailed coordination. RCBs will support a number of **common programming services** (see 4.3 below).

The general task of the APB is to ensure the translation of principles and norms into concrete and pragmatic guidelines for programming. It is also responsible for a final review and consolidation of programmes at the national level and, through this, for the preparation and launching of the Consolidated Appeal. Finally, it will have responsibility for a number of **common programming core functions** (see 4.5 below). The functions it will assume are currently spread across the assistance community. The creation of the APB is intended to rationalise and consolidate existing arrangements.

The RCBs and the APB will meet at least twice a year to facilitate the Common Programming Cycle, culminating in an appeal launched in early October:

Regional Coordination Bodies

Mid-January:

Review of situation in the region and establishment of programming priorities

End-August:

Review of programme proposals

Afghanistan Programming Board

Ongoing

Establish policy guidelines

Mid-February:

Review of overall situation in Afghanistan and establishment of national programming priorities

Early September:

Review and consolidation of programmes.

Early October:

Launch of the Consolidated Appeal

4.2 Regional Coordination Bodies

It is recommended that there be seven RCBs, as follows

<u>Region</u>	<u>Provinces</u>
East: (Jalalabad)	Laghman, Nangarhar, Paktika, Paktia, Kunar
South (Kandahar)	Kandahar, Zabul, Helmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan, Ghazni
West (Herat)	Herat, Farah, Ghor, Badghis
North (Mazar)	Faryab, Jawzjan, Balkh, Samangan, Kunduz
- North-East * (Faizabad)	Badakhshan, Takhar
Central	Kabul, Parwan, Logar, Wardak, Kapisa
- Bamyan * (Bamyan)	Bamyan

* These are sub-offices of the northern and central regions respectively.

4.2.1 Mandate and tasks

The general purpose of the RCB will be to promote the translation of assessed needs into programme formulation. It will have the following responsibilities:

- __ To establish time bound Thematic Groups to address specific policy, operational or technical problems.
- __ To ensure that participatory needs assessment techniques are fully utilised so that Afghan beneficiaries have a visible and direct input into the work of the RCBs.
- __ To help the collection and assessment of all available information on ongoing and planned projects and programmes;
- __ To assess information on needs and resources within communities, districts, provinces and the region as such;
- __ To establish programme priorities in the light of available information;
- __ To identify training needs within the assistance community;
- __ To review proposals for programmes and projects on the basis of available information and established priorities in order to ensure
 - that duplication is avoided;
 - that principles and norms are adhered to and differences in interpretation are arbitrated;
 - that available system-wide resources are utilised efficiently;
 - that programme formulation gradually moves beyond a traditional sectoral approach through promoting the implementation of integrated programmes. In this manner, the complementarity of agencies and/or organisations is utilised to the greatest extent possible in meeting needs in Afghan constituencies.

It will not be possible to achieve the above immediately. Preparation of the 1999 Appeal (issued in late 1998) will reflect progress made and identify further steps required.

- __ To recommend to the APB arrangements for dealing with local and/or regional authorities - to ensure that the assistance community acts in a coherent fashion vis a vis these authorities. It is proposed that no agency or organisation should seek authorities' official views or decisions on issues without prior discussion with the RCB;

- _ address technical bottlenecks; and
- _ to exchange any other relevant information.

The RCB will work on the basis of consensus. Further consideration is to required as to how consensus decision making will be achieved; it will require the elaboration of some procedural ground rules and steps to build in the needed competencies - for example, chairing skills to make meetings effective - to make it work.

A premise of RCBs' work that all proposals concerning any intervention within a region by any members of the assistance community is to be made known and discussed if necessary by the RCB before any further action is taken by the member. It is recognised that this cannot be enforced - that, for example, donor governments have the right to raise issues directly with authorities and that they, and other assistance actors, may be disinclined to have such communication screened by an RCB.

Ultimately, the system will rely upon goodwill and upon assistance actors recognising that it is in their collective interest to support and liaise with the RCB. Having said this, RCBs should report to other parts of the coordination structure on any intervention that come to their attention that has not been recommended in accordance with the stipulated procedure, particularly if the effect is detrimental to principled common programming.

4.2.2 Structure of the RCB

In terms of organisational structure, the RCB will mirror the APB - namely that it will be a numerically balanced board constituted by NGOs and UN agencies (see below). Those agencies and organisations implementing projects and/or programmes in the region are eligible. Such UN agencies will automatically be members as will the NGO coordinating bodies; other NGO members need be selected by the NGO community, on a rotating or any other basis. Meetings will be hosted and chaired by the RCO. The Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC, on a basis which respects its unique mandate and protection role, will be invited to participate.

It is proposed that where donors have a presence in the region - for example, the European Commission in Kabul - they be members of the RCB. The participation of visiting donor governments, especially the APB Troika (see 4.4.2 below) in RCB work should be encouraged, not least in connection with the preparation of the Consolidated Appeal.

To the extent that other coordination mechanism exist in the region, e.g. within the ACBAR structure, these should be merged with the RCB to avoid duplication and related wastage of sparse resources, including time. Sharing of premises and equipment might be considered as an initial step.

As a natural consequence of the above, the facilities already available to the RCO should be put at the disposal of the RCB and the assistance community as a whole (see below). It is envisaged that the creation of RCBs will reduce duplication of coordination efforts and thereby save time and money. However, there may be some initial costs involved in establishing the proposed common services.

4.3 Common Services

On the regional level, with a view to greater efficiency and reducing total costs to the assistance community, it is recommended that the following services be provided through the office of the RCO.

Communication and security: all agencies and organisations shall have access to communication facilities for long-range communication (radio, telex, e-mail) against full coverage of costs. Furthermore, all organisations shall have access to local communication networks (walkie-talkies), possibly on dedicated frequencies, taking into account local operational realities. Guidelines on the use of communication facilities will be agreed and disseminated, not least to avoid their abuse. The RCO is to ensure that all information on the local, regional and national security situation is disseminated to all agencies and organisations

Transfer of cash: organisations should, when required, be allowed to utilise the UNOCHA flight services to transfer cash from Pakistan to field offices. This recommendation is intended to reduce costs and risks of such transfers which at the moment often are handled through information banking channels. It is clear that the proposed arrangement may have implications related to security, liability etc. These need to be addressed.

Use of vehicles: Consistent with operational priorities, all agencies should allow non-UN staff to travel as passengers in UN-vehicles through utilising the standard waiver-form.

Meeting space: The office of the RCO shall include a meeting room with appropriate facilities, thus providing for coordination meetings

Information services: The office of the RCO shall be equipped to handle a full range of required information services, including access to ProMis, other types of relevant material (reports on needs assessments and surveys, maps, technical information, evaluation reports), updated financial information (funding, budgets etc). Furthermore, the office shall organise, document and prepare minutes of RCB meetings (including meetings of thematic groups), distribution of the same as well as other types of information material etc.

4.4 The Afghanistan Programming Board

Coordination on a national level and on a system-wide basis will be facilitated through the establishment of the *Afghanistan Programming Board (APB)*, members of which will come from the UN system, the NGO and donor communities. ICRC will be invited to participate in a capacity which respects its special mandate and protection activities.

4.4.1 Mandate and tasks of the APB

The overall functions of the APB will be:

1. To agree upon national assistance programming priorities;
2. To determine how principles and operational guidelines can be practically applied in the formulation of sectoral policies and assistance programmes;
3. To review and consolidate programmes submitted by RCBs and to check the degree to which submissions adhere to agreed upon common norms, principles and standards. The APB will have particular responsibility for the integrity of programmes with pan-regional or national objective.

4. To facilitate the preparation and launch of the Consolidated Appeal.

5. To manage the Common Programming core functions, including the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

In fulfilling its functions, the APB may appoint Thematic Groups, in particular with regard to the second two elements in the APB mandate.

Suggestions for the establishment of Thematic Groups will come from the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, Regional Coordinating Boards, individual agencies and/or NGOs, NGO coordinating bodies or from the Monitoring and Evaluation System (see below). Likewise, concrete proposals on strategies and procedures may be elaborated by one or more of these entities for subsequent review by the relevant Thematic Group(s) and finally by the APB.

Each Thematic Group will be co-chaired by a UN-agency and an NGO and will be open to participation by interested assistance actors. Recommendations by Thematic Groups will be made by consensus for approval by the APB. The APB's subsequent decisions will be normative and as such applicable to all actors involved in the common assistance programme. The compliance with these normative decisions will be monitored by the Monitoring and Evaluation System.

In cases where a consensus cannot be reached within the Thematic Group, the issue may be submitted to the APB for further review and final decision.

4.4.2 Structure of the Afghanistan Programming Board.

The APB will be composed of Representatives/Country Directors of all UN agencies and programmes as well as heads of NGO coordinating bodies and individual NGOs. It will also be open to the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, UNSMA and the ICRC.

To ensure a fair and full representation of all involved, a numerical balance will be maintained between the UN and NGO participation. The NGO community will need to determine the basis of its own involvement. It is suggested that in the selection of individual NGO, factors such as capacity as well as geographical and sectoral scope of activities be taken into account. Furthermore, it is regarded as indispensable that both Afghan and international NGOs be represented within the APB.

Donor governments will need to determine among themselves the basis of their own participation. For example, those with major bilateral programmes may wish to be full time members; others may feel that this is not necessary or that they do not have the local capacity.

As a basis for discussion, one formula might be a two tier approach:

a) to include all donor governments that put significant assistance funding into Afghanistan as participants or observers to the two key APB meetings each year - to review the overall situation and to establish national programming priorities (mid-February) and to review and consolidate programmes (mid September);

b) to invite the past, present and future chairs of the ASG (i.e. the ASG Troika) to serve as full time members of the APB. At a minimum, the Troika's tasks will include preparation for and participation in the two key

programme cycle meetings each year, and preparation for and attendance at important programme policy and review meetings.

Regarding the ASG, it has determined its own membership which is limited to those donors who have consistently and most generously responded to UN Consolidated Appeals over the last decade. The role of other donor governments, neighbouring and refugee host countries in particular, in common programming may need further consideration, not least bearing in mind their involvement in political negotiations relating to Afghanistan.

All sessions of the APB will be conducted either in Islamabad, Peshawar or, when feasible, in Afghanistan and be chaired by the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. All decisions and recommendations are to be reached through consensus. As there may be considerable divergence of views, this will require good process management skills and possibly the agreement of basic procedural groundrules. The UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator will propose specific steps to build these.

The following charts attempt to show the current and proposed programming arrangements.

4.4 Core Functions

Core functions, accountable to the APB, will support programme formulation, coordination and consolidation on both the regional and national level. Core Functions cover eight distinct - but mutually reinforcing categories.

4.4.1 Policy setting and clarification

Currently, there is considerable confusion regarding the translation of agreed principles into meaningful policies on the ground. Agencies have chosen to interpret key principles - for example, regarding the principled centred approach to gender, and the prohibition on engagement in institution building efforts of the Afghan authorities as long as their discriminatory practices continue (see the ECHA guidelines of 3rd June 1997) - in many different ways. A primary function of the APB will be to review these principles, to arbitrate between differing interpretations of them, and to provide clear guidance on their translation into practice.

4.4.2 Programme review and prioritisation

The APB will be responsible for reviewing the programming **priorities** prepared by the seven RCBs with a view to ensuring consistency and complementarity both within and between sectors at the national level. It will determine national programme priorities largely accordingly. Once the regions have identified specific **programmes**, the APB will be responsible for reviewing and aggregating them with a view to their inclusion in the Consolidated Appeal.

4.4.3 Information management

To facilitate informed decision-making in programme development and to ensure that programme initiatives, designed within the framework of agreed programme priority areas, address the highest-impact activities while also avoiding duplication, the strengthening of a shared programme information system is an utmost priority.

This information system will need to provide, in an easily accessible and user-friendly manner, information on past, ongoing and planned assistance programmes, as well as provide aid practitioners with up-to-date baseline information of a sectoral, regional or thematic nature. It will be responsible for preparing quarterly Situation Reports on the political, economic and social situation. By gradual extension, the data set will also develop into a continuous trend series providing critical inputs into the common monitoring and evaluation of assistance programmes and their impact.

The Programme Management Information System (ProMIS) project, located in the Office of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, will be the vehicle for achieving this and will link stakeholders in a electronic data exchange network. ProMIS will be made accessible to all Common Programming partners in each region so as to facilitate their ongoing analysis and planning.

4.4.4 Monitoring and evaluation

An essential dimension of common programming is a common approach to monitoring and evaluation, and the gradual development of such a common approach requires the establishment of a standards development service on the national level. Four critical tasks will need to be provided by this service: a review of existing monitoring and evaluation practices and standards; the planning and facilitation of the thematic monitoring and evaluation of related programmes; the design of what can be considered and accepted as common standards for all monitoring and evaluation; and, finally, the maintenance of a central depository of monitoring and evaluation reports so that future programmes can benefit from the cumulative lessons learned under previous programmes.

A separate memorandum on monitoring and evaluation for common programming is being circulated with this document. Its proposals are designed to satisfy the purposes described above.

The combined wealth of information and guidance from this service will, in turn, be fed into and accessible on the ProMIS information network.

4.4.5 Capacity assessment

Cross-fertilisation among the different aid organisations, whether they work in different or similar sectors, is expected to lead to more common approaches in programme design and implementation. A first step in that direction would be to develop and maintain an assessment of capacities and skills as an essential input into concrete programme coordination, thematic networking and skills transfer. In concrete terms, a common format for registration of the capacity and skills of agencies and organisations will have to be developed (preferably in close coordination with ProMIS), based on which all agencies and organisations will be asked to report. The format will include information on current programmes and projects (including budgets and basic strategies by sector and region), staffing level and categories, monitoring and evaluation activities, internal training activities etc. It is regarded as imperative that capacity assessment is initiated as soon as possible.

4.4.6 The Consolidated Appeal

The 1998 Appeal, issued in February 1998, was a transitional one in that it anticipated that the Appeal process will need to be revised in light of common programming. The Appeal will be a natural product of the programming cycle. It is recommended that, in future, it be issued in October to fit in with most donors' own funding cycles. The focus on programmes (rather than on a list of projects) and its regional underpinnings,

combined with the presence of a donor troika on the APB as it reviews both programme priorities and then programme submissions will facilitate more informed funding decisions and decrease the possibility that certain sectors or activities receive little or no attention while others are oversubscribed.

4.4.7 Provision of training opportunities

An area where the need and scope for common approaches has been most clearly felt is that of training, in already identified areas (such as needs assessment techniques, cultural sensitivity; conflict resolution; negotiation and presentation skills; team-building; project planning; project cycle management; monitoring and evaluation; gender mainstreaming; human rights; etc.) as well as other areas the need for which will emerge as the common programming process evolves. A common service capacity needs therefore to be created soonest, both for needs assessment and for the actual planning and implementation of training programmes. As an initial step, it is recommended that consultants are hired to make a system-wide assessment of existing training resources, ongoing and planned training activities as well as specific training needs.

4.4.8 Administration and logistics

With regard to administration and logistics, the APB will review the existing configuration of offices and support services and will make recommendations as to how they could be rationalised

5. Stakeholder responsibilities

Realism is required as to what can be achieved in the near future, and how common programming might contribute to the broader goal of achieving peace in Afghanistan. Overall success depends upon stakeholder commitment, and upon mutual goodwill in working towards a new way of doing business. Without these, it cannot work.

Stakeholders include a wide cast of players, including:

- Afghans;
- UN Member States, including refugee host countries, other neighbouring countries, and donor governments;
- the UN family including international financial institutions;
- the NGO community; the ICRC and federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies;
- the private sector, both international, regional and local.

Each of these groups has specific opportunities - should they should to exercise them - to help build peace in Afghanistan. These responsibilities need to be further elaborated as part of the broader Strategic Framework initiative (see Annex B).

Equally, common programming, which if successful can contribute to the achievement of peace, presents stakeholders with specific opportunities and responsibilities. The most salient might be summarised as follows:

5.1 Afghans

Common programming will not be sustainable unless Afghans are fully engaged and can eventually assume responsibility for it.

5.1.1 Civil society

Common programming is intended to ensure that assistance activities are driven by needs identified in close collaboration with Afghan communities and beneficiaries. Every opportunity should be explored for involving the dwindling number of Afghan technocrats in the basic elements of common programming - for example, in researching and analysing the political, social and economic situation, in programme management, capacity assessments and in the provision of common services and core functions.

Other constituencies will also need to be engaged. Further work is needed on how they should be engaged, by whom and on what basis. Below are some preliminary considerations.

The programme formulation process will be demand driven with needs identified through a dialogue with a number of Afghan constituencies, which are not mutually exclusive:

- rural communities, including nomadic groups;
- urban communities, including traders, truckers, entrepreneurs etc.;
- refugees;
- Afghans settled abroad;
- technocrats; and
- authorities

Whenever relevant, assessments of needs and resources within communities will ideally be undertaken by NGO- and/or UN field staff, using participatory techniques. Women will be directly involved in the participatory assessment of needs. The skills required in the assistance community to undertake these assessments need to be strengthened and disseminated. A medium to long term approach to community organisation in specific Afghan cultural contexts will be required. Lessons and experience need to be drawn from successful community organisation projects, whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere.

These assessments may be supplemented by available data from surveys in the region as well as among communities of refugees and internally displaced persons who are contemplating to return to their point of origin but unable or unwilling to do so because of reported conditions. To facilitate sharing of information on needs and resources (notably through PromIS), methodologies and formats used to assess needs should be standardised to the extent possible.

5.1.2 Authorities

The absence of a functioning, recognised national government complicates prospects for involving Afghans in common programming. Ideally, responsibility for common programming should be shared with Afghan authorities, allowing it to be a true compact between them and the international assistance community. Consideration should be given at an early stage to the possibility of a negotiated peace and its implications for Afghan engagement in and ownership of Common Programming

As a first step in this direction, it is proposed that RCBs should recommend to the APB the basis, if any, on which regional authorities might be involved in their work - for example, in working groups set up to address

specific problems. In making such recommendations, RCBs should be responsive to the views of local communities as to local presumptive authorities should be involved in initiating and implementing projects..

The full involvement of national authorities in the work of the APB will need to await the emergence of a recognised national government. The APB will provide guidance on appropriate parameters for relations with authorities, depending upon the political situation.

In the meantime, it is recommended that the decisions of both RCBs and the APB be systematically shared through RCBs with regional authorities. It is recommended that if and when a recognised government is installed in Afghanistan, or if and when peace negotiations are formally engaged, the involvement of authorities in, and eventual responsibility for, common programming be an agenda item.

5.2 UN and NGOs

- Formal commitment to support common programming by headquarters and local Heads of Agencies
- Willingness to present all their programmes and to include information about all funding sources and deployment of funds in annual Consolidated Appeals.
- Willingness to implement new working arrangements in the field in line with proposed rationalisation of geographic areas and roles for the Regional Coordination Bodies in identifying programmes and in preparation of projects.
- Willingness to abide by decisions reached through the Afghan Programming Board on policy and operational matters.

5.3 Donor governments

- Commitment to seeking endorsement of common programming from each of relevant executive bodies of UN agencies, funds and programmes.
- Willingness only to consider requests for funding that have been included in the Consolidated Appeal (or in any interim Appeal) regardless of whether such requests will be met bilaterally or through the UN.
- A formal role in achieving policy clarity and programming efficiency through the Afghan Programming Board and the proposed troika arrangement.
- Willingness to fund requests through the Consolidated Appeal to support the realisation of common programming - for example, to strengthen NGO coordination activities.

6. Main recommendations

It is proposed that the following recommendations are given immediate attention.

1. The Afghanistan Programming Board and seven Regional Coordination Bodies should be established and gear their work to the Common Programme Cycle, particularly the launching of the Consolidated Appeal.
2. Thematic or other Groups with time specific tasks should immediately be established by the APB to address urgent issues that require the translation of principles and norms into practicable policies and guidelines,

including sectoral (e.g. in education or home schooling) or in setting technical, human resource or other standards.

3. Preparations should be made, as part of ongoing negotiations with presumptive authorities, for the formulation of a Code of Conduct to be agreed and eventually promoted by both Afghan authorities and external assistance actors.
4. An assessment of Afghan and external actors' capacities, including in participatory needs assessment, should immediately be initiated. A common base line information system on agency resources, capacities and skills should be established as part of ProMIS.
5. Training needs should be identified - for example in participatory needs assessment and gender mainstreaming - and opportunities provided through the APB to support common programming, wherever possible using existing resources, ongoing or planned training activities.
6. The APB should find the means, drawing upon existing activities by individual agencies if possible, to support and publish research and information into the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.
7. Detailed work on the practical implications of common programming should be initiated as soon as the mechanisms suggested are approved by stakeholders. The meeting of the Afghan Support Group of donors on May 5th, to which UN agencies, funds and programmes have been invited as well as representatives of NGO coordination bodies, will be critical in this regard.

Implementation of common programming will be a gradual process. Adapting individual agencies' working practices and programme cycles to it will take time - particularly for donors, the bigger UN agencies and NGOs. It is clear that the various elements of common programming will fall into place in different schedules and time frames. For example, the assessment of needs, however improved, will remain an ongoing exercise, and the full establishment of common services will be need to be spread over a period of time.

But this should not delay the implementation of other elements of the common programming mechanism, particularly the establishment of the APB and RCBs; the programme review by the APB and the RCBs in September 1998; and completing a necessarily abbreviated programme cycle for the 1999 Consolidated Appeal - so it can be launched in early October 1998.

Should the main proposals in this document be approved on May 5th, it is proposed that all stakeholders be invited to indicate what the practical implications for them will be of common programming - for example, in terms of programming and funding cycles, human resources and other issues. A more detailed 'route map' then be prepared for the implementation of common programming.

Finally, it is suggested that early consideration should be given to the implications for common programming and overall assistance activities of a peace settlement in Afghanistan. The sustainability of common programming depends upon Afghan engagement and ownership of it, and detailed consideration needs to be given, notwithstanding the complex circumstances which pertain in Afghanistan today, to Afghan authorities' assumption of responsibility for and direction of the assistance effort.

Annex A: Current situation

Common programming in Afghanistan is predicated on the assumption that all of the ‘stakeholders’ – actors with a direct stake in the provision of assistance - share a common understanding of the environment in which assistance will be implemented. Having this common understanding - of the political situation, economy and society, and of the circumstances faced by women and vulnerable groups - is particularly important in a fragmented state where external assistance can have a great impact on peoples’ lives. There are various elements to achieving this common understanding, ranging from a knowledge of the history and culture of Afghanistan to having information and insight into the current political/military, economic/social and humanitarian domains.

Very incomplete, and in some cases even misleading, information is always available. It can be and, in the absence of more reliable information, often is used to carry out situation analyses of the environment in Afghanistan. What reliable information that does exist is not always shared with those who might most benefit from it in preparing and implementing programmes.

The absence of reliable information is a serious lacuna which common programming, through the Programme Management and Information Service (ProMIS) and other means, is already trying to or will eventually address. But in the meantime, the current exercise is informed by the following analysis of some key variables.

A.1 Political Situation

Afghanistan has been at war for more than 18 years and active conflict between and among various factions is continuing. The international community, as represented by the General Assembly and the Security Council, has in recent years repeatedly called upon the Afghan parties to cease all armed hostilities, arrange a cease-fire and enter into a negotiating process leading to the formation of a fully representative transitional government of national unity. In this regard full support has been lent to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan in their efforts to facilitate reconciliation and reconstruction.

The Secretary-General, in his most recent report to the General Assembly, has concluded that unfortunately the Afghan parties do not seem prepared to abandon the war option. All factions are furthermore receiving abundant support and military supplies from external actors, allowing them to continue the conflict. The approach of the United Nations in this situation has been to maintain a dialogue with all Afghan parties, as well as prominent Afghan individuals and groups not involved in the fighting, in order to foster reconciliation and engender interest in peace.

The other essential element in the strategy of the United Nations has been to bring together Afghanistan’s neighbours plus the Russian Federation and the United States into a contact group known as the “6 plus 2”. The purpose of this group is to develop a regional political consensus which would support a peace process in Afghanistan. It is recognised that Pakistan and Iran, as the two neighbours of Afghanistan which have accepted the largest number of refugees and hence are the most affected by the war, are particularly important. The Special Envoy, on his most recent visit to the region in March and April of this year, discussed the prospects for peace with high level officials in both Islamabad and Tehran.

Following the visit of the Special Envoy to the region and the visit of Ambassador Richardson of the United States to Afghanistan in April, at the time of writing plans are afoot to convene in late April a Steering Committee for a Ulema meeting under joint UN and OIC auspices. It is hoped that such a meeting would among other things address short-term goals such as a cease-fire and exchange of prisoners as well as longer term political issues.

Despite these developments and the continuing efforts of the Special Envoy, at the time of writing, it would appear that neither the immediate goal of the United Nations (a cease-fire and exchange of prisoners) nor the longer-term goals (a political dialogue resulting in reconciliation and the formation of a representative government) are likely to be realised in the near future.

Current political strategy

At the time of writing, the political negotiating strategy is based upon certain assumptions: that Afghanistan's neighbours need peace as much as it does – the war in Afghanistan has had profound implications for its neighbouring countries; that no peace is possible in Afghanistan unless all arms and ammunition supply to the warring factions is stopped; that an embargo on arms can only succeed if the neighbouring countries actively assist in enforcing it; that no single faction, at the present time, can govern the totality of Afghan territory by itself and a government of national unity, composed of the different factions, is therefore needed; and that the Taliban proposal, which has been accepted by the Northern Alliance, calling for an *Ulema* convention may be an important first step towards peace. Finally, that all factions must make significant progress in the area of human rights, particularly the treatment of women and minority ethnic groups, in order to attain sustainable peace, international recognition and full scale resumption of reconstruction and developmental assistance.

A.2 Economic

There are few tools and data to understand the economy and hence not much can be said with certainty about its size and structure. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are substantial regional differences. Some parts are flourishing, but the predominant characterisation is that of a fragmented, informal, and subsistence economy.

Main economic activities are agriculture and trade. There are signs of increased production of cereal and other agricultural products in areas where there is relative peace. Agriculture is dominated by cultivation and production of poppy, which accounts for approximately \$100 million of income for Afghan farmers. The trade sector is vibrant in certain areas, such as border towns. Much trade consists of smuggling - Afghanistan is being used as a conduit for transportation of goods to neighbouring countries. Most manufacturing activity is in the form of small-scale or home-based production of agriculture-based products, carpets and rugs, leather goods and handicrafts. Large-scale or informal manufacturing capacity is almost non-existent.

A sizeable portion of the physical infrastructure in Afghanistan has been destroyed or has gone into disrepair due to lack of maintenance. Roads, canals, irrigation channels had been severely affected by widespread mining and war-related destruction, although some have been subsequently repaired and put back into use. Cultural and tourist sites have been looted. There is limited availability of energy, telecommunications, water and sewerage facilities, and what exists is mainly in urban centres. Many rural areas lack even the most rudimentary infrastructure. Environmental damage, including the widespread exploitation of woodlands and forests for fuel and housing, is extensive.

Most economic services are provided by the informal sector. The financial sector is dominated by informal moneylenders and money changers who are quite efficient but effectively unregulated. The Central Bank does exist but is carrying on the very limited functions of collecting utility bills and taxes. Official economic management structures are working with few trained personnel, who are paid extremely low salaries and have to supplement their incomes by other means. There is very little effort or control by the authorities to regulate markets or managing economic activities. Market forces determine prices, exchange rates and many other facets of economic life, often leading to severe hardships for the population. Even though there are no quantifiable statistics on income distribution and poverty, it can be said without much ambiguity that Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in Asia.

Uncertainties related to the peace process, and the disruption and destruction created by continued fighting, do not allow much optimism for the revival of Afghanistan's macro-economy in the near future. However, there are indications that economic revival is taking place in a limited fashion in many areas. The assistance community, working with local authorities and using community participation techniques, is making headway in improving agricultural practices and production, providing income generation opportunities for both men and women, providing clean and safe water supply to rural areas, training and educating the population for a better economic future. However, these efforts would gain a greater impetus if the political conditions improve and there is peace to carry on the momentous task of economic development.

Determining policies and setting up appropriate structures to revive the economy would be one of the top priorities of any future government. In addition, in a post-conflict scenario, there will be many needs - to restore or build infrastructure, to set up appropriate economic management structures, establish formal financial institutions and economic services, and set up and implement good governance mechanisms.

A.3 Social and humanitarian

The quality of life in Afghanistan is extremely poor and human suffering is pervasive. In 1996 Afghanistan was ranked 169th in the UN Human Development Index (out of 174 countries). In terms of social indicators Afghanistan has one of the lowest life expectancy and highest rates of infant and maternal mortality. It ranks far below the South Asian average on indicators of literacy, mean years of schooling, and educational attainment. Although various UN agencies and NGOs are providing health services, health indicators are poor mainly because of the very low access of the population to health services, due to poverty, and poor awareness of gain from modern health care facilities. The war has created large numbers of displaced, homeless and destitute people. Despite major repatriation, approximately 3 million people remain as refugees outside the country. Afghanistan's social fabric has been severely affected by the war. Social services provided by the public sector are almost non-operative, but exist in pockets where NGOs and UN agencies are providing valuable inputs. With low levels of social development, a poor economic environment, and few economic opportunities, the hardships faced by the Afghans are immense. Women and children have suffered most; females have unequal or no access to what rudimentary health and education facilities remain. Little is known about the psychological suffering endured by them as a result of family loss, conflict and discrimination.

Afghanistan currently receives approximately \$150-200 million annually through the budgets of various UN agencies, through NGOs, and through periodic appeals by the United Nations. The UN system mobilises approximately half of the total aid for Afghanistan, the bulk of it in the form of humanitarian assistance. The

international and Afghan NGOs access the other half from their own sources, notably the European Union. They play an important role in being the implementing partners to the UN agencies.

The role of NGOs in reaching Afghan beneficiaries at the district, village and community levels is well recognised. The assistance community has in many sectors assumed the role of *de facto* administration in the absence of Afghan government counterparts. For instance, one NGO is the main provider of education in large parts of the country. Similarly FAO's operations provide most of the agricultural extension services for crops and livestock. While providing many essential services, poor coordination among assistance providers is generally believed to be resulting in a sub-optimal impact on the ground.

Shared understanding and analysis of the political, social/humanitarian and economic situation is lacking. Regular research and analysis is lacking. If available, this might enhance and deepen shared understanding of the multiple dimensions of Afghan economy and society. Such research might include succinct analysis of political developments, the economic environment (including analysis of key prices, exchange rates, and overall economic activity), and the social/humanitarian situation, not least as it affects women and children, including an assessment of relief supplies, main humanitarian activities in the regions, etc.

A.4 Assistance in Afghanistan

International assistance to Afghanistan has produced mixed results. There have been some undoubted successes, and many individuals and communities have benefited directly and indirectly from the continued willingness of the international community to provide funding for assistance, and from the dedicated work of the NGOs, the ICRC, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

In extraordinarily difficult circumstances, countless lives have been saved and much misery relieved; millions of refugees and displaced people have been assisted; heavily populated and agriculturally important areas have been cleared of mines and unexploded ordnance; homes, schools and clinics have been rebuilt; tens of thousands of disabled have been reached and supported; children have been immunised and their education supported; canals, water and sanitation systems built or restored; livestock and crops safeguarded and increased.

But from the beginning of the war almost 18 years ago, assistance has rarely been proactive. Rather, it has reacted to changing political and military environments, to changing external alliances, to a panoply of political actors who have arrived and departed with their own agendas, and to the institutional imperatives of donors, agencies and implementing partners.

Understanding and analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, of how assistance impacts the population, notably women and children, and of the actual and potential capacity of the Afghans to address their own problems has not typically informed the activities of the international assistance community. Thus, while assistance has undoubtedly helped many people, it has been characterised by the absence of collective prioritisation and planning based upon identified needs and upon assessment of Afghans' and international actors' capacities. This has meant that many opportunities – for peace, self governance, sustainable development – may have been lost. Rather than be geared to shared overall objectives, assistance activities and projects have often taken on a life and logic all their own.

Moreover, the principles and policies which underpin and guide the provision of assistance have been singular to individual assistance organisations, often contradictory and largely unenforced. Collective commitment to

fundamental principles, operational guidelines and to common policies has been missing. This is apparent, for example, in the variety of approaches to gender and to capacity building with technical departments working under the direction of presumptive authorities. For many years, the political motor behind the provision of assistance was the imperative of supporting the rural resistance in its efforts to eject the communist government and its backers from Afghanistan. The arrival of the Taliban on the Afghan scene has brought the whole issue of the basis on which assistance should be provided into much sharper and long overdue focus. It has also highlighted the practical difficulties of interpreting agreed principles and translating them into practice.

The last 18 months have seen vigorous efforts by all actors to improve coordination. The formation in early 1997 of the Afghan Support Group of donors, representing the 14 donors who have provided approximately 85% of the funds through the UN over the last decade, has laid the basis for much closer collaboration between donors on policy and funding issues. Concurrently, in the UN, the separate functions of coordinating humanitarian and development assistance were combined and a single UN assistance Coordinator appointed. Senior Regional Coordination Officers were assigned inside Afghanistan in summer 1997.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, coordination remains problematic. Its success depends upon the competence of those offering coordination services. But more fundamentally, it depends upon two key elements. First, the willingness of assistance actors to be coordinated in the interests of a greater common good. There remain both attitudinal and practical hurdles; some actors are disinclined to be coordinated, others feel they lack the capacity and resources required to join the appropriate fora. Second, success depends upon it being seen to offer clear advantages to those involved (or clear disadvantages to those not involved). These have been largely lacking, although this may be changing. Ultimately, financial considerations are paramount. In recent months, donors have indicated that one criterion for responding to funding requests, whether through the Appeal or otherwise, will be whether projects demonstrably relate to other activities - in effect, whether coordinated.

Currently, the assistance effort in Afghanistan might be characterised as project driven rather than priority driven. Projects are formulated either by agencies, whether UN or NGO, often in isolation, and are then either submitted for inclusion in the Consolidated Appeal or directly to funding bodies. Either way, donors are presented with a 'shopping list' of projects with little way of telling whether programmes have met certain criteria, for example, whether regarding their adherence to a principle centred approach or the degree to which they have been coordinated with other assistance activities. Moreover, the lines of communication in formulating programmes are unclear.

Chart C (see Annex C) attempts to capture the current coordination system.

A.5 Relations with presumptive authorities

Over the last 18 years, assistance actors have developed a variety of ways of dealing with the shifting cast of political and military authorities. Some have sought to engage with them and seek their full participation in the choice, planning and implementation of projects; others have largely bypassed them or treated them as a source of non objection certificates. Competition between authorities, their administrative weakness, and sometimes their disinterest in assistance has combined with lack of policy cohesion among assistance actors – donors, UN and NGOs - to create a complex and confusing scene characterised by absence of accepted ground rules for dealing with authorities.

Over the last year, attempts have been made to clarify matters, not least through the appointment of Regional Coordination Officers (RCOs) entrusted with overall responsibility for dealing with authorities on behalf of the UN and, if so desired, the NGO community, but this has only been partially successful. Individual agencies have reserved the right and insisted upon the need to maintain direct relations and have not been discouraged from doing so by the authorities themselves.

One upshot is that the international community emits conflicting signals which have contributed to deep misunderstandings on both sides and resulted in a number of ugly incidents, including, for example, the summary expulsion of UN and NGO staff. Assistance actors remain highly vulnerable to pressures and manipulation by authorities both in the choice and implementation of projects and, in some instances, in the choice of staff.

Annex B: Common programming within the broader Strategic Framework initiative

This document results from a number of decisions and events over the last 18 months. The following Charts (A and B) attempt to summarise these and to explain the relationship between processes driven from the field and from headquarters.

Chart A

Strategic Framework and Assistance Strategy Strategic Framework: how they are related

Field driven:

Ashgabad
(Jan 97)

First ASG meeting (April 97)

Strategic Framework mission to field (Sept/Oct 97)

Draft Assistance Strategy (Nov 97)

ASG New York (Dec 97)

Common programming document (May 98)

Headquarter driven:

Review of Political Emergencies
and international response (96/97)

ACC choose Afghanistan (April 97)

Draft Strategic Framework (Nov 97)

HQ discussions (Dec-Feb 98)

2nd draft Strategic Framework for
Afghanistan (Feb 98)

ACC discussion of SFA (March 98)

An early impetus for the formulation of an assistance strategy came from the preparatory work for and outcome of the Ashgabad Forum on International Assistance to Afghanistan in January 1997. The formation of the Afghan Support Group (ASG) of donors in early 1997 further catalysed efforts to articulate an assistance strategy, as did

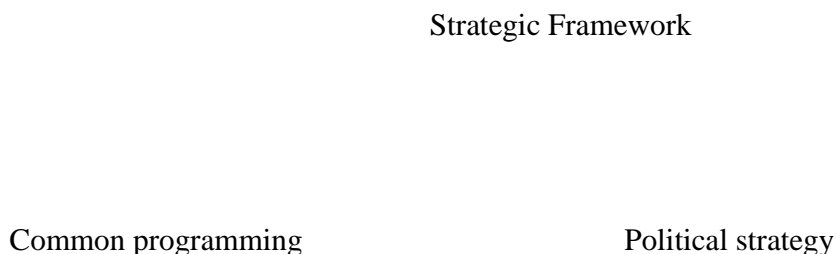
the decision in April 1997 of the UN's Administrative Committee on Coordination to chose Afghanistan as a test case for reviewing the capacity of the UN system to act in a concerted and integrated way in crisis situations. This decision resulted in a headquarters' mission coming to the region in September 1997 and the preparation of a draft Strategic Framework for Afghanistan.

With a view to addressing the practical concerns of stakeholders in the region, a draft Assistance Strategy was prepared, drawing upon the draft Strategic Framework, and submitted to stakeholders in late 1997, notably the ASG in New York on December 3rd. The ASG requested that further work be undertaken to develop the strategy and that a document elaborating common programming – this one - be prepared by the time of the May 1998 ASG meeting in London.

There has undoubtedly been confusion regarding the respective roles and relationships between the Strategic Framework, the Assistance Strategy and the UN's political efforts. To a certain degree, given the innovative nature of the work being undertaken, this has been inevitable. Expectations of what each of the three should aim to do have evolved, adding to the confusion. For example, from the field perspective, it is increasingly clear that assistance actors cannot be held responsible for developing an overall strategy for bringing peace to Afghanistan - but they can contribute to a broader effort to do so. Thus reference to an 'assistance strategy' may be confusing, and should perhaps be dropped, recognising that assistance can contribute to an overall strategy - but not be one. The following chart points to a possible future relationship:

Chart B

Relationship between the Strategic Framework, common programming and the Political Strategy



Under this rubric, the purpose of the **Strategic Framework** is to set out the rationale for a more integrated approach by the international community to the problems of a country in crisis - Afghanistan. It sets out an overriding vision and goal that should inform collective efforts to build peace. It sets out a strategy for achieving peace, embracing both assistance and political actors. It outlines the partnerships that will be required to realise this goal – whether between the people of Afghanistan and the international community, between political and assistance actors, and within the assistance community. It sets out the principles and modalities for partnership and overall policies that should inform both the assistance and political strategies.

The decision of the Secretary General in late March 1998 to entrust overall responsibility for the Strategic Framework process at the global level to the Deputy Secretary General is intended to bring greater clarity

regarding its purpose, responsibilities for it within the UN, and to boost efforts to ensure genuine participation and ownership of the process both within the UN and among its partners, and to garner headquarters' support for efforts underway in the field.

The purpose of **common programming** is to propose practical working arrangements whereby the collective impact of assistance activities on beneficiaries can be improved in a principled and resource efficient manner. Ideally, common programming influences, is guided by and elaborates the vision, goal and unifying strategy laid out in the Strategic Framework. Responsibility for facilitating the formulation and implementation of common programming rests at the country level with the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan.

The purpose of the **political strategy** is to seek a negotiated peace to the Afghan conflict. Responsibility for it rests with the Secretary General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan and the UN Special Mission for Afghanistan. It too should influence, be guided by and elaborate the vision, goals and strategy laid out in the Strategic Framework.