

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS ON STATUS OF THE IASC LEVEL 3 RESPONSE IN SOUTH SUDAN

Background for IASC Principals discussion based on EDG and Principals' reviews to date, 4 May 2016

BACKGROUND

This note provides a brief overview of recent discussions at headquarters level regarding the System-Wide Level Three (L3) Surge Response designation for South Sudan, by the IASC Principals and Emergency Directors. It supports the IASC Principals' review and decision-making on the L3 designation of the inter-agency humanitarian response in South Sudan. This note should be read in conjunction with the HCT recommendations, which were submitted in early 2016: 'Review of the IASC Level 3 Response by the South Sudan HCT: Recommendation & Analysis.'

The Level 3 response in South Sudan was activated on 11 February 2014 and has been extended four times¹, for a total duration to date of over two years. At the last review in August 2015, the HC requested an extension of the L3 designation to make progress in meeting benchmarks, and presented a plan to transition the response out of L3 surge status. The IASC Principals agreed to extend the L3 designation for an additional three months, with the request that the HCT implement the plan and benchmarks. In early 2016, the HCT provided an updated analysis and recommendation to deactivate the L3 designation, accompanied by a set of forward-looking recommendations for high-level IASC action to support the humanitarian response in 2016.

DISCUSSIONS TO DATE

- **The South Sudan HCT reported that the L3 designation had accomplished its intended purpose and recommended deactivation, proposing a set of measures to maintain high-level focus on the response, given the continued gravity of the situation.** The HCT reported that progress had been made in implementing the L3 Transition Plan, and benchmarks within HCT control had been met. The analysis and recommendation also drew attention to the requirement for continued attention from the highest levels of the IASC, including on staffing, allocations and engagement with partners.
- **Upon reviewing progress and HCT recommendations at the Annual Review of Operations in January 2016, the Emergency Directors agreed that the response in South Sudan has been scaled up within the L3 mechanism, and this surge designation should not be extended further.** This was affirmed in a subsequent review by correspondence, in which some agencies noted that, given the continued gravity of the humanitarian situation and requirements in certain sectors, their corporate 'L3' or equivalent response status would be maintained, even if the system-wide surge designation was deactivated. The accompanying measures to maintain the visibility of the crisis and consistency of the international response were also broadly endorsed.
- **These recommendations were presented to the IASC Principals, and the subsequent review yielded overall agreement that the L3 surge response status should be deactivated**, in particular in the case that a renewed surge might need to be re-activated if the situation were to deteriorate sharply and outpace existing capacity. Following the review period, as the situation developed, two agencies have expressed concerns that deactivation of the system-wide L3 status might send an incongruous message with respect to the continued severity of the crisis, including access constraints and protection and rights violations, and a deterioration in food security, requesting that the system-wide recommendations and next steps be reassessed in the context of a dedicated discussion.
- **This discussion provides an opportunity to identify measures for the IASC to take as a collective to maintain the profile and resources required to address the sustained needs of affected people in South Sudan in light of developments and possible scenarios for 2016, as well as potential operational steps.**

¹ May 2014, November 2014, May 2015 and August 2015.