

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

JOINT MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP AND EMERGENCY DIRECTORS GROUP

26 APRIL 2018

Host: UNDP, New York

Final Summary Record

Opening Remarks

Ms. Ursula Mueller, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and Chair of the IASC Working Group emphasized this combined Working Group and Emergency Directors Group (WG/EDG) meeting should deliver concrete outcomes for both policy and operational issues, improve communication and foster shared purpose among IASC partners. Major humanitarian challenges require collective engagement by the IASC, including growing funding gaps and continued high levels of displacement. She highlighted the plight of people displaced by violence with little hope of return or durable solutions during her recent visits to the Central African Republic and Myanmar. Ms. Mueller also underlined the unique character of the IASC as a platform that includes UN agencies, NGOs and the RC/RC movement; and reiterated the need for the IASC to work better together, as well as to respond quickly and effectively to new needs and to find concrete solutions to collective challenges.

Mr. Michele Candotti, Chief of Staff, UNDP, noted the importance and timeliness of the joint WG/EDG meeting at a time of reform. The meeting will help shape the humanitarian community of practice, through contributions of the individual expertise in the room and actions decided in common. The outcomes should influence the way the UN system responds and works collaboratively together. Greater coherence is indispensable, especially when it comes to the 'new way of working' and the repositioning of the development system. He stressed that affected people have no time to comprehend the way the response is carried out; uncoordinated and incoherent responses are therefore an additional burden to the people we serve.

1. IASC Strategy Discussion Priorities for Collective Action

Facilitated by: Ms. Clare Dalton, Head of Humanitarian Diplomacy, ICRC

Introducing the session, Ms. Dalton highlighted the need to strengthen linkages between strategic priority setting and field operations, as well as IASC support to the coordinating role of Humanitarian Coordinators. Participants were invited to share their perspectives on opportunities and challenges ahead, with the purpose to identify priority issues that require concerted and collective action. As recognised in the Peer2Peer background paper, challenges are multi-dimensional and inter-related, yet there was also opportunity to flag additional issues that did not yet make it onto the IASC agenda.

Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process, for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), speaking by videoconference, noted that as an HC he relies heavily on the IASC and operational support. He called for less policy but more operational support and mentioned, as an example, the recent mission by Emergency Directors as helpful to highlight operations problems in the field. In his experience in Yemen and oPt, humanitarian action is directed towards those most in need, often a fraction of the population, while entrenched conflict affects the entire country. He indicated long-term challenges that confound time-bound humanitarian response, which itself is further restricted by the political influence of member states.

Response could be enhanced by clarifying where strategy should be set versus operational discussions and information-sharing. This would require emphasising the strategic focus of the HCT, and ensuring a functioning Inter-Cluster Coordination Group to address operational issues. He also suggested revisiting

the cluster system and promoting a phased approach, with ‘Tier 1’ emergency clusters active in the initial response, and other ‘Tier 2’ clusters more involved in the recovery phase.

Among challenges, Mr. McGoldrick highlighted access, donor indifference, protection, insecurity and uncertainty. He called upon the IASC Principals to share stronger advocacy messages and robust humanitarian diplomacy for political action to enable humanitarian access and end conflicts. He welcomed a discussion on enhancing the overall response, the set-up of the HCT, the humanitarian-development nexus, and donor funding (as development and humanitarian donors work from different budgets), while recognising that some issues require a contextual regional approach and others a global response.

In the plenary, he clarified that the cluster system is still needed, but that it should be less prescriptive, and better adapted to the local context. Clusters should be more independent from individual agency mandates, and more operational partners, including non-UN partners should be involved. In complex emergencies, it may be difficult to involve government partners and line ministries in the response, instead governments could be more involved in the normative aspects. He advocated for donors to be encouraged to become good “political” donors, not to undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the humanitarian role.

Ms. Mbaranga Gasarabwe, Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), speaking by videoconference from Bamako, provided insight into the access and security challenges in Mali. She commended the Peer2Peer mission, as well as the visits of Emergency Directors and of Security Directors. However, she also highlighted the need for more capacity for security and mitigation measures. The asymmetric threats of armed groups made it difficult to deliver to remote areas. She advocated for a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator to facilitate humanitarian delivery.

On the specific context in Mali, Ms. Gasarabwe described the deterioration of the State capacity to deliver basic services in some areas of the country, and the looming agro-pastoral and nutrition crisis, leading the most vulnerable to rely on humanitarian assistance. Operations take place in a challenging context, with frequent terrorist attacks in the north and central regions, where civilians are increasingly victims of improvised explosive devices. Humanitarian workers are subject to criminality in the same areas. UN agencies should step up security measures to facilitate movement to deep field locations. The situation resulted in numerous human rights violations. One of the biggest challenges would be to maintain the trust of the population.

Considering increasing humanitarian needs and insufficient funding for the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, urgent support from all levels of the IASC to mobilize resources and to put Mali on the international agenda would be needed. She called for robust diplomacy, with additional advocacy at country level. She requested coherence on security approaches among the humanitarian community, promoting the Saving Lives Together framework, sharing analysis and risk mitigation. Concerning the New Way of Working among development and humanitarian actors, more practical information and capacity was needed to operationalize the approach at country level.

In discussion about what the IASC could do differently, four critical issues were identified. These were access, including growing concerns about administrative impediments faced by NGOs in many different contexts, and security; resourcing/funding; cluster system/operational guidance and the way to navigate and operationalize the nexus. Inclusion of local actors and communities and better accountability were identified as enablers, as well as the importance of direct operational support by P2P and Emergency Directors. Finally, there was consensus around the need for robust humanitarian diplomacy, including a collective approach to speaking up and speaking out, for example on donor funding, access and collective approaches.

The Working Group/Emergency Directors:

- Reached agreement on priorities that require collective IASC action, namely:
 - Humanitarian Financing, including coherent IASC engagement with donors. There is also a need to identify new sources of funding and take up, in addition to the Grand Bargain, the two other pillars of the Report of the HLPF;
 - Collective Advocacy, the need for more ‘robust humanitarian diplomacy’, among others to enable better humanitarian access and security;
 - Operationalizing and incentivising the humanitarian-development nexus at field level, increased collaboration between humanitarian and development communities to work towards collective outcomes, while safeguarding humanitarian principles and upholding the humanitarian imperative;
 - Accountability to affected populations and humanitarian system accountability to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse
 - Improving response – adapting coordination arrangements to the context, reviewing and strengthening the cluster approach, including inter-cluster coordination and the system-wide emergency designation.
 - Greater inclusion of local actors, acknowledging the strengths and opportunities that each actor, including local ones, can bring to the collective (for instance in terms of humanitarian diplomacy with host government in some specific contexts)

- Subject to endorsement of these themes by the Principals, these priorities should be addressed in the IASC work plan for 2018 and beyond.

Action: The IASC secretariat to ensure the outcomes of the discussion is reflected in the priorities of the next Deputies and IASC Principals meetings, to map out where these issues are being or should be addressed and to elaborate a work plan proposal, to be presented to the WG and EDG after the Principals meeting.

2. Review of the L3 Emergency Response Mechanism

Facilitated by: Mr. Manuel Fontaine, Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF

Since the development of the Transformative Agenda, the designation of an IASC L3 response has contributed to the ability of IASC members to rapidly mobilize at scale and in a concerted manner. To address challenges around the system-wide L3 emergency response, IASC Principals decided to replace the current L3 mechanism with different procedures to trigger either prompt, coordinated and substantial operational scale up in response to large, new crises, or to signal the need for continuing major responses and high levels of financing for the biggest protracted crises. A concept paper describing some of the proposed characteristics of a revamped Humanitarian System-wide Emergency Activation mechanism had been provided as background.

Stressing that the present L3 designation had largely become an outward political signal of a crisis instead of the intended collective internal scale-up trigger mechanism, *Mr. Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF* stressed that the new system should be efficient, internal, as well as remain light and flexible.

Participants welcomed the proposal to divide the existing system into two pillars. There was overall support for a more focused ‘scale-up’ system on operational response, with a discussion on the level of required benchmarking to support activation, the duration and review cycle. The new scale-up system should not indicate the severity of the crisis, but rather the need for more response capacity. There was broad support for simple benchmarks and to limit the scale-up duration to six to nine months. There was also support for changing the criteria regarding reputational risk, and strengthening the capacity criteria to better include an assessment of national capacities including local NGOs and civil society. While the ‘scale-up’ system

should be delinked from a system that signals funding priorities, it was also agreed that a scale-up also requires new / additional funding.

On the second system in large-scale protracted crises, some participants discussed the need to ensure strengthening of the new way of working, and providing specific ‘resilience’ benchmarks to achieve.

There was an overall recognition that the scale-up and sustain criteria may be applied differently depending on context, presence of country offices and that the framework should not be overly technical.

Additional points raised included:

- The need to better define what needs to be fixed (all agencies were not stepping up at the same time, very complex situation and lack of humanitarian leadership).
- A call for stronger language, particularly to recognise the importance of local partners and strengthening country systems.
- Understanding how agency-specific L3 declarations would relate to the new system-wide declarations
- The connection and interlinkages between the SUSTAIN phase and ongoing initiatives such as the NWOW should be assessed, in order to avoid duplication.
- Stronger leadership and more political engagement are required. Principals should be alerted to evolving crises, be kept better informed and should engage at high level discussions with potential donors.
- The need to clarify how the framework links up to the other IASC structures was also discussed in general. In response to this, the chair noted that the Principles had endorsed the Deputies’ forum as a light informal structure to ensure the facilitation of consensus building.

The Working Group/Emergency Directors:

- Agreed on the SCALE-UP concept and what needs to be strengthened, including better assessment of “on-the-ground” capacity and limited time-bound designation of six months with the possibility of a three months’ extension.
- Agreed that criteria to apply the SUSTAIN category needed further discussions to define its objectives and thus its relevance, and see how the sustain designation can be applied to ongoing emergencies.
- Agreed that a core group of IASC members would work on setting the parameters and principles for the L3 activation paper, and the links between the scale-up and sustain levels.

Action: *Core group to work together with the IASC Secretariat. A proposal for decision making to be reviewed by the WG/EDG Group and then by Deputies before presentation at the Principles meeting on 31 May.*

3. Better Response for Internally Displaced Persons in Protracted Crises

Facilitator: Ms Kate Phillips-Barrasso, Director, Humanitarian Policy, InterAction

Ms. Mueller opened the session, outlining recent developments including the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and General Assembly Resolution 72/182 on protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons. In this context, she stressed that the IASC must identify when, where and how it can engage with Member States on normative frameworks, collective advocacy and other key issues, and invited participants to share specific ideas on how to strengthen the holistic approach to this issue.

Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of IDPs, addressed participants by recorded video¹ on the four priority areas for multi-stakeholder collaboration that are outlined in the Plan of Action for advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018-2020, launched a few days before in the framework of the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The Plan calls for more participation of IDPs in decisions that affect them; the adoption of national laws and policies on internal displacement; the increase of Member States' capacity to gather and analyse data on internal displacement, and the scaling up of engagement on durable solutions for situations of protracted displacement, including through the implementation of the SDGs. The next step for the Plan of Action will be the establishment of a Steering Group overseeing its implementation, comprised of Member States, UN agencies, NGOs and some Standing Invitees such as the ICRC and the WB. A number of initiatives are already underway (updates are available [here](#)).

3.1. IDPs in protracted urban settings: gaps and opportunities

Mr. Filiip Decorte, Deputy Director, New York Liaison Office, UNHABITAT, presented “It’s time to think urban”, and the new responses that are needed for an increasingly urban world. Speaking to concrete examples in Somalia (2005), Haiti (2010) and the Syrian crisis, he outlined challenges that may arise from the presence of internally displaced in cities (including land tenure, sanitation, protection, durable solutions for IDPs, relationship with host communities) and demonstrated the importance of understanding neighbourhood dynamics and of finding durable solutions. The Global Alliance for Urban Crises aims at adapting humanitarian action to the urban world by involving local authorities. He encouraged the IASC to adopt five key asks:

1. Create urban geo-referenced data and dynamic analysis capacity: IDP/urban
2. Adopt urban profiling as a basis for settlement-based assessments, coordination and programming, including urban solutions to manage displacement, integrate displacement tracking and IDP profiling (push/pull)
3. Further adapt HPC tools to urban areas
4. Agree on Protocols for engaging and empowering local authorities, and other local stakeholders (including guidance on managing urban displacement)
5. Find new ways of financing urban extensions/IDP settlement, urban service delivery, shelter solutions and leveraging local private sector, etc.

In discussion, participants stressed that political solutions should be favoured, as well as collective advocacy. The importance of multi-year and multi-sectoral approaches, close collaboration with local authorities and legislative change was emphasized. Efforts to limit potential negative impacts are also needed, including by providing support to the host community, scaling up local services / social protection, encouraging livelihood solutions and extending financial solutions to foster the resilience of those who stay behind. This would require a shift in the mind-set of the humanitarian sector to overcome assumptions concerning internal displacement in urban settings. A joined-up approach between humanitarian, development and peace building efforts for durable solutions should be favoured. Participants also discussed how to further adapt humanitarian response to the specificities/complexities of urban areas, to keep protection as the central pillar of their approach and to collect better data on internal displacement. The importance of long-term resource mobilization was stressed. It was also discussed that the current coordination model must be adapted—not redesigned—to better support response in urban environments and that some level of work had already been completed by the Reference Group on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Environments on this topic. The criticality of working with local municipal authorities to ensure IDPs are incorporated into urban planning and local service delivery was highlighted. The new

¹ See text of full video statement on IASC website (background documents to WG/EDG meeting)

role the WB is playing in places like Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq would gain from being replicated or adapted to internal displacement situations. current coordination model.

The Working Group/Emergency Directors:

- Agreed to revisit guidance, such as the draft guidance note developed by the RGMHCUA and consulted with key clusters (incl. inter-cluster), to identify the most effective coordination arrangements in complex urban crises. An adhoc voluntary group bringing together a few EDGs and WG members could do a final review of the work done by RGMHCUA for final decision making. UN-Habitat willing to facilitate.
- Agreed to revive the mapping on ongoing initiatives and IDP policies, that was decided by the WG IASC in the 92nd WG meeting of April 2017, especially in the context of the G20 Plan of Action, with the purpose of connecting them to each other ².
- Agreed to develop a short paper for field use on joined up approaches of main IASC agencies working on IDPs.
- Agreed to ask the Global Alliance to develop a concept note on engagement and empowerment of local actors, to be presented to the group.

3.2 Improving engagement and advocacy with governments and other actors to foster durable solutions

Mr. Neal Walker, Humanitarian Coordinator, Ukraine described the serious humanitarian crises in Ukraine, and outlined the critical needs of civilians who are not only affected by the conflict, but have also lost most of their legal rights and entitlements. He stressed how this loss of rights creates humanitarian needs. Despite a solid, evidence-based HRP, less and less funding is received. He called upon the IASC to provide more support to the Protection Cluster and the Protection Strategy led by the HC and to help raise awareness and international engagement. He stressed that a united, collective approach is needed to lead the analysis. Finally, he requested strong humanitarian leadership to counter the politics of the situation.

Mr. Walter Kaelin, independent consultant and author, Breaking the Impasse, presented lessons from Somalia, Ukraine and Cameroon, where, as Special Advisor to the HC, he applied the recommendations of his study. To improve engagement and advocacy as well as operationalizing the new way of working, a good normative framework led by the government must be in place. RC/HC leadership and clear incentives for agencies to cooperate with each other are also needed to support the New Way of Working. He encouraged the IASC to:

1. Integrate IDP issues into the New Way of Working as a collective outcome
2. Enhance deeper and broader analysis beyond humanitarian needs assessments, including political economy,
3. Apply area-based approaches in displacement affected cities
4. Emphasise bringing people back to self-sufficiency, even if return is not envisaged
5. Build a resilience marker into humanitarian projects, highlighting the long-term perspectives
6. Explore the relationship between the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the New Way of Working and internal displacement

Participants discussed the role of the IASC in internal displacement issues and advocacy. In terms of normative guidance, laws exist to cover disaster situations, but many countries do not have norms or

² The Office of the Special Rapporteur mentions that the mandate co-chairs with UNHCR a Task Team on Law and Policy under the Global Protection Cluster, which has developed a database of laws and policies on internal displacement (currently being updated) available here: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/law-and-policy> .

provisions for the recovery phase. Actions need also to be identified to support implementation in situations where normative frameworks exist, but are not considered for political reasons. Even where the host community demonstrates exemplary solidarity upon arrival of IDPs, tensions may arise in protracted situations. Development plans and achieving the SDGs could help improve the situation in certain cases. High-level political dialogue would also be required to counter the perception that IDPs originating from conflict areas may be affiliated with terrorists and encourage donors not to restrict funding based on this perception.

More clarity and coherence is needed on the role of in-country actors (host communities, governments, parties to the conflict, militaries, non-state actors), and on how to engage them around protection issues. Humanitarian action should be visible within longer-term plans, to provide incentives to donors to finance both humanitarian and development actions.

The World Bank highlighted that new financing windows for refugees exist, but not for forced displacement. There was concern that silos could result when agencies work directly with line ministries, and as such, government coordination should be supported, as should the coordinating role of the RC/HC. Collectively, more action should be provided around supporting governments to fulfil their responsibilities, including providing basic services (i.e. electricity, birth certificates). The IASC could consider identifying donors to work on specific aspects of the Humanitarian Development Nexus, and to support fund-raising. There was significant discussion around the value of humanitarian diplomacy/advocacy during this session—which underscored the need for that to be one of the core IASC priorities (per earlier in the day).

The Working Group/Emergency Directors:

- Recognized, in line with the SDGs, that internal displacement represents both a humanitarian and development issue, even though the ultimate solution is political.
- Noted the offer of IFRC to work on normative guidance with interested partners
- Noted the offer of UNDP to lead efforts to develop a resilience marker for humanitarian projects in in cooperation with interested actors.
- Will look further into the feasibility of advocacy guidelines for protracted displacement, including with local actors.
- Proposed an IASC Statement recognising connections between humanitarian, development and urban planning in areas with IDPs
- Acknowledged the call for strong humanitarian advocacy to mitigate the impacts of conflicts and displacement on civilians and to advocate for better funding for the range of needs and services.

4. Reflections on the Joint Working Group & Emergency Directors Group Meeting

Facilitated by Ms. Ursula Mueller, DERC and Chair of the IASC WG

Ms. Mueller noted that while this was not the first time the WG and the EDG had a joint meeting, it was the first meeting since the IASC Principals requested a review of structures below Principals. The discussions had been productive by addressing issues from both a policy and operational perspective. She indicated that she had asked the IASC Secretariat to review the different proposals of the past years to ensure that coherence can be promoted at the various levels of the IASC, from the Principals to operations and policy, and to ensure that IASC guidance and policy is informed by the best available technical expertise. She then opened the floor for reflections about the meeting and the various IASC bodies and how their coherence could be strengthened.

Mr. John Ging, Chair of EDG, stressed the importance of listening to both IASC bodies and commended the harmony and unity of the group. He also found that there had been consistency between sessions on

areas to improve our collective focus. How the outcomes of the meeting are operationalized will be the key to success. He encouraged participants to favour a collective approach where possible, and underlined the importance of focusing on protection and humanitarian access as top priorities for collective actions. He considered the need for robust humanitarian diplomacy as the most important. An IASC approach would need to be firm and dynamic, and from top to bottom, responding to profound changes in modus operandi in humanitarian action.

During the plenary discussion, the importance of designing an efficient IASC process was highlighted on multiple occasions, as was the need to strengthen robust humanitarian diplomacy. On this topic, it was proposed that scenarios on humanitarian diplomacy for a few selected countries could be proposed to the Principals on 31 May. Additionally, using the Early Warning, Early Action report and information, more advanced notice should be provided to Principals when there is a need for humanitarian diplomacy. There was also a proposal to involve HC/ RCs more in humanitarian diplomacy.

More discussion about how the various processes (CRRF, WB, NWoW, UN Reform, etc.) come together was proposed for the Deputies Forum. A platform would be needed to share information on these processes. The funding gap and the work of the Humanitarian Financing Task Team is already proposed for the IASC workplan, but should be better connected to Principals' discussions. It was proposed that the IASC could consider one 'big issue' per year. More issues could be considered by regional or country teams, with the IASC providing a monitoring and supporting role. Participants confirmed the need for a cultural shift – the importance of speaking in a collective manner and not from an Agency perspective. They also reaffirmed that decisions should be driven by affected persons.

Participants called for clear actions, deliverables, priorities and timelines (“achieve rather than discuss”). They also asked for quick decision making and response.

Participants agreed to enhance collaboration between humanitarian and development communities working towards collective outcomes and committed to strengthen accountability to affected populations, including adapting coordination approaches to given local contexts. There was also a call for a robust policy/practice loop to mutually re-enforce policy development and field operations.

On the IASC, the various parts of the structure should be well integrated and form should follow function. There was wide consensus about connecting the discussions of the Principals and to strengthen the IASC Secretariat. It was stressed that the IASC must link up to other platforms and current reform processes. It was suggested that the secretariat at some stage take the temperature of the various members and functions and present a menu of options for the way forward. Several participants felt that more discussion would be needed to be thoughtful and inclusive in the revision process—and that May 31 was too soon to formulate a fully fleshed out mechanism with participation/buy in from critical parties.

Several participants underlined that elements of the EDG which are pertinent to the field should be maintained. A suggestion was made to consider the possible establishment of thematic umbrella groups in order to better combine policy with operations in support of the field.

Closing Remarks

In her closing remarks, *Ms. Mueller* highlighted that the IASC represents the collective will of its members, and in doing so, it must also always aspire to be ambitious and bold and ensure that all its decisions centre on improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action. She also informed that, in preparation of the May 31 Principals meeting, she will convene a meeting of the IASC Deputies Forum, to review the outcomes of the joint WG/EDG meeting, as well as discussing the L3 review and progress on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and preventing sexual harassment.

She thanked participants for their constructive engagement and adjourned the meeting.
(end)