Strategic Humanitarian Coordination in the Great Lakes, 1996-1997: An Independent Assessment

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List of Acronyms

ADFL	The Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire
ANC	African National Congress
BAT	British-American Tobacco
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CERF	Central Emergency Revolving Fund
CETI	Complex Emergency Training Initiative
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DfID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs; since renamed Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
DMTP	Disaster Management Training Programme
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peace-keeping Operations
DRC	Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo
ECHA	Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAR	Forces ArmÉes Rwandeses
FAZ	Forces ArmÉes Zairoises
FCSU	Field Coordination Support Unit
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HRFOR	UN Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IRIN	United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network
MCDU	Military Civilian Defence Unit
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MNF	Multi-National Force
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NIF	National Islamic Front
NRA	Yoweri Museveni's National Revolutionary Army
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
ORHC	Office of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator
SHC	Strategic Humanitarian Coordination
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
RHC	Regional Humanitarian Coordinator
RC	Resident Coordinator
RPA	Rwandese Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandese Patriotic Front
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDMTP	UN Disaster Management Training Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSECOORD	UN Security Coordinator
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US	United States of America
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
ZCSC	ZaÔrian Camp Security Contingent

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Executive Summary

1. In 1996-1997, the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa[1] saw the latest in a series of dramatic developments in an ongoing political, security, social and humanitarian crisis which has gripped the region throughout the decade. Ongoing civil war in Burundi and continued insecurity in Rwanda intersected with political and ethnic conflict in eastern Zaire, leading in fall 1996 to a wider war for control of Zaire. The Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), with military backing from Rwanda and Angola and political support from Uganda and Burundi, defeated a rough coalition of Zairian and ex-Rwandan army forces, leading to the overthrow of President Mobutu.

2. The humanitarian costs of conflict in the region were rarely less than extraordinarily high. Moreover, they were neither accidental nor incidental. At various stages in the Region's conflicts, political and military authorities resorted to forced population movements, mass internments of civilians, and even direct attacks on refugees and civilians as tactical tools of insurgency and counter-insurgency. In so doing, they set both the stage and the limits of humanitarian action.

3. International political response to the crisis ranged from permissive to passive to partial. Among major powers, there was passive support for the ADFL and their backers, partially conditioned by growing intolerance for the corruption and incompetence of Mobutu's regime. Moreover, there was a continued unwillingness by major powers to engage with sufficient energy in the underlying political and security dimensions of the Region's crisis. An effort to deploy a Multi-National Force to eastern Zaire to contain the humanitarian costs of war ran aground on confused mandates and competing agendas. As had been the case in response to civil war and genocide in Rwanda in 1994, humanitarian action was the principal form of international response.

4. In this context, the mounting of humanitarian operations has of necessity involved humanitarian actors in a series of dilemmas and compromises. The reputation of humanitarian action and actors has been sullied. The principal burden of degradation of humanitarian law and principles in the Region has been borne by the victims of genocide, war, and repeated displacement. A secondary burden has been borne by the humanitarian community. A key lesson from 1996-1997 can be added to that from 1994: continued international failure to tackle the political and security dimensions of the crisis, combined with sustained use of humanitarian assistance in the resultant policy vacuum, undermines the credibility, reputation, and long-term viability of humanitarian action, to deleterious consequence for the lives and livelihoods of those who humanitarian action is supposed to protect and assist.

Strategic Humanitarian Coordination of the UN Response

5. In response to the humanitarian crisis, the UN system and its NGO partners mounted a massive, multi-faceted relief operation. Humanitarian agencies found ways to provide critical relief to hundreds of thousands of refugees, displaced persons, and other affected populations. However, in the context of tremendous constraints placed on them by warring parties, including direct attacks on humanitarian space, and with only weak support from those very governments that funded their operations, humanitarian actors could not hope to protect and

assist all of those who suffered. In the Great Lakes Region, the UN was neither king nor rook but rather, pawn.

6. In an effort to improve their overall response to humanitarian crises, not just in the Great Lakes Region, the senior humanitarian body within the UN system at the timeññthe Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)ññ attempted to strengthen the coordination of the UN's response by distinguishing between the tasks of operational and strategic coordination. Whereas the former focuses on logistical and sectoral coordination, strategic coordination comprises two sets of tasks: first, negotiating access to affected populations, advocating respect for humanitarian principles and law, and liaising with international political and military actors, including those of the UN system; second, setting the overall direction and goals of the UN humanitarian programme, allocating tasks and responsibilities within that programme, ensuring correspondence between resource mobilization and established priorities, and monitoring and evaluating the system-wide implementation of the programme. This report explores aspects of the UN system's performance of these functions in an effort to identify lessons for further improvement.

7. From the outset, the report challenges the oft-stated assumption that it is the UN system that is primarily responsible for the strategic coordination of emergency response and hence, is uniquely responsible for the successes and failures of that response. Rather, the report starts with the alternative premise that coordination is a function of interaction between the wider UN systemññincluding member statesññand those political and military actors that are legally, morally and materially responsible for the welfare of affected populations, i.e., national governments, local governments, armies, and in some instances, rebel authorities. Local political and military authorities set the stage for strategic coordination through the provision, or not, of a *framework of consent for humanitarian action.* Their willingness to do so is a function of their own interests and agenda, and the interest of international political actors in pressuring them to comply with humanitarian principles and law. Members of the Security Council and major donor governments have particular responsibilities in this regard.

8. Only within this framework of consent for humanitarian action can UN agencies and departmentsñwhose mandates and responsibilities place them at the heart of the emergency response systemññengage in the functions of strategic coordination. The structures and mechanisms in place for strategic coordination, and the performance of those mechanisms, are important determinants of the UN's capacity to minimize the humanitarian costs of war and conflict. In particular, the major operational agencies, the major development agencies, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA; since renamed the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) have key roles to play in fulfilling the functions of strategic humanitarian coordination. Other UN actors have lesser, but still significant roles.

9. A number of formal and informal mechanisms for strategic humanitarian coordination were employed by the UN in response to the Great Lakes crisis. These formal and informal mechanisms for strategic coordination did result in a number of positive instances where the UN adapted to challenging circumstances and performed well despite serious obstacles. The plethora of mechanisms used by the UN in the region reveal a degree of adaptivity and learning by the system which is important to record, and from which positive lessons can be learned. Positive highlights from the UN's performance of strategic coordination functions include:[2]

- good collaboration between Regional Humanitarian Coordinators, regional heads of the major operational agencies, and local emergency field coordinators in the realm of negotiating with rebels and the government in Zaire;

- system-wide collaboration, drawing on the strengths of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to develop a common humanitarian policy on *regroupement* camps in Burundi, a policy solidly grounded in humanitarian law;

- ongoing efforts by Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators to maintain the difficult balance between good relationships with their government counterparts and respect for humanitarian principles;

- at the behest of the Emergency Response Coordinator, NGOs active in the region were able to address the Security Council for the first time, increasing the profile of humanitarian issues at the political level of the wider UN system;

- at times, coordination staff wielded information to strategic effect, using superior knowledge of disaster conditions in the country to extract concessions from government counterparts and to forge collaborative strategies with civil society actors;

- the creation of the UN's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) for the Great Lakes Region, which represented a significant improvement in the collection, distribution, and use of information by UN humanitarian agencies, donors and NGOs.

10. Among other issues, a number of these examples point to the weakness of the distinctions between strategic and operational coordination when viewed from the field perspective.

11. These positive experiences notwithstanding, there were important gaps in the strategic coordination structure and weaknesses in performance, critically with respect to strategic planning and the setting of strategic priorities. Overall planning of a balanced UN response was weak, as was the process for allocating tasks and responsibilities for different aspects of the programme. The Consolidated Appeal Process, a resource mobilization tool which in theory is also a tool for strategic planning and allocation of resources, made little substantive contribution to strategic coordination.

12. Moreover, while the *mechanisms* for strategic coordination performed with varying degrees of effectiveness throughout the region, they never amounted to a coherent *system* for strategic coordination. Recent innovations brought about improvements in existing practice but nevertheless a) were insufficient to meet the challenges at hand and b) did not address major, underlying problems such as the structure of authority and responsibility within the UN system, and important outside pressures in the areas of finances and visibility.

13. Further, the UN system has not resolved critical issues of continuing internal tension, competition, and in some cases distrust. Distrust of key coordination elements, especially DHA, led to energy being spent within the UN Secretariat and among UN agencies on issues of withholding or obtaining information within the system, energy that would better have been spent on using information as a strategic tool for negotiations and advocacy. Such intra-UN tensions were exacerbated by financial pressures and the need to promote the visibility of individual agencies in order to compete for increasingly scarce resources.

14. Most critically, the UN system has not resolved important issues of gaps and overlaps in the existing mandates of the operational and development agencies, in particular with regard to internally displaced persons. This was a major problem in a region where hundreds of thousands of people were repeatedly displaced.

Lessons Identified

15. Thus, key lessons about strategic coordination can be identified:

- Local political and military authorities set the stage for strategic coordination through the provision, or not, of a framework of consent for humanitarian action. In situations where local authorities do not provide full consent for humanitarian action, pressure by foreign governments will be a secondary determinant of the scope for humanitarian action and effective strategic coordination. Because it is necessary to establish and maintain consent, humanitarian access is not an unchanging or stable condition, but a fragile and politically contested reality, requiring continual negotiation with the support of all elements of the UN system.

- The UN system has a multitude of resources and mechanisms to draw on in support for strategic coordination functions. Energy and activism on the part of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, working through and supported by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, is required to ensure that these mechanisms sum to a coherent system and that gaps are filled, especially in the realm of strategic planning.

- An important determinant of the viability of strategic coordination is a degree of coherence between the basic structure of UN coordination arrangements and the structure of political and military authority in the country. Where one coherent governmental authority controls access throughout a country, this suggests that combining the Resident Coordinator position with the Humanitarian Coordinator function is an appropriate structure. Where access is divided between warring authorities, this suggests that an independent Humanitarian Coordinator is needed.

- Continued overlaps and gaps in the mandates of UN agencies pose major challenges for the development of a balanced overall UN response. This issue is exacerbated by existing differences in the response capacities of the operational and technical agencies. Particularly in the case of internally displaced persons, such issues must be resolved as a prior function of strategic coordination.

- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has the potential to be a powerful, unified voice for humanitarian principles and policy, combining wide representation of the humanitarian community with links to development and political actors in the UN system and access to the Secretary General. The IASC was most relevant when it used specific instruments of humanitarian law as a basis for policy, and had direct links to the field in the body of senior coordinators. The costs of not living up to this potential are missed opportunities for early, preventive action, a reactive posture, and a limited capacity to develop coherent, common policies and positions for system-wide implementation.

- Fund-raising and visibility pressures amplify existing competition and distrust between agencies, undermining effective collaboration and thus impeding strategic coordination. Effective strategic coordination requires tackling these problems through

a concerted effort to resolve tensions, build trust, and develop common vision, common policy, and common action among the family of UN agencies.

16. Finally, the report provides recommendations and suggestions to aid the IASC in their continuing efforts to improve strategic coordination and the overall UN response to complex emergencies.

Notes:

1 Used in this report to refer to Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo, but with attention paid to related issues in Uganda and Tanzania.

2 Importantly, this report is confined to the UN's performance on strategic coordination functions. A parallel studyññ"Report of the Tripartite (UNICEF/UNHCR/WFP) Lessons Learned Study of the Great Lakes Emergency Operation since 1996"ññhas reviewed the lessons to be learned in the same region from UN operational coordination. Significant successes were recorded by the UN in the realm of operational coordination.

Introduction

"Sometimes it is very difficult to find humanitarian space . . . even in New York."
Y. Akashi, former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

A. Purpose and parameters of study

17. This study considers the United Nations' (UN) experience with strategic humanitarian coordination in the Great Lakes Region from September 1996 to August 1997. It has two analytical objectives: to identify lessons from UN arrangements for strategic humanitarian activities, and to provide a series of recommendations for future action. Although termed a ëlessons learned' study, this report in fact can only identify lessons; learning them requires action on the part of relevant actors within the system. While drawing clear lessons and conclusions, the study team recognizes that there are no easy answers to the problems identified by its analysis. The issues explored are complex, the challenges enormous.

18. The study was commissioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), a unique body within the UN system that comprises all UN humanitarian agencies but also includes the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Representatives of non-governmental humanitarian organizations and the Red Cross movement sit as standing invitees. The report is written principally for the IASC and its member agencies, although the report touches on issues of concern to some other elements of the UN system, including Secretariat departments not represented on the IASC, and member states. From an organizational perspective, the study was supported by the former Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Funding was provided by Sida, DANIDA, DfID (UK)[3], and OXFAM/UK & Ireland. Although commissioned by the IASC, the report is entirely independent, and the views expressed here are in no way intended to reflect the views of any element of the UN system.

19. The topic itself was an initial challenge for the study team in meeting their objectives. Only recently has the IASC attempted to delineate elements of humanitarian coordination as either ëoperational' or ëstrategic'. Indeed, the IASC has not *defined* strategic coordination, but rather has instead listed functions that *describe* what it considers to be the composite elements of two related tasks, strategic and operational coordination. The composite functions of strategic coordination, according to the IASC, include:

- setting the overall direction and goals of the UN humanitarian programme;
- allocating tasks and responsibilities within that programme and ensuring that they are reflected in a strategic plan;
- advocacy for humanitarian principles;
- negotiating access to affected populations;
- ensuring correspondence between resources mobilized and established priorities;
- monitoring and evaluating the overall implementation of the programme; and,

- liaising with military and political actors of the international community, including those of the UN.

20. Two important tasks for the study team were to make an assessment of whether the IASC's list of strategic coordination functions accurately captured what is in fact needed, and to map this set of neatly defined functions onto the necessarily more complex reality of UN operations. These tasks were more easily accomplished at the headquarters and regional levels than in the field, where most were saw little value in the analytical division. Adding to the challenge was the fact that the intended nature of the division between strategic and operational coordination had been poorly communicated to the field; many of those interviewed were unaware that a distinction had been made by the IASC. In short, the topic of investigation was ill-defined and unfamiliar.

21. The political composition of the region in question is also debated and in flux. Traditionally, the term ëthe Great Lakes Region' denoted an ethnographically distinct region of Africa also known as the ëlacustrine' region: Rwanda, Burundi, south-western Uganda, north-western Tanzania, and eastern Zaire.[4] The term has been used institutionally by the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, a body comprising only Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire. In more recent political discourse, the term has come to connote a rough constellation of countries that border Rwanda and Burundi and whose interests to a greater or lesser extent are impacted on by political developments in those two countries. Added complication comes from the fact that Rwanda and Burundi are grouped bureaucratically by a major donor agency as part of the ëGreater Horn of Africa', a grouping that has no historical precedent but does have some important political linkages. For the purposes of the study, the study team focused on the three countries to which humanitarian coordinators were appointed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), namely Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)[5]. The study team also considered events in Tanzania and related political developments in the wider sub-region.

B. Premises and structure of report

22. The study team considered three categories of factors that had an impact on the overall success or failure of strategic humanitarian coordination arrangements: the politics of the region; organizational issues pertaining to the UN system; and the mechanisms of humanitarian coordination.

23. Analysis of the first set of factors, pertaining to regional politics, raises the issue of who is actually responsible for effective relief responses. While assessing the UN's role, the study team questioned from the outset the oft-read assumption that the UN system is the central coordinator of humanitarian response, and hence, is uniquely responsible for the successes and failures of that response. The study team operated on the alternative premise that coordination is a function of interaction between elements of the UN system and those political and military actors that are legally, morally and materially responsible for the welfare of affected populations, i.e., national governments, local governments, armies, and in some instances, rebel authorities. Indeed, this principle is enshrined in UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (1992), the Annex to which notes that "...the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, *coordination*, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory." (Emphasis added.) Interaction with responsible governments is

particularly evident in relation to the functions of negotiating access to affected populations, but also impacts on the other functions of strategic humanitarian coordination.

24. In short, the politics of the region define the framework of consent for humanitarian action. The successful negotiation of a framework of consent is a major variable in the overall performance of humanitarian coordination, and as such forms an important part of the analysis in this report. The degree to which state actors respect and adhere to international law (to which they are the principal parties) is a key determinant of the viability of humanitarian action. Safe and unimpeded access to affected populations is also critical. This can usually only be provided by sovereign and quasi-sovereign political and military authorities, although in some instances the absence of such authority is the determining reality.

25. The second set of factors relates to the general functioning of the UN system.[6] No single UN agency implements all aspects of strategic and operational humanitarian coordination. Therefore, to assess coordination mechanisms, it was logically necessary to consider some wider aspects of the UN system's experience in the region. The report includes observations about the functioning of the UN system as it impacted on the performance of the strategic humanitarian coordination arrangements.

26. Finally, and centrally, the study team focused on the performance of the various mechanisms for strategic humanitarian coordination used in the Great Lakes Region.

27. From a methodological perspective, this work entailed exploring the direct questions put forth in the study team's Terms of Reference. These issues first had to be placed in the broader political and organizational context in order to draw lessons from the UN's experience. Given that the IASC members who were the subject of study are not uniquely responsible for strategic coordination or its failures, analytical rigour required distinctions to be drawn between results on the one hand, and structure and process on the other. Thus, to identify lessons, it was necessary to map the international and regional political context, to explore therein how much space was available to UN system for the performance of strategic coordination tasks. Having identified major political constraints, it was then possible to explore the mechanics of strategic coordination: was there evidence of key tasks being performed? were the structures in place to perform them well matched to the realities of the context? were strategic coordination functions unnecessarily distracted by other problems of the UN system? did their focus and areas of concentration match the priorities on the ground? did the various mechanisms in place add up to a coherent system for strategic humanitarian coordination? It is from these, and similar questions, that the study team attempted to identify lessons and develop recommendations.

28. The following methodologies were used to answer these questions: review of over 200 UN documents supplied principally by DHA; review of academic and press literature pertaining to events in the Great Lakes region; review of academic and policy literature pertaining to coordination; participation in an experts briefing on the Great Lakes Region hosted by DHA in New York; interviews with approximately 130 informants in New York, Geneva, Rome, and the Great Lakes Region; participation in an experts meeting hosted by OXFAM in Oxford, UK; circulation of an initial draft for consideration by the IASC and academic collaborators; and review of responses, including in a special meeting of IASC members hosted by DHA in New York. Informant interviews encompassed UN staff, international NGO staff, local NGO staff, church leaders, western diplomats, African diplomats, regional government officials, journalists, human rights workers, and academics.

Interviews were divided between roughly two weeks at headquarters (New York, Rome and Geneva) and four weeks in the Great Lakes Region.

29. Following the Executive Summary and this Introduction, the presentation of findings from this process comprises six additional sections. This section is followed by a discussion of framework issues (Section III): the question of the framework of consent for humanitarian action (hereafter, *humanitarian consent*); the definition of strategic humanitarian coordination; and the nature of decision-making in different coordination structures. Section IV considers the politics of the region, in particular the way in which the history of the conflict and the recent actions and current agendas of the major political and military actors limited the scope for humanitarian operations. This section also gives some consideration to the policy of major international actors. Section V explores issues pertaining to the UN system as they affected the performance of strategic coordination mechanisms. The central element of the report is an examination of the various mechanisms of strategic humanitarian coordination in the Great Lakes Region (Section VI). Section VII outlines major conclusions and lessons identified. Finally, a series of recommendations is provided (Section VIII).

30. By the beginning of the period reviewed in this study, the international donor community had invested well over one million dollars on a comprehensive evaluation of the international community's response to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and related humanitarian disaster. The excellent five volume evaluation was widely distributed. Many not directly involved in humanitarian response to the Great Lakes Region have studied this evaluation; however, many directly involved have yet to read the work. While most UN offices in the region have at least one copy of the evaluation, a distressingly high number of them are still in their original cellophane. Indeed, this has become something of a joke in the region, where many people freely admitted to not studying the lessons learned contained in the evaluation. Clearly, the evaluation was not considered ërequired reading'. Furthermore, a recent follow-up report on implementation of the recommendations contained in the 1996 evaluation has only been minimally distributed in the region.

31. Once again, donors have funded a ëlessons learned' exercise for the Great Lakes Region. This study, far less ambitious, covers many points which are regrettably familiar to those who read the 1996 evaluation. The issues raised here are also complicated; this report will also take time to read and absorb. It hopefully provides another opportunity for the UN to take notice of the lessons from its experience in the Great Lakes Region. Unless political and humanitarian actors learn the lessons of previous responses, history will repeat itself and the opportunities for such studies will continue in abundance. The people who suffer in Burundi, Rwanda, the DRC, Tanzania and beyond will not find sufficient refuge and protection in the UN system, but will continue to bear witness to gross violations of humanitarian law and principles and manipulation of humanitarian aid and actors to political ends.

Notes:

3 Swedish International Development Agency, Danish International Development Agency, and Department for International Development (United Kingdom).

4 Iris Berger, Religion and Resistance: East African Kingdoms in the Precolonial Period. Institut National de Recherche Scientifique, Publication No. 20. Butare: 1981, p. 5

5 Midway through the period under study, the country formerly known as Zaire was renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

6 The 'UN system' comprises the Secretariat, specialized agencies, including the subset of agencies that perform humanitarian functions, and member states. As a whole, the UN system has political and military responsibilities, as well as humanitarian obligations. As such, the term ëUN system' is unavoidably problematic in this report, but the authors have attempted to clarify when reference is to UN humanitarian actors only, UN agencies generally, or the wider UN system including member states.

Framework Issues

A. Consent

32. The nature and extent of consent for humanitarian operations are very relevant to strategic coordination. Consent for humanitarian operations, access to affected populations, and the ability to coordinate humanitarian aid are the result of complex interactions among local, national, regional and international interests of warring parties, neighbouring countries and donor governments, and, to a lesser degree, actions by the entire UN system. The majority of contemporary humanitarian operations are heavily dependent on the co-operation and agreement of local and national political authorities. Because it is necessary to establish and maintain consent, humanitarian access is not an unchanging or stable condition, but a fragile and politically contested reality.[7] For this reason, it is worth considering the basis upon which it is typically established.

33. While technical competence and organizational capacity and innovation are important determinants of coordination, in the last analysis effective strategic humanitarian coordination is strongly conditioned by the agreement and priorities of warring parties. Without consent, even well managed operations are rendered partial and ineffective. At the extreme, actual coordination passes to national political actors. That is, once warring parties have determined when, where, and how aid agencies operate, then it is they who are the principal source of strategic humanitarian coordination. This has major implications for the quality of access, and the uses to which humanitarian aid is put.

34. In general, it is possible to distinguish three sources of consent for relief operations. First is what might be termed ëpure' consent, i.e., situations where the warring parties are willing to accede to humanitarian action. The second source is foreign government pressure. The third source is what can be called ëenforced consent'. These latter two are, of course, made possible only through strong commitment to the humanitarian agenda by foreign governments, either as donors and/or as members of multilateral institutions such as the UN. These three sources of consent for humanitarian action are considered in turn below.

34. ëPure' consent is predicated on a mix of humanitarian concern and pragmatic interests. Often parties will provide consent claiming genuine humanitarianism, while masking more mercenary reasons. Frequently, however, the interests of warring parties will be opposed to those of humanitarian action. A senior UN official formerly involved in UN operations in Namibia and the former Yugoslavia has argued that in circumstances of modern civil war, at times "[n]eutral and humanitarian organizations are denied the basic conditions, laid down in international humanitarian law, which are indispensable for carrying out their activities."[8]

36. The willingness of parties to grant consent for humanitarian action is one part of an equation. The other part is their authority and capacity to do so. ëAbility' is a function of an authority's degree of control over territory; the strength or weakness of their governance and administrative systems, in particular with respect to their capacity to establish and maintain priorities for social policy and their logistical and technical capacity. An ICRC matrix tool captures in schematic form some of the alternative possibilities for the degree of consent provided by warring parties based on their degree of willingness and ability (see Figure 1).

37. Measuring both the willingness and ability of parties to consent to humanitarian operations provides a thumbnail sketch of the context where consent will be granted and facilitated. The manner in which consent, access, and coordination are negotiated, established and maintained will vary significantly from situations where local authorities are willing and able to consent (pure consent), willing but unable (pure consent that must be bolstered by capacity building), unwilling though able (a situation where negotiation and pressure from outside sources may increase the degree of consent), or unwilling and unable (the most challenging situation).

Figure 1. Willingness and Ability to Provide a Framework of Consent

WILLING AND ABLE (Pure consent)	UNWILLING BUT ABLE (Pressured consent; role of foreign governments is critical.)
WILLING BUT UNABLE (Capacity building required)	UNWILLING AND UNABLE (Enforced consent)

(The comments in brackets are the study team's additions.)

38. At the opposite end of the spectrum from ëpure' consent is what might be termed ëenforced' consent. This oxymoronic concept describes humanitarian interventions like Operation Provide Comfort in Kurdistan, and, following the Gulf War, Operation Provide Hope in Somalia.[9] The concept of humanitarian intervention has been much in vogue since those operations, but the use of armed forces to provide and protect humanitarian space is the exception, not the rule. Even when troops are used to enforce consent for humanitarian action, the consent of local armies is an important factor, as the UN military forces in Bosnia (UNPROFOR) learned to their cost. Moreover, the willingness by western militaries to engage in humanitarian intervention has dissipated, following important setbacks in Bosnia and Somalia. There is, rather, a growing mood of caution among troop contributing nations regarding their involvement in complex political emergencies.

39. In the absence of ëpure' consent, and without recourse to the use of force, the process by which consent has been established typically involves direct and indirect political pressure by donor and other foreign governments. Donor pressure, for instance, has been a central element in the establishment and maintenance of consent for Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), one of the few examples of a long-running relief operation where the basis of consent has been examined in any detail.[10] Indeed, so important has donor pressure been in generating access that it is possible to periodicize OLS in terms of the waxing and waning of external pressure and the resulting humanitarian access When donor pressure was at its heightñ̃at the establishment of OLS and again following the Gulf Warñ̃the degree of access accorded to relief organizations likewise peaked. When internal or international developments diminished donor interest in maintaining pressure (in particular with respect to the IGAD peace process) effective coordination of the relief programme passed into the hands of warring parties. Consent subsequently weakened. The conclusion from OLS and other experiences with coordination is that when local parties are unwilling, though able, to provide consent for humanitarian action, pressure by foreign governments (far more than any action by a UN agency or individual coordinator) will be a central determinant of the scope for humanitarian action, both in terms of access and effective coordination.

40. As with national political actors, donors vary in their willingness and ability to pressure for consent for humanitarian action. Their ability to exert pressure is partially a function of pre-existing aid relations. Other determinants of donors' willingness to exert adequate pressure are foreign policy interests and the domestic political climate, itself often shaped partially by the media. Aid policy makers, foreign policy makers, and domestic politicians usually have their own bureaucratic and institutional constituents within a given donor government, and these may be at odds in the formulation of overseas aid policy. Both national political actors and UN agencies are often in the position of having frequent contact only with embassies and aid officials, and basing their assessment of ëdonor' politics on these contacts, while having substantially less information about domestic political interests that may significantly alter overseas aid policy.

41. Consent and the resultant ability to coordinate are a function of the interactions among national, regional and international interests. Donors are not the only foreign governments positioned to influence a framework of consent. Neighbouring countries also have incentives to exert positive or negative pressure for access for humanitarian actions. Therefore, fully understanding access and coordinationññand negotiating it successfullyññdemands a far wider analysis of changes in the regional and international political economy than is normally considered part of the scope of UN humanitarian activity. An important responsibility for UN coordinators, then, is to analyze not only the willingness and ability of counterparts to provide consent for interventions, but also to evaluate the nature of donor pressure in the absence of such consent. In the subsequent section of this report, this type of analysis is drawn, and the implications for consent, access, and coordination in the Great Lakes Region are highlighted. First, however, it is important to sketch the implications of the question of consent for understanding what is entailed in the concept of ëstrategic' coordination.

B. Strategic Humanitarian Coordination: Definition and Delineation

42. The argument above suggests an overt need to consider local, regional, national, and international policy and strategic interests as part of the UN's strategies for strategic humanitarian coordination and negotiation. Only some dimensions of this are included in the existing conception of strategic humanitarian coordination, in which the wide political context is insufficiently addressed or integrated with more technical concerns.

43. The elements in the IASC's description of strategic humanitarian coordination have been listed above (Section II.A.) Within this list, there are two analytically distinct types of activities. First, there are what might be termed the ërepresentational' elements of strategic coordination, including negotiating access, advocacy for respect for humanitarian principles, and liaising with international military and political actors, including those of the UN system. These are the functions of establishing consent or securing humanitarian space. Second are what can be classified as ëpolicy' functions: setting overall direction and goals for the humanitarian programme; developing a strategic plan and allocating tasks and responsibilities within it; ensuring that resource allocation corresponds to priorities; and, monitoring and evaluating overall performance. The study team found important differences between these two sets of activities (see Section VI). Information management and analysis, including the effective use of the media or the careful use of strategic and sensitive information, are absent from the IASC's list of functions yet are critical elements of any strategic process.

44. ëStrategic' thinking, planning, or coordinating involves evaluating the interests and capacities of a number of actors, broadly considering the wider operating environment, and incorporating an element of time. In the Great Lakes Region, strategic analysis would involve: considering the perspectives of actors ranging from civil society and government to human rights advocates and arms dealers; analyzing the larger political, economic and military environment that includes governments from Eritrea to France, and actors from mercenaries to troop-contributing nations; and, incorporating a longer term view of the roots and dynamics of regional conflict. Strategic coordination, then, relies on using such analysis to guide a process by which the goals of UN humanitarian action are established, advocated, implemented and evaluated.

45. This is a high ideal that few organizations in the private or public sectors achieve with any degree of consistency. The UN is in the unenviable situation of working within a political environment of enormous complexity, which makes it difficult to achieve effective strategic analysis. However, since complex political environments also make strategic thinking more urgent, it is imperative that UN humanitarian actors further develop this capacity, in part through improved collaboration with political actors within the UN.

46. The IASC's division between strategic and operational coordination confuses this issue. Again, there are two analytically distinct components of operational coordination. First, there are elements that might be classified as ëadministration' of a humanitarian operation including providing common services for humanitarian actors, communications, security and common logistics systems. The second component can be described as incorporating "substantive coordination", as the IASC calls it, in relation to specific sectors, geographical areas, and beneficiary groups. If substantive coordination is held as distinct from the more logistical, administrative elements, it is entirely unclear what distinguishes substantive and strategic coordination, other than the scale of activity. Under closer scrutiny, as many in the field immediately realized, these distinctions are blurred. (These definitions have been developed over time from historical divisions of labour, and as such reflect compromise outcomes rooted in competition between traditional agency roles.)

47. Quite apart from the question of definitions, there are at least three types of nexus between strategic and operational coordination: a) areas where the two interact in a structured way; b) areas where the difference between the two is negligible; and, c) areas where there should be but are no differences between the two, because of poor performance in one of the dimensions. Examples follow:

a) To begin, there is a structured interaction between operational and strategic humanitarian coordination on the question of access. Management of relief interventions, or operational coordination, is undermined when strategic coordination functions are weak or even absent. When strategic humanitarian coordination is functioning well, i.e., the UN is working with national authorities and, as necessary, foreign governments to successfully establish a basis for consent for humanitarian operations, then it creates the humanitarian space for operational activities. This relationship is bi-directional: without the capacity to deliver humanitarian relief, the UN has no basis on which to negotiate consent. When operational and strategic coordination are insufficiently linked, this undermines the UN's efforts.

b) Where the differences between strategic and operational humanitarian coordination are negligible, the study team established a rule of thumb, that the difference between strategic and operational coordination is inversely related to the distance from headquarters. For

example, camp management teams have daily negotiations with local authoritiesññregional governors, local army commandersññto ensure ongoing access and to coordinate the delivery of relief supplies. Is this strategic or operational coordination?

c) Where there should be but frequently are no differences between strategic and operational coordination are in areas such as information management, strategic programming and resource allocation. Frequently field realities dictate that operations generate the bulk of information used in programming, and thus the options for programming are constrained by pre-existing operational realities. This can result, for example, in a dearth of information on areas where agencies are not operational, thus biasing priorities toward those areas already receiving assistance. This is a ëreality' that the coordination system should attempt to overcome. This is particularly the case when an element of time is added. Existing operational capacities may preclude certain policy options at a given point in time, but with a sense of strategic direction, such capacities can change and evolve to realize key policy goals.

48. Apart from the conceptual nexus between strategic and operational coordination, there is the question which agencies perform which tasks? On this point the study team was agnostic from the outset. The study team did not attempt to determine which agencies are or should be responsible for the performance of strategic humanitarian coordination functions and which should not be. It is a system-wide concern. The study team recognized that clear conceptual divisions between strategic and operational coordination, and between the analytical categories drawn above, are currently desk realities, not field realities. In a context where humanitarian assistance has routinely been abused and manipulated, and where repeated mass violations of humanitarian standards, law, and human rights are a constant reality, the important issue is that well-thought out policies should inform well-prepared and executed humanitarian operations. As this report details, this has not been the state of affairs in the Great Lakes Region.

49. Related to the questions of strategic and operational coordination, and the questions of who performs which tasks, is the question of authority within the UN system, and what is the basis of authority for coordination, especially at the strategic level. This is in turn connected to the issue of the different models of coordination the IASC has recognized as options: designation of the UN resident coordinator as humanitarian coordinator, appointment of an independent humanitarian coordinator; and designation of a lead agency. A further option, establishment of a specific UN programme or office for an emergency operation, has been used in, for example, Palestine (UNWRA).

50. Alternative mechanisms for strategic coordination have their own strengths and weaknesses. In the countries examined, one of which was effectively divided in two or three parts (Zaire during the civil war), there were a multiplicity of coordination structures and mechanisms in place. These included:

- resident coordinators as humanitarian coordinator (Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire-Kinshasa);
- humanitarian coordinator independent of the resident coordinator (Rwanda, prior to the period of this study);
- independent humanitarian coordinators for the entire region (the regional humanitarian coordinators);

- agency appointed emergency field coordinator (UNHCR in Goma, WFP in Kisangani);
- UN country team as disaster management team (UN in Tanzania).

51. It is important to note that the lead agency model was not used in the Great Lakes Region during this time period. The variety of models used for coordination relates also to the question of the nature of authority to coordinate given to those responsible for doing so. This is a question that has bedeviled coordination efforts and analyses, and is considered in more depth in the sections dealing with the UN system (Section V) and the strategic coordination mechanisms (Section VI).

Notes:

7 On the necessity to negotiate access and consent, see Jurgen Dedring, "Humanitarian Coordination" in Jim Whitman and David Pocock, (eds). After Rwanda: The Coordination of United Nations Humanitarian Assistance. (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1996).

8 Cedric Thornberry, "Peacekeepers, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Conflicts" in Whitman and Pocock, After Rwanda, p. 226.

9 For an analysis of these interventions, see James Mayall, The New Interventionism, 1990-1994, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

10 See Karim et al, OLS Review, (New York: DHA). Consider also the example of Angola, prior to the signature of the Lusaka protocol between July 1993 and November 1994. Had it not been for the "troika" (US, Portugal, and Russia) and other donors, in close collaboration with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, it would have been difficult to initiate any form of humanitarian operations in that country at a time when assessments reported that 1,000 Angolans were dying daily.

External Factors: Political

"Our concern is not with the moral character of one rebel movement, our concern is with the moral character of the war."
Burundian Bishop, Bujumbura, October 1997

52. In the Great Lakes Region from the summer of 1996 to the fall of 1997, there were critical moments when consent for humanitarian action was blocked by military actors. The willingness and ability of international actors to bring pressure to bear on these local actors was weak. As a result, the framework of consent for humanitarian access and coordination generally collapsed, leaving humanitarians unable to effect positive change during major developments in the region. Indeed, the UN became a valuable resource to be exploited by non-humanitarians for ends most brutal.

53. The resulting humanitarian disaster was neither accidental nor incidental. Large-scale attacks on populations, massive and forced population movements, and gross manipulation of humanitarian resources have been essential, deliberate strategies of insurgency and counter-insurgency. Throughout this period, the aims of local authorities and the efforts of humanitarian actors have rarely been aligned, and they were frequently diametrically opposed. It has not helped that foreign governments have often been dissatisfied with the humanitarian agenda and have generally not been as supportive as necessary to create and defend humanitarian space. This was clearly demonstrated during the crisis of mid-November 1996, with associated bitter disagreements between politicians and humanitarians over the location of war-affected populations in then eastern Zaire.

54. This collapse of consent can partially be explained by reference to the history of the conflict; by the emergence of an important political movement in the sub-region with strongly critical views on international assistance; by the relationship of this movement to key international actors; and, by the troubled past of the UN (military and political aspects, especially) in the region (considered in Section V).

A. Background: The recent history of the conflict

55. In 1996 and 1997, the Great Lakes Region saw the latest in a series of dramatic developments in an ongoing political, security, and social conflict. As politicians in the region are the first to note, the roots of the current conflict trace back to socio-political developments under colonialism, as well as those attached to the end of the decolonization process in central Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[11]

56. Even in recent terms, it is necessary to go at least as far back as 1985, and the victory of Yoweri Museveni's National Revolutionary Army (NRA) over the regime of Milton Obote in Uganda. This victory shaped recent events in two major ways: first, it brought to power a member of a clique of African politicians who shared intellectual roots and elements of a political agenda, a group which would be of increasing importance in the region through the subsequent decade, and into the period under study. Second, and more immediate, it bolstered the position of the so-called ëBanyarwanda'[12], i.e., Rwandan refugees exiled during the political upheavals of decolonization. The Banyarwanda were important backers of Museveni's NRA from its earliest days, and a number of Banyarwanda served in senior

military and security positions in his government. This strength shaped the formation of a Rwandan-exile political movement, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), in the late 1980s. In 1990, the RPF received tacit Ugandan backing for an invasion of Rwanda and the beginning of a war against the then Rwandan regime. This opened a story in which the recent crisis in Eastern Zaire was in part another chapter.

57. The period of the ascendancy of the RPF in Uganda more or less coincided with a period of serious tension in Burundi. There, in 1988, mounting political tensions culminated in uprisings and responding repression that left tens of thousands dead.[13] A high degree of political turmoil continued. By 1993, this had resulted in an attempt at multi-party democracy, a half-successful coup, and another bout of mass killing, only this time more intense: roughly 50,000 Burundians, both Hutu and Tutsi, were killed in a single week in October 1993.[14] These events all led to a form of political stasis in Burundi, an experiment at power-sharing that did little more than paint a thin veneer over a process of ëcreeping genocide', resulting in the death of probably one quarter of one million people by 1996.[15]

58. While Rwanda and Burundi were entangled in war and genocide, neighbouring Zaire was engaged in continual adaptation to the corruption and decay of Mobutu's crumbling dictatorship. In the Kivu regions that border Rwanda and Burundi, politics and conflicts of local groups, local actors, and local authorities were of greater importance in shaping political events than were the dictates of Kinshasa, some 2,000 kilometres to the west, accessible only by terrible roads and worse phone lines. The eastern provinces of Zaire had long been dissatisfied with rule from Kinshasa. Indeed, shortly after the establishment of Zaire, the province of Shaba attempted to break away, only to be blocked by a coalition of interested actors encompassing France, the US, Mobutu (then Chief of the Army), and UN peacekeepersñña historical episode of considerable significance in the political development of one of the separatists of the time, a certain Laurent Kabila, who fought in the *ArmÉe Populaire de Libération*.[16]

59. Failed separation bids notwithstanding, the Shaba, Katanga, and Kivu provincesññindeed, the whole of the east of Zaireññmanaged to evolve over three decades a form of *de facto* devolution which saw certain local groups struggling to maintain hegemony over local competitors.[17] A continuing dimension of tension was resentment by local populations of a substantial presence of Banyarwanda in both North and South Kivu, Rwandans who had fled the "Rwandan revolution" of 1959-1961. This group, distinct from a long-settled population of ethnic Rwandans who had lived in south Kivu since before the colonial period, became the focus of competition with such important local groups as the Bahunde, the Banande, and Batembo, among others, often referred to collectively as *autochthonous*.

60. Tensions in the region were an important subject of a Zairian Sovereign National Conference held in 1991. In the conference, Kinshasa bowed to pressure from dominant groups in the Kivu provinces to uphold a 1981 law on nationality, which contained restrictive interpretations of the basis upon which citizenship was accorded. Land-lease arrangements between Banyarwanda and competing local groups, especially the Bahunde, particularly in the Masisi region, also came under attack. Civil protests by Banyarwanda groups in Masisi and Walikale, in 1992-1993, resulted in violent attacks on these populations especially by guerrillas known as the Mai-Mai (or the Bangilima Mai-Mai), a group with long-standing connections to the Bahunde. Tens of thousands of Banyarwanda were killed in these attacks (an episode which received almost no international attention, except from a handful of NGOs including MSF and Oxfam.)[18]

61. Events in these three countries up until 1990 were essentially local, though associated by commerce and culture. They became linked in 1990 when a number of Banyamulenge joined the RPF, and then became inextricably entangled in 1994 when the Rwandan civil war, which had been on hold for some months following the signing of the Arusha Peace Accords in August 1993, erupted again in the Rwandan genocide of April 1994.[19]

62. The genocide was a cataclysmic event in Rwanda and the region, leaving dead almost a million Rwandans in the space of roughly three months.[20] The brutality of the conduct of the genocide was perhaps exceeded only by the horror of its scale: estimates of the rate of killing in Rwanda suggest that death occurred at a rate almost triple that of the Nazi holocaust of the 1940s or the Cambodian holocaust of the 1970s.[21] Fully one seventh of the population of Rwanda was murdered in the space of ten weeks; fifty percent of the Rwandan population was either killed or displaced during the genocide period.[22] One cannot overstate the degree of social trauma embodied in these bald figures.

63. In terms of the region, the most immediate effect of the genocide was to transmit Rwanda's political tensions throughout the sub-region, both politically through the shock waves the killings produced, and physically, through the masses of people that were forced to flee Rwanda in May, June, July, and August of 1994. In these four months, over two million Rwandans became refugees in Tanzania, Burundi, and eastern Zaire.[23] Critically, the exodus into eastern Zaire in particular was largely determined by a concerted effort on the part of the former regime to create a human shield inside the Zairian border with Rwanda. Just inside Zaire, the former regime established a base for military operations, and exerted political and para-military control over the huge refugee camps which were established around Goma, Bukavu, and Uvira.[24] This aspect of the events of 1994, more than any other, laid the groundwork for continued warfare in eastern Zaire.

B. Regional politics and the anti-aid sentiment in the collapse of consent

64. Another aspect laying the groundwork for the events of 1996 and 1997 was the growing strength of a newly emerging movement variously known as the Museveni coalition, the Dar-Es-Salaam group, and the Greater Horn of Africa coalition.[25] Indeed, the new Rwandan regime, which took power in July 1994, quickly became a key member of a wider regional coalition of regimes whose political agenda was beginning to dominate political and military developments in the region. This coalition of regimes, that loosely groups Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, some elements of the Tanzanian government, and elements of South Africa's ANC government, among others, shares important common traits.[26]

65. The leaders of these regimes enjoy a common intellectual and personal heritage tracing back to the University of Dar-Es-Salaam, where they studied the political philosophy of Julius Nyerere and other independence thinkers, and to solidarity in the anti-apartheid era struggles in South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. They share intellectual and political alliance with the growing Pan-Africanist Movement.[27] Each of their regimes had come to power through similar process of insurgency warfare grounded in a degree of popular support, and each had overthrown leaders of some of Africa's nastiest regimes: Ethiopia's Mengistu, South Africa's apartheid regime, Uganda's Milton Obote, and the genocide clique of Habyarimana's Rwanda. Moreover, members of this coalition provided each other with important diplomatic, financial, and at times direct military support. Each also came to power through a process associated with adapting to structural adjustment and neo-liberal economics, as for example, in Uganda. Indeed, the social tensions involved in adaptation to structural adjustment

programmes were in some instances important parts of the dynamics of civil war that brought these regimes to power.

66. This coalition of a new generation of African leaders has shown a renewed determination to solve Africa's problems on its own terms. In its most positive dimension, the common intellectual and political agenda of this group of regimes is grounded in an aversion to foreign aid, an understanding of the constraints and opportunities afforded by global market liberalism, and a common search for newly independent political space for African rule.[28] For critics and opponents, however, this search for ëAfrican solutions to African problems', simply masks a new form of oppression and clientism.[29]

67. Critically, most of the regimes led by these men have undergone structural adjustment programmes at the behest of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This has produced more narrowly defined ëpost-adjustment' states with fairly liberal investment, currency, and trading regulations, and large programmes of deregulation that create opportunities for foreign investment. In place of aid, the post-adjustment states are generating international investment and are welcoming foreign companies as a means of providing the business infrastructure and know-how to exploit Africa's comparative advantage in land, raw materials and cheap labour. Regarding the opportunities for foreign companies in Uganda, President Museveni foresees:

> *They could make good money here and help us at the same time. By investing they bring their know-how [and] their capital, they will link us up to the markets. We will make profits by selling them raw materials, by selling them cheap labour, by selling them power.*[30]

68. As Museveni has further noted, the logic of replacing aid with investment is shown in the fact that the tax returns from just one or two large-scale commercial undertakings would, in many cases, exceed today's dwindling aid budgets. For example, British-American Tobacco (BAT) is said to pay $42 million per year in tax revenues to Uganda. This exceeds USAID's development budget.[31] With a few commercial undertakings of this scale, the implication is that these ëpost-adjustment states' can move out from under the sway of the aid agencies.

69. One of the shared goals of the Museveni coalition is a rejection of aid, or at least of the political and social conditionalities typically attached to western aid. Unlike former developmental states, the emerging post-adjustment states in Africa have tended to adopt a radically different and disparaging view of aid and aid agencies since the 1980s. Reflecting the general climate of stagnation and decline in aid budgets, many Southern rulers now freely dismiss international aid as demeaning and encouraging an unsustainable dependency. Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki has argued:

> *If our Government pursues a policy of making aid continual, then definitely poverty will be continual, and all the other ills of society will continue. I am against any welfare anywhere. Welfare is crippling, welfare is dehumanizing.*[32]

70. In the case of the Rwandan regime that came to power in 1994, the anti-aid sentiments of the coalition were sharpened into outright hostility by its experience with the UN. In particular, the UN's decision to withdraw its peacekeeping presence at the onset of the Rwandan genocide laid a groundwork of distrust and hostility that more recent events would only amplify. This issue is explored in more depth in Section V.

C. International interests and the limits of donor pressure

"This was a time to give war a chance..."
Senior western diplomat, Kigali

71. This coalition has attracted a significant degree of international support. The motivations can be seen as malign or benign, depending on one's political viewpoint. The reasons for this backing are important because the actions taken by the Museveni coalition in eastern Zaire were also backed, at least passively, by key international actors. This support translated at best into limited willingness on the part of the donors to pressure local authorities into providing a framework for consent for humanitarian action.

72. The principal context for international support for the Museveni coalition was set by the end of the Cold War, and the decline in superpower engagement in Africa. Especially by critics of US policy, this is often described as a loss of superpower interest in Africa. However, it can also be characterized as a decline in superpower competition and meddling in Africa, not a negative outcome given the record of superpower engagement in such conflicts as Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Whatever the perspective, it is clear that there has been a significant diminishment in the degree of high-level western political interest in and attention paid to the African continent. This is even true of France, once the most active western power in Africa and the most interventionist, recently more reticent to use its declining military capacities on the continent.[33]

73. Chester Crocker, former US Under-secretary of State for African Affairs, has argued that this decline in western political interest has two key implications: first, it increases the scope for bureaucratic action on the continent; and second, it dictates an absence of the sort of political will required to implement solutions or engage with problems adequately, especially those requiring the use of force.[34]

74. In place of high-level interest in Africa, the general approach taken by western actors since the end of the Cold War is to emphasize support for "African solutions to African problems". Again, this has a positive and a negative aspect. Read positively, this constitutes support for real African independence, and a conscious choice to refrain from the meddling that characterized western relations with less powerful African counterparts. Read negatively, it is synonymous with apathy, i.e., an unwillingness to be concerned about whose African solutions are used to deal with which African problems. Both approaches coexist in different elements of western governments.

75. Also important for generating support for this coalition is its relationship to international financial institutions, and to the programme of liberal market economic regimes. Despite potentially significant social welfare losses, the relationship is a largely welcomed as constructive and positive. It has generated a sense in the western business community, but also in African policy circles, that this coalition of regimes is composed, in the words of one diplomat in Kigali, of "people you can do business with".

76. This move away from aid dependency and toward a higher level of direct foreign investment has attracted the support of a developing anti-aid lobby in the North, especially its Anglo-Saxon quarter. This *ad hoc* and multilevel alignment is composed of overlapping actors, ranging from free-market think-tanks, sceptical journalists and academic critics of humanitarian assistance, to solidarity groups supporting the new post-adjustment elite. Aid is

seen as a relic of the Cold-War, a force that distorts markets and encourages an outdated welfare state view of development at a time when the potential for long-term economic growth is greater than ever.[35] Aid agencies, and NGOs in particular, are seen as usurping government functions, undermining official capacity or, by absolving rulers of responsibility for their actions, encourage authoritarianism.[36] Adding to this critique of aid is a growing body of research which suggests that humanitarian aid can encourage dependency and fuel conflict.[37]

77. Finally, an important factor is the movement's general opposition to the Turabi-dominated National Islamic Front (NIF) regime in Khartoum. Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda, in particular, are important players in the rough coalition of forces arrayed against Khartoum. This agenda has generated important support from Israel and important actors in the US, especially in the US National Security Council and US Congress. At the height of the eastern Zaire offensive, the US released surplus military equipment for defensive use to three key members of the anti-Khartoum alliance: Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda. All three were politically or militarily involved in eastern Zaire at the time.

78. All of these factors combined to produce a context in 1996-97 wherein major players in such states as Britain, the United States and elsewhere were broadly sympathetic to the position of the Rwandan (and Uganda) government. These actors had reasons to welcome the extension of this coalition to neighbouring regimes and simultaneously had a diminished capacity to wield their aid leverage to shift the agenda of these regimes. This was an important contributing factor to the collapse of the framework of consent for humanitarian action in the war in eastern Zaire, that started in earnest in September 1996ññwhat one senior diplomat in the region called "a permissive international environment for war".

D. War in Zaire, 1996-1997

79. The war in Zaire in 1996-97 was directed toward a number of key goals. First, critically, the purpose of the war in Zaire was to challenge the forces of the former Rwandan regime, the ex-FAR and related militias, as well as to disrupt a growing alliance between Rwandan and Burundian insurgency movements based in eastern Zaire. An equally important second purpose was to prevent the spread of ethnic cleansing from Masisi to the Uvira region. This agenda was shared by the Rwandan government and a number of local groups in the Kivu provinces that had suffered at the hands of the ex-FAR and their Zairian allies. Third, and for some of the actors, crucially, the war was an attack on Mobutu, a major regional and African player whose agenda was the opposite of that espoused by the pan-Africanist movement. This coalition had argued that Mobutu's support for the former Rwandan regime, and the corrupt nature of Mobutu's rule in Zaire itself, had rendered Mobutu a threat to regional security and a block on the exploitation of Zaire's natural wealth. From this perspective, the overthrow of Mobutu was the key to the stability and fortunes of the pan-Africanist coalition. This had ancillary benefits in that the overthrow of Mobutu opened the mineral-rich territories of eastern Zaire to trade and commerce with Uganda and Rwanda, and through them to the Horn and East Africa.[38] Finally, and critically from the perspective of some of the Museveni coalition's international backers, it improved the strategic position of the anti-Khartoum armies in southern Sudan, by (partially) clearing the Zaire-Sudan border of Khartoum allies.

80. The range of goals at stake in the war, however, complicated the question of international backing. At least in the UK and the US, bureaucratic actors in those governments responsible for dealing with Zaire approached the issue from very different perspectives than did those

dealing with Rwanda. From the former's perspective, the agenda of the Museveni coalition was fine when confined to eastern Zaire, but was problematic when it entailed the overthrow of Mobutu. Although international backing for Mobutu had waned since the end of the Cold War, among the diplomatic community in Kinshasa there was a long standing belief in Mobutu's prophecy of '*aprËs Mobutu le déluge*'. Thus, whereas the coalition's agenda in eastern Zaire received broad backing, as it became apparent that the war was going to extend to Kinshasa, this support shifted. The major international actors sought a negotiated settlement that would involve both Kabila and Mobutu in a deliberate transition over a period of time to a democratic Zaire. In the end, however, events moved far ahead of this agenda. These events developed roughly as follows:

81. In the summer of 1996, two events occurred that shaped humanitarian issues in the region for the period under study. First, in Burundi, Major Pierre Buyoya successfully led a *coup d'état* against what by then was the barely functioning power-sharing government that had survived the partial coup of October 1993. This coup led to renewed Hutu refugee flows into Tanzania and Zaire. It also launched a period of consolidation by Buyoya's regime, which intensified the war in some parts of the country, and later began a programme of mass forced relocation of civilians referred to as *regroupement*. The ongoing civil war in Burundi, which to date has resulted in the deaths of at least one quarter of one million people, and the repeated and frequently forced displacement of large sections of the Burundian population. These were among the most important humanitarian issues in the region during 1996-1997, albeit frequently overlooked.

82. Critically, the consolidation of power in Burundi by Buyoya's forces led to a strengthening of co-operation between the Rwandan and Burundian governments on joint security issues. In particular, both governments were concerned about a growing collaboration between Burundian and Rwandan insurgency movements, both based among refugee populations in the Kivu provinces. This led directly to the second, and much more noticed event of the summer and fall of 1996, i.e., the amplification and expansion of conflict in eastern Zaire.

83. At the end of the first phase of the Rwandan civil war in July 1994, the defeated Rwandan army (the ex-FAR) was able to cross into Zaire more or less intact as a fighting force. Its ability to do so was partially a result of a French military intervention, that, while seeking to achieve humanitarian objectives, had the consequence of halting the RPF's advance and thereby denying them a final defeat of their retreating opponents. Moreover, when retreating, the ex-FAR forced a huge number of refugees out of Rwanda, creating a massive human shield inside Zaire.

84. In late 1994, the presence of the ex-FAR in the refugee camps in Zaire prompted sufficient concern for the UN Secretary General to send a mission to the region to explore military options for separating the armed elements from the wider refugee population. The mission was led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and had representation from other agencies, notably UNHCR. The mission proposed a series of military/police options for separating combatants from refugees and disarming the combatants. International political support for these solutions was practically non-existent. Following the collapse of military options, UNHCR and the Government of Zaire agreed to provide a quasi-international police option, the Zairian Camp Security Contingent (ZCSC). The ZCSC was composed of Zairian armed forces personnel but reported to a civilian body comprised largely of Dutch police officers (referred to as Civilian Liaison Officers; collectively, the operation was known as the Zairian Camp Security Operation).[39] The ZCSC had some success in controlling theft and

disturbances in the camps and in providing security to relief workers, but was never intended to tackle the underlying security threat posed by the continuing military and para-military activity in the region by the ex-FAR and related militias. The ZCSC operated in the void created by the failures of political and security action at the level of the Security Council.

85. Unimpeded by a serious international response, the ex-FAR proceeded to use the refugee camps as a political and military base and to intimidate the refugee population into staying in Zaire, where they would continue to serve their essential function as both shield and base for the rearming of the ex-FAR. Controversially, some international NGOs also provided relief directly to military camps in nearby Lac Vert, under the argument that doing so would limit the extent to which military forces stole from civilian populations.[40] In 1995, the ex-FAR was sufficiently rejuvenated to begin a series of attacks on western Rwanda, that, while repulsed by the RPF, nevertheless caused serious tension and dislocation along Rwanda's western border.

86. Moreover, the ex-FAR forged a series of coalitions with local authorities in the Kivu region and with local elements of the Zairian army. The mass exodus of Rwandan Hutus into Goma and Bukavu had had a major impact on continuing competition and struggle between local groups. With support from a rough coalition of Zairian actors, the ex-FAR began a series of attacks on Banyarwanda and other ethnic groups in the Masisi region, including the Hunde and Nyanga. Groups that had fought each other in 1992-93ññin particular the Banyamulenge and the Mai-Maiññfound themselves on the same side of an attack by the ex-FAR and Zairian partners.

87. Following their success in attacking local populations in the Masisi region, the ex-FAR and their Zairian allies began in the summer of 1996 to lay the groundwork for a similar attack in the South Kivu region, some 200 kilometres south of Masisi, a region that also comprised a portion of the population with Rwandan ancestry, the Banyamulenge.

88. The struggle for South Kivu, however, was a very different matter than ethnic cleansing in Masisi. There were two critical differences: first, ex-FAR attacks on the Hunde and Nyanga had resulted in a convergence of enmities (if not necessarily interests) on the part of the Banyamulenge and the Mai-Mai guerillas; second, the Banyamulenge had the backing of the Rwandan government[41] and the political support of other regional governments, including those of Burundi and Uganda.[42]

89. By the late summer of 1996, the Rwandan government was actively engaged in a military effort to block the renewed attacks of the ex-FAR and their Zairian allies. This involved training and equipping a large number of soldiers, collectively but somewhat artificially also referred to as the Banyamulenge, and later deploying the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) directly in Zairian territory.[43] To support and supply the Banyamulenge in the Uvira and Bukavu regions, the Rwandans had to cross through Burundian territory, in particular the northwestern Cibitoke region. Burundi's interest in disrupting insurgency activity based in South Kivu was therefore critically important.

90. Also during this period a nebulous group called the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) emerged as the constellation of rebel forces involved in the fighting in eastern Zaire. The ADFL appeared to be led by Laurent Kabila, whose name had began to appear in the media. In fact, as early as May 1996, members of this rough

coalition had been circulating through the region, seeking backing for the Banyamulenge struggle against the ex-FAR and their Zairian allies.[44]

91. By September and October 1996, two fronts had opened up in eastern Zaire. On October 7, a declaration by the Governor of South Kiva that all Banyamulenge would have to leave Zaire within seven days led to heavy fighting between the Forces Armées Zairoises (FAZ) and the Banyamulenge forces. In North Kivu, the Mai-Mai attacked refugee camps and Hutu populations. At this point, regional engagement in the war expanded. First, the RPA opened a new front near Goma. Officially, the Rwandan government denied having troops inside Zaire. It was, however, an open secret in Rwanda that "our troops" were winning victories inside Zaire, and respected international journalists with long track records in the region consistently reported the widespread presence of the RPA in the Goma area. That the RPA was behind this offensive was subsequently acknowledged by Paul Kagame, Rwanda's Minister of Defence.[45] At the same time, it is widely believed that Ugandan troops crossed into Zaire, not so much to open another front as to close off an escape route for the ex-FAR. This is still denied by the government of Uganda.[46]

92. In late October, the ADFL and RPA fought elements of the FAZ and the ex-FAR for control of Goma, which fell to the "rebels" on November 2. During the same period, a Special Envoy appointed by the UN Secretary General, Ambassador Chrétien, began discussions with the UN and the Canadian government about a proposal for Canada to lead a Multi-National Force (MNF) to eastern Zaire. On November 9, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1078 calling for governments to begin working towards a MNF, and on the same day the Canadian government agreed to lead it. On November 13, the American government expressed its commitment in principle to providing up to 5,000 troops to the MNF. In total, with contributions from France, Spain, and others, the proposed force would comprise between 10,000 and 15,000 troops.

93. The purpose and objectives of the MNF were initially not clearly understood, and many in the humanitarian community expressed hope that the MNF would tackle the critical task of separating armed elements from refugees in the camps surrounding Goma town. From the outset, however, the Canadian government made clear to the UN that the use of military force to separate armed elements was not part of the agenda of the MNF. Rather, the MNF would seek to secure humanitarian operations perhaps by providing secure corridors for the return of refugees to Rwanda. Exactly how such an operation would work on the ground was not clear, an issue which caused the US Department of Defence in particular to ask penetrating and challenging questions about the proposed force's mission, and eventually to scale back their proposed involvement. The purpose and mission of the MNF became entangled in debates between those who wanted the MNF to undertake military action, those who wanted the MNF only to secure humanitarian space, and those who argued that the MNF could not secure humanitarian space without undertaking military action and was thus ill-advised.[47]

94. Such debates notwithstanding, the momentum behind the MNF was swiftly curtailed when on November 14, an attack by ADFL/Mai-Mai/RPA forces on Mugunga campññwhere by this point the mass of refugees and of the ex-FAR had congregatedññtriggered a mass repatriation of refugees, with over 500,000 refugees crossing back into Rwanda over the next few days. It should be stated that the return of the refugees was planned and forced, not spontaneous as often described. The Rwandan government in no way shies away from this description: "we took the army to eastern Zaire and we forced those refugees home." It is

instructive to compare this frank description of the action with the far softer language used by most western observers.[48]

95. On November 19, the American government scaled back their proposed involvement, in what was taken by many to be the death knell for the mission, although discussions of a potential role for the MNF continued through November. Some Rwanda analysts have argued that the potential deployment of the MNF had actually spurred Kigali into advancing the timetable of the attack on Mugunga in order to rob the MNF of a coherent agenda. The evidence for this interpretation is patchy, however.

96. While the MNF contingents debated their potential role, the war continued. In November and December, the ADFL's concentration was on consolidation of its gains in Goma, though fighting continued north of Goma towards Rutshuru and the Uganda border. At this time, there were initial reports about ADFL massacres of refugees and/or civilians. Also at this time, aid workers began to express grave concern about the fate of the refugees from the South Kivu camps, arguing that as many as 200,000 refugees were unaccounted for. Humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, prevailed on the advance military contingents of the MNF to use their capacities to track the missing refugees.

97. Thus began the "numbers game", a debate between various military, diplomatic, government, and humanitarian actors about the existence or not of the missing refugees. UNHCR and a number of NGOs insisted that the refugees were unaccounted for and thus were being deprived of life-sustaining relief, while the Government of Rwanda denied their existence. The American Ambassador in Kigali was vocal in supporting the Rwandan government position.[49] US satellite intelligence and US and UK aerial reconnaissance did not provide clarity, as neither could provide accurate data under conditions of cloud cover and heavy forest cover.[50] Accusations and counter-accusations became the order of the day, involving on the one hand accusations that humanitarian agencies had inflated the numbers of the refugees for fundraising purposes, and on the other that the military/political actors were deliberately manipulating satellite data to block humanitarian actions.[51]

98. Further dimensions of this "grotesque debate" (as characterized by a Canadian diplomat) are considered in Section VI. For the moment it suffices to say that the lack of certainty and consistency in the tracking and assessment of the numbers of refugees did two things: first, it revealed the lack of a common perspective and agenda among humanitarian actors and major foreign governments; and second, it undermined any potential role for the MNF.

99. By mid-December, at least 100,000 refugees had been "found" near Shabunda. By this point, a new dimension for humanitarian action had opened up in the form of the Tanzanian government's announcement that the camps holding over 500,000 Rwandan refugees in western Tanzania would be closed before the new year. The mass return of refugees from Tanzania to Rwanda was itself a major humanitarian development, quite apart from the complexity of what was happening in eastern Zaire.

100. From January 1997 onwards, what had seemed initially like a war for control of the Rwanda-Zaire border area rapidly became a war for the Kivu region and then a war for the whole of Zaire.[52] In late January, the ADFL and their backers began moving towards Amisi, which fell to the rebels on February 9. On March 2, the ADFL overran the town of Lubutu and the refugee camps of Tingi-Tingi. During this same period, attacks along a southwestern dimension led to the fall of Kalima to the ADFL on February 22. After the fall of Tingi-Tingi,

attention focussed on Kisangani, presumed by many to be the point where Mobutu's government would mount a major defense and, some argued, an offensive against the rebels. In the end, after some days of heavy fighting, Kisangani fell to the ADFL on March 15. On this northwestern axis of attack, the ADFL consolidated their victories, while on the southwestern angle, fighting continued. On April 9, the ADFL took Lubumbashi, both the second largest city in Zaire and symbolically the heartland of 1960s separatism. As the two prongs of the ADFL attack proceeded, they created large movements of refugees and internally displaced Zairians. For humanitarian actors, providing protection and relief to this growing, shifting, changing body of refugees and displaced was a tremendous challenge, requiring constant information tracking, continuous negotiation, and tremendous logistical challenges.

101. In western capitals, discussion concentrated on the difficulties the ADFL would have in getting from Kisangani to Kinshasa, a distance of over 1000 kilometres. At this stage, however, the involvement of another regional actor took on a substantive dimension when the Angolan government began to provide support, including air transport, to the rebels. This support allowed the ADFL rapidly to cross the western half of Zaire. Incredibly, a mere five weeks after the fall of Lubumbashi, the ADFL entered Kinshasa after a brief battle around the nearby airport. On April 18, the ADFL took control of Kinshasa, with Mobutu having fled Zaire two days earlier.

102. This brief chronology of major episodes may convey something of the speed with which events unfolded, but it cannot convey their complexity nor the tremendous brutality of some of the fighting. Quite apart from direct fighting between the ADFL/RPA and the ex-FAR/FAZ, refugees and local populations were used as human shields, adding tremendous civilian casualties to the fighting. At key points in the war, especially at Tingi-Tingi and Kisangani, refugee camps became battlegrounds, as refugees were placed between warring parties. One Rwandan official defended the strategy, arguing that "we had to kill those criminals, and if there were women and children in the way, we can't be naive; this is war." Estimates of those killed during the fighting range from 50,000 to triple that number.[53]

103. What is clear from this period is that the long-term failure of the international community to act in a timely fashion to separate the ex-FAR from refugee populations added tremendously to the human cost of the Zaire war. There is no reason to suppose that a separation mission in 1994ññproposed by the Secretary General and never acted onñññwould have altered the overall strategy of the military opponents of the Zaire war. However, there is reason to believe that having separated military combatants from refugees, such a mission would have substantially contributed to lessening the human costs of the Zaire war. Failure to act to tackle the political/military dimensions of the crisis clearly contributed to the human costs of the events of 1996-1997. Humanitarian action in the region during this period could not hope to provide effective protection for civilians and refugees in the face of military strategies which used refugee populations as shields and battlegrounds.

104. A former DHA official has written about this type of war, where the aims of combatants

> *". . . are absolutely incompatible and the lives of their respective populations become hostage to the struggle for power. This struggle for control results in a total disregard for the victimized civilians who are hit by both sides and who are denied escape or rescue. Such a constellation depicts the outer frontier for humanitarian coordination today. The*

risk of failure is extremely high, and failure results in the negation of the humanitarian imperative for people in the cross-fire."[54]

In concrete, bloody terms, this was indeed the frontier of strategic humanitarian coordination in eastern Zaire.

Notes:

11 Excellent sources on these issues include Filip Reyntjens. L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise: Rwanda et Burundi, 1990-1994. (Paris: Khartala, 1994); Prunier, Gerard, The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Johann Poittier, "The ëSelf' in Self-Repatriation: Closing Down Mugunga Camp, Eastern Zaire" in R. Black and K. Khoser (eds.) The End of the Refugee Cycle. (Oxford: Berghahn, forthcoming.)

12 Although the majority of Rwandans exiled in Uganda in this period were Tutsi, and thus the term Batutsi is a more descriptively accurate one, the academic and political convention is to use the term Banyarwanda. See especially UNHCR Banyarwanda Refugee Census of 1964, cited in Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, and Catherine Watson, Background to an Invasion, (Washington, DC: US Committee for Refugees, 1992.) The use of this term also reflected the desire of political elites within the Banyarwanda population to position themselves diplomatically as Rwandans, not Tutsis. This was especially true of the Rwandan Alliance for National Unity, a precursor to the Rwandese Patriotic Front, which sought right of return to Rwanda on the basis of nationality, not ethnicity.

13 René Lemarchand, Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

14 Alison des Forges, Burundi: A Failed or a Creeping Coup? Current History, May 1994.

15 Filip Reyjntjens, Burundi, (London: Minority Rights Group, 1996.)

16 See Poittier, "The Self in Self-Repatriation" for a first-rate account of the local history of conflict in eastern Zaire.

17 ibid. Also, author's notes, ActionAid conference on the Great Lakes Region; the input to this conference of scholars such as James Fairhead and Johann Poittier should be mentioned.

18 For background on the Masisi conflict, see in particular Poitier, "The Self in Self-Repatriation". On the impact of the Masisi crisis on international response to the civil war in Rwanda, see Bruce Jones, "NGOs in Complex Emergencies: The Case of Rwanda" (Ottawa: CARE Canada, 1996.)

19 For an discussion of the links between the Arusha Peace Accords and the genocide which followed, see Bruce Jones, "The Arusha Peace Process: Preventive Diplomacy?" in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (eds.), The Path to Genocide: Uganda to Zaire. New Brunswick: Transactions Press, Forthcoming 1998.

20 See John Borton, Alistair Hallam, and Emery Brusset, "Humanitarian Aid and Effects" Study III, International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience. Copenhagen: Danida, 1996.

21 Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report. (New York: 1998).

22 Borton et al, "Humanitarian Aid and Effects."

23 ibid.

24 The refugee camps in eastern Zaire were not militarized in the sense that no formal military training or formal military activity by the former Rwandan army (ëex-FAR': military and para-military actors of the former regime tend to be referred to collectively as the ex-Forces Armées Rwandaise, or ex-FAR) took place in the camps. However, not only did formal military command structures of the ex-FAR interact in a major way with political control structures established in the camps, there was also an important para-military presence in the camps, especially of the interahamwe and impuzamugambe militias. Given the very direct relationship between these militias and the ex-FAR in the

conduct of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, a strong distinction between para-military and military activity in the refugee camps, while legally important, perhaps fails to capture the political and strategic reality.

25 For a generally positive analysis of this coalition, see Philip Gourevitch, 'Letter from the Congo: Continental Shift', The New Yorker, 4 August 1997.

26 This grouping of regimes has in recent times often been referred to as an "alliance". In the authors' view, the term ëcoalition' more accurately captures the loose nature of the connection, which is one of quite different regimes, with disparate internal structures and problems, coming together in pursuit of common goals, rather than on the basis of profound, constitutive features.

27 See Patrick Smith, "Africa at Trigger-Point." Observer. 1997 May 18: 27.

28 Phillip Gourevitch, "Continental Shift".

29 Human Rights Watch, Annual Report, 1998.

30 Yoweri Museveni quoted by Goldberg, 1997: 62.

31 ibid.

32 Isaias Afwerki quoted by Goldberg, 1997: 75.

33 Although France has stayed politically active in a number of countries relevant to events in the Great Lakes, domestic political changes in particular have caused it to hold back on military intervention. This was especially evident during the Zairian civil war. In a previous era, the likelihood would have been French military troops stationed in nearby Central African Republic being sent to bolster the Mobutu regime. France continues to be active in supplying weapons to a number of African regimes, as do other Security Council members.

34 Chester Crocker, "Conclusion" in David Smock (ed.) Making War and Waging Peace: Foreign Intervention in Africa. (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1993).

35 Goldberg, 1997.

36 African Rights. Discussion Paper No 5. Humanitarianism Unbound? Current Dilemmas Facing Multi-Mandate Relief Operations in Political Emergencies.

37 Mary Anderson, Do No Harm. (Boston, Mass: Collaboratives for Development Action, 1996); Sue Lautze and John Hammock. Coping with Crisis, Coping with Aid. New York: UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, December 1996.

38 This also created new opportunities for foreign investment, principally by US, UK and Canadian corporations, some of whom provided direct financial and material backing to Kabila.

39 For more details on this period, and the ZCSC, see Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke with Bruce Jones, "Early Warning and Conflict Management" Study II, International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience. Copenhagen: Danida, 1996.

40 ibid.

41 As Poittier, "The Self in Self-Repatriation" makes clear, there were long-standing links between the Banyamulenge and the RPF.

42 According to UN documents (14 October 1996), President Museveni telephoned the Secretary General in October to express concern about the Banyamulenge situation.

43 During most of the Zairian offensive, the Rwandan government denied its active role in Eastern Zaire while making clear its political support for the Banyamulenge. More recently, Vice President Paul Kagame has acknowledged the active military presence of the Rwandan

army in the Eastern Zaire campaign: The Washington Post, 9 July 1997. Also see Mamdani, Mahmood, 'Why Rwanda Trumpeted its Zaire Role', Mail and Guardian, 8 August 1997.

44 In July 1996, one author of this study received from local contacts a copy of a document being circulated in Nairobi and Kigali: Executive Committee of the Rwandaphone Zaireans Association, "Memorandum on the Tragedy of the Rwandaphone Zaireans with some Proposals and Recommendations", June 1996. The document outlined the history of the "Banyamulenge" population, the argument that the Kivu regions had historically been part of Rwanda, and the need for the regions' governments to act to defend the Rwandaphone Zaireans.

45 Mamdani, Mahmood, 'Why Rwanda Trumpeted its Zaire Role', Mail and Guardian, 8 August 1997.

46 As early as June 1996, the Belgian newspaper, Le Soir, reported Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF) activity in the North Kivu region. Cited in Poittier, "The Self in Self Repatriation".

47 For example, proposals to establish secure humanitarian corridors for the safe return of refugees did not provide clear answers to the question of how refugees would enter the corridors without a potentially large-scale fire-fight between the MNF and the ex-FAR.

48 For a detailed discussion of international depiction of these events, see Poittier, "The Self in Self Repatriation".

49 On November 22, 1996, in a BBC World Service interview, Ambassador Gribben stated clearly that there were "no masses" of missing refugees, confirming the Rwandan government position that there were at most ten or a couple of tens of thousands of "missing" refugees. Cited in Refugees International, "The Lost Refugees: Herded and Hunted in Eastern Zaire" (Washington, DC: September 1997).

50 DHA correspondence, November 21, 1996.

51 An excellent discussion of this debate is found in Nicholas Stockton, "Rights and Racism" Unpublished paper, Oxford: 7 December 1996.

52 The timeline which follows is drawn from IRIN daily reports, as well as from Refugees International, "The Lost Refugees: Herded and Hunted in Eastern Zaire".

53 For a variety of estimates and surrounding debates, see Refugees International, "The Lost Refugees: Herded and Hunted in Eastern Zaire" (Washington, DC: September 1997).

54 Jurgen Dedring, "Humanitarian Coordination", p. 47.

The UN in the Great Lakes Region

105. In this region's dramatic history, the UN has never been a central actor, but neither has it been long absent from the stage. The international community's political and military involvement in the region has been largely negativeñña record of partial involvement, non-involvement and abandonmentññand this has reflected poorly on the UN system as a whole. This history is an important conditioning factor of the UN's strategic humanitarian coordination capacity, as it has sullied the reputation and relationship of the entire UN system with key political and military actors in the region. These regionally-specific issues add to the challenge of working with a complex UN system facing internal problems that extend beyond the Great Lakes Region. The two factors taken together equate to a UN system in the Great Lakes Region where receptivity for strategic coordination is at a minimum, while the need for it is at a maximum.

A. The UN in the Region

1. Compounding Failure: Humanitarianism in a policy vacuum

106. The UN's history in the region has not only included UN humanitarian actors, but also political and security elements of the UN and of the wider international community, working at times through the UN. UN humanitarian agencies, and relief organizations more generally, have repeatedly been both the front line and scapegoat for international political and security responses to conflicts in the region that have fallen short of substantive international political engagement. UN humanitarian agencies shoulder the brunt of condemnation as a consequence of continued humanitarian operations in a region where other forms of international political engagement are weak. This report strongly reaffirms the principal finding of the Joint Evaluation undertaken in 1995, i.e., that humanitarian action has repeatedly been forced to operate in a political vacuum. Humanitarian actors have been seriously weakened as a result.

107. Indeed, the situation has deteriorated since 1994: since that time, humanitarian operations have been shaped by political agendas while also serving as a substitute for more substantive political action. Not only does this constitute a major and continued failing in political terms, it works fatally to the detriment of humanitarians and humanitarianism, not just in the Great Lakes Region. Without a political environment of consent and secure humanitarian space, humanitarian action can compound the damage done by a failure of political response. This was the case in the camps in eastern Zaire, for example. Humanitarian assistance was provided in camps that were dominated by political and militia groups with an agenda of political intimidation, continued genocide and ongoing warfare. The principal responsibility for this situation lies with states that failed to uphold their legal responsibilities concerning protection, e.g. principally, Zaire and, secondarily, with the Security Council. Humanitarian actors became deeply implicated in the continuation of this state of affairs, and as a result had their own reputations seriously tarnished.

108. Over the past decade, in Rwanda and Burundi particularly, western states have remained involved at the bureaucratic level in the search for solutions and peaceful transitions. Claims of inattention or inaction are not accurate in this respect. Western actions have included:

- sustained involvement in the Rwandan peace dialogue (the Aruhsa process) prior to the genocide;
- sustained, though less coherent, efforts at ëpreventive diplomacy' in Burundi;
- continuous involvement at a low level in pressuring the Zairian state towards democracy and pluralism; and,
- sustained humanitarian engagement throughout the sub-region.

109. However, the enormity of the crises have overshadowed these efforts and thus conforms to the Crocker thesis noted earlier: when crises reach the point where political will is necessary to move a solution forward, that commitment will be absent. As a result, potentially constructive bureaucratic efforts have been displaced by a series of critical failings on major security issues. Some examples of political failings include:

- The lack of international response to large-scale ethnic killings in Burundi in October 1993. The weak response can be explained by timing and other contingent factors, but this does not alter the message that was communicated in the region, i.e., that ethnic cleansing and killing on a mass scale could go forward unimpeded by a significant international response.
- The withdrawal of the bulk of the UN's peacekeeping forces at the onset of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The reasons for this withdrawal have been well-documented, but can never be excused. The withdrawal reiterated the message that the international community would not act to prevent mass killings, even genocide, in the region. The deep sense of betrayal occasioned by the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping mission has translated into a wider sense of distrust of the UN system as a whole.
- The decision not to send a military force to address the armed presence in the Goma refugee camps, as was debated in late 1994 and through mid-1996. A request from the Secretary General for troop contributions was refused by fifty-nine out of sixty nations consulted, including permanent members of the Security Council. This was a key issue for the governments of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Here perhaps more than any where else, humanitarian actors were held to task for failings which were in fact those of governments in the region and the wider international community.
- The absence of a political response to the programme of killings and ethnic cleansing by the ex-FAR and Zairian allies, particularly in the Masisi region, from 1993 to 1996.
- The weakness of the international response to ongoing civil war, ethnic cleansing, and pogroms in Burundi. A peace enforcement mission for Burundi was mooted in 1995 but received no serious backing, yet more than a quarter of a million people have been killed in the last four years, and millions repeatedly displaced.[55]

2. Perceptions of the UN

"The UNHCR in eastern DRC is selling food and buying arms for the rebels. This is not humanitarian."
R. Luc, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Republic of Burundi.

110. The above quote is obviously incorrect, having no basis in evidence. Nevertheless, it is indicative that humanitarians in the UN system, and their NGO partners, have borne the brunt of anti-UN, anti-humanitarian sentiments far beyond that for which they are responsible.

111. From the perspective of the Rwandan government, in particular, and of those who are sympathetic to their viewpoint, the combination of sustained humanitarian operations and weak international political action resulted in a disastrous series of unintended consequences. It allowed the former Rwandan regime to conduct a genocide unimpeded by outside force; facilitated the ex-FAR's rejuvenation as a political and military force in eastern Zaire; and allowed the ex-FAR and their Zairian allies to attack western Rwanda and engage with impunity in ethnic cleansing in Zaire.[56] This generated distrust on the part of actors in the Great Lakes Region towards the international community, with the UN as its unwitting standard-bearer. This distrust encompasses a profound sense of betrayal and in certain quarters what one informant called "nothing short of visceral hatred". These feelings have been repeatedly expressed in public by officials in the region.[57]

112. Burundian government perspectives on the international community and the UN are perhaps less acute. There is a widespread, general, and mostly justified sense among government actors in Bujumbura that the international community either does not know or does not care about what is going on in Burundi. There is a large and active conflict resolution community engaged in the search for solutions, but this does not replace the need for political attention. In interviews with Burundian government, church, and civil society officials, the questioning was often turned around, as informants sought to gain insight from the study team on the inexplicable lack of international engagement in Burundi.

113. In Zaire, the UN has a long and complex history that defies neat summation. The major western powers, except for France, had in the last few years applied pressure on the Mobutu regime to move towards some form of pluralism and democracy. This pressure waxed and waned with regional and domestic political changes, but represented an important departure from the days when Mobutu was shielded from serious international criticism by his strategic support role in the Cold War. A number of important donor countries cut their development aid to Zaire, partly as a result of instability, and partly to reflect concern about a lack of progress in the Sovereign National Conference, which many western governments were hoping would lead to democratic reform in Zaire. The cutting back on aid of course had a serious impact on the position and influence of the UN in Kinshasa. Tensions between the international community and the Kinshasa regime were not enough to alter the perspective of important actors in Goma that the UN and the west were "Mobutu-backers". This Cold War perspective of the UN and the international community was an important legacy of the Shaba revolt in the 1960s. That Kabila cut his political teeth during this episode has already been mentioned.

114. In brief, the UN has been in the remarkable position of being mistrusted and perceived as partial by all parties in the region. Of course, one could argue that being distrusted by all parties equally is a form of neutrality! If so, it is a very negative form, one which has posed trouble for the UN and all humanitarian organizations in the region.

B. Pragmatism vs. Principles

115. In the Great Lakes Region, UN humanitarian personnel and other relief workers (and the citizens of the region) have been exposed to levels of violence far outside the realm of normal

human experience. The study team was aware of the psychological impact of humanitarian tragedies on dedicated staff. Nowhere in the world have humanitarian principles been so tested as in the Great Lakes Region. This situation has been summarized as a conflict between the humanitarian imperative and the humanitarian impulse[58]: where the humanitarian imperative to maintain neutrality dictates certain courses of actions, these actions at times seem to contradict the humanitarian impulses which motivate many of those tasked to uphold the imperative. The challenge of maintaining humanitarian principles has been very difficult for many working in the Great Lakes Region, while horrendous violations of human rights have unfolded literally before their eyes. This dilemma, which is experienced by UN and NGO relief workers far more widely than just in the Great Lakes Region, has serious ramifications for the ability of the UN to coordinate among its own agencies and the NGO partners on whom the system relies for the implementation of many of its programmes.

116. World-wide, the human rights and humanitarian communities have yet to define a comfortable working relationship. The dilemma between saving lives and upholding human rights laws and conventions was felt acutely by most working in the Great Lakes Region. Some organizations, such as MËdecins sans FrontiËres, have stated their commitment to vociferous objection to human rights violations while simultaneously delivering relief assistance to the point where, when push comes to shove, they will suspend operations rather than be helpless witnesses of abuse. Others, including UNHCR, have increasingly downplayed their human rights roles rather than risk disrupting operations. Critics of this stance have accused humanitarians of buying access by deliberately rejecting human rights obligations or associations. That position is defended by a ëback to the basics' humanitarian agenda of strict neutrality and silence, such as is traditionally practiced by the ICRC. The result is that humanitarian issues were judged or analyzed through a variety of prisms, not necessarily based in pure humanitarianism or grounded in well-studied human rights law. Indeed, throughout the humanitarian community, training on humanitarian law has historically been very weak. Here, until recently, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights has been largely absent, in part by its own organizational issues and in part due to many humanitarian organizations unwillingness to be associated with human rights bodies.

117. The humanitarian community, including donors, NGOs and UN agencies, has been split over what many referred to as the dilemma between "principles and pragmatism". One UN staffer recognized this as a slippery slope, noting that the spectrum of the dilemma ranged from principles to pragmatism to complicity. "One must work with the governments in the region but engage in critical discourse well founded on human rights conventions," he said. "If you're ëtoo neutral', you'll get little done or programme implementation will be done in parallel to national systems. If you're too close to the governments, you're easily duped and this has extremely bad consequences."

118. This dilemma has sometimes had profound operational implications. The ability of individuals with these varying and at times contradictory viewpoints to work together to form a coherent and coordinated overall relief and development programme in, for example, Rwanda and eastern DRC has been compromised. Attitudes vary regarding the extent to which agencies should or should not work with governments; relations with those governments differ widely not only between different agencies and NGOs, but also within them. There has been at times an unhealthy effort by some humanitarian agencies to establish their pro-government credentials. Moreover, the UN has sent mixed messages regarding its role when different elements of the UN system speak and act differently from one another.

119. The compromise of principles was particularly acute with respect to the refugee population in eastern Zaire. This population was mixed and included those involved in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, intimidators in the Zaire camps, and others who had been subject to intimidation, persecution, and political pressure either during the genocide or in the camps or both. When the camps were broken up in November 1994, the prevalent pro-RPF prism was brought to bear. According to one senior NGO staff member,

> *"...impartiality was compromised. We interpreted the Hutus going west [further into Zaire] from the camps as a plea of guilty, although this was an untested assumption. This value judgement led to the rationing of aid. The NGOs acted as judge, jury and, by withholding aid, executioner. Everyone is innocent until proven guilty and you can't be tried or sentenced to death in absentia. The NGOs violated all of this."*

120. This viewpoint was in sharp contrast to those who saw the unfolding events in eastern Zaire as yet another round in the region's recent history of mass political killings as a method of achieving a particular political or military transition. These contradictory views expressed themselves in different advocacy positions and actions among the NGO community in particular, and more quietly among the action and inaction of the UN and diplomatic communities. Even within the human rights community (and certainly outside of it) there has also been a strong reassertion of solidarity-based perspectives on advocacy and humanitarian action, especially as relates to the Rwandan government. This reflects challenging developments within the broad humanitarian and human rights communities. The debate between solidarity perspectives and more traditional neutrality perspectives has been particularly important within the NGO community, impeding common advocacy positions and common operations.

121. The compromises of humanitarian principles and human rights laws have been particularly acute in those areas most directly affected by the 1994 Rwandan genocide, i.e., Rwanda and eastern Zaire. Diplomats and humanitarian staff in Rwanda refer to a phenomenon of different ëgenerations' of perspectives. Those with the longer view of ethnic-based violence in the region tend to understand the historical context of recent conflicts, including its roots in struggles between Hutu and Tutsi elites at the end of the colonial period. This relatively small group of thinkers is found more in academic institutions than among the staff of UN agencies or NGOs. The second ëgeneration', those who witnessed the aftermath of the genocide whilst Rwanda was still awash with blood and bodies, have been singularly aligned in their sympathies with the RPF, and are frequently referred to as "the fan club." The third ëgeneration' are more critical of the RPF but tends to lack the perspective of either the recent or the longer history of the crisis. The fourth ëgeneration' of very recent arrivals tend to be sharply critical of the RPF. Some of the members of the ësecond generation' have converted to sharp criticism of the RPF. Having trusted the RPF to be worthy of support, even solidarity, many felt betrayed by the RPF's conduct both in eastern Zaire and inside the country. While this depiction of ëgenerations' is of course something of a caricature, it conveys the idea that the traditional humanitarian position of neutrality and impartiality has been tested and stretched by the occurrence and re-occurrence of genocide, acts of genocide, and ethnic cleansing.

122. As a further complication to this dilemma, many within the UN and the NGO community feel a profound level of guilt about the international community's lack of response, particularly with respect to the Rwandan genocide. As a result, they are susceptible to pressure brought to bear on them by the regions' governments, who rarely let a chance pass

to remind the UN of its failures. The words of a former Humanitarian Coordinator for Rwanda are relevant here:

> *"The humanitarian community felt itself increasingly burdened by the genocide. The standard rules of protection and assistance seemed to lack a certain relevance when faced with a reality that in the course of the previous three months, from April to June 1994, a plan of the previous government, almost incomprehensible in terms of its cruelty, cold-bloodedness and efficiency, had been implemented, resulting in the torture and murder of between 500,000 and 1,000,000 supposedly-ethnic Rwandan Tutsis. The humanitarian situation was further compounded by the fact that after July 1994 the new Government of Rwanda never failed to remind the humanitarian community that in refugee camps along the nation's borders perpetrators of the genocide were being fed and maintained by UN agencies and NGOs alike."*[59]

123. This burden of institutional guilt limits the attention paid to critically important but highly sensitive issues such as justice and human rights by humanitarian agencies. Most critically, it has resulted in a degree of quietude about human rights abuses inside Rwanda in particular. Only recently has the amplification of reported killings by the Rwandan army attracted serious attention even by the specialized press or been raised in western foreign policy and aid policy dialogues. These issues have been less pronounced in Burundi, where the levels of killing has been more evenly distributed between parties to the conflict, throughout its recent history. It is perhaps not unsurprising that it was in Burundi that the study team found the most clear-cut example of a common humanitarian position (see Section VI.3).

C. Current state of the UN

124. The factors listed above are specific to the Great Lakes Region. However, they intersect with a series of other aspects of the UN system that have an impact on its coordination function in the Great Lakes Region, and presumably more broadly.

1. Competition

125. The UN humanitarian system is facing serious issues of competition and distrust. Inter-agency rivalry has become a negative force, weakening the reputation and negotiating position of an already challenged institution, and feeding fuel to increasingly voracious critics. Far from healthy competition of the type that might encourage performance, UN agencies at times seem caught in rivalries that have serious ramifications for the ability of the system to effectively respond to the needs of survivors of complex emergencies.

126. In the Great Lakes Region, this competition did not prevent important instances of collaboration among agencies, especially when the crisis was at its peak. For example, good collaboration among agencies facilitated the work of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinators in negotiating with the rebel movement in Zaire. Equally, important innovations in collaboration on such issues as joint logistics have been documented by a parallel study.[60]

127. However, such instances of collaboration and cooperation occurred alongside important instances of discord, breakdowns in communication, and rivalry. Most recently, the UN reform process appears to have added rancour to already difficult relationships. The process has left a legacy of anger and resentment that further stresses relations between agencies. Many of the very serious issues brought to the fore by the reform process have not been

addressed. The process of reconciliation after what was felt by many UN personnel to be a struggle for bureaucratic power has been inadequate.

128. These problems are not limited to the Great Lakes Region. Interagency rivalry has been amplified in the post-Cold War era, when UN specialized agencies have been forced to work together in unprecedented proximity because of the increasing numbers of complex emergencies. Such emergencies, set in a context of intra-state conflict, by definition require a system-wide response. The more complex the emergencies, the higher the degree of coordination and co-operation required of the UN system. Hence, interagency competition in the highly complex crises of the Great Lakes Region is of serious concern.

129. The effects of this non-cooperation have filtered from agency headquarters in Geneva and New York down to the field offices in the Great Lakes Region. In the current atmosphere, the rancour has been transmitted directly to the field. Notably, strong messages have been sent from headquarters of some agencies not to co-operate with other UN agencies, especially not with DHA and technical agencies. Bureaucratic competition and infighting is usually most vicious at headquarters; field conditions tend to dissipate these energies, and forge solidarity through shared experience. While there was some evidence of this phenomenon at play, solidarity among the humanitarian community in the field was weak. In at least one instance, disagreement between two agencies in Rwanda spilled over into a media dispute, resulting in damage to the credibility of the UN in the eyes of governments and donors. Officials of both agencies assured the study team that the incident was not representative, and that relations between the two agencies had improved in recent times. However, the incident does indicate that more work needs to be done to find effective channels for managing dissent.

130. Moreover, especially in Rwanda, this intra-UN competition has intersected with the issue of competing sympathies in the region, and in particular with solidarity-style sentiments about the government of Rwanda. UN officials in the country expressed concern that some of their colleagues were using inter-agency competition to cement their own relations with the government. In at least one important instance, one UN agency leaked confidential UN documents to the government of Rwanda.

131. This competition is damaging to UN coherence and coordination in an environment where consent for humanitarian operations is already under strong challenge. The government of Rwanda in particular has perfected the art of playing agencies off one another by strategically wielding information and misinformation. Rather than band together to counter this, however, UN agencies frequently continue to ëgo it alone' when circumstances allow.

2. Mandate issues

"IDPs are clearly UNICEF's responsibility."
UNICEF staff member, Tanzania.

"IDPs fall under UNHCR's mandate."
UNHCR staff member, Rwanda.

"The UNDP naturally has a mandate for IDPs."
UNDP staff member, Burundi.

"Doesn't DHA have a mandate for IDPs?"
DHA staff member, Geneva.

132. The legacy of reform battles, and the resultant diminished willingness to co-operate, compound a series of pre-existing problems concerning mandate creep, confusion, overlap, and gaps.

133. In the face of overwhelming needs, operational agencies, especially the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR have concentrated on building up logistical and programme capacity with impressive success. The effectiveness of these efforts is the topic of another study (the Tripartite Team Study on Joint Logistics) and is not explored here. Of relevance to strategic humanitarian coordination, however, is a tendency by some UN agencies to expand activities rather than build up capacity to work in concert with other UN agencies through interagency coordinationññña phenomenon which results in mandate creep.

134. Given its superior ability to mobilize fiscal, human and material resources, UNHCR in particular has demonstrated that it will move to fill gaps in humanitarian operations and in doing so, has saved lives. One exasperated UNHCR officer acknowledged that his organization was expanding its activities but explained that "We can't wait for other UN agencies, we have to take action. (Our assistance) is a drop in the ocean." UNHCR's intentions in this regard are clearly humanitarian, not imperial. However, the net effect of less capacity and speed on the part of some UN agencies, has had the unintended negative consequences of displacing technical agency expertise while tipping the balance of assistance in favour of refugee/returnee populations over the larger needs of other populations and sectors, not to mention exacerbating interagency competition. The argument here of course, is not that UNHCR should be less efficient or energetic. Rather, it is important that other UN agencies improve the quality of their emergency response capacities. An important positive example of cooperation in the region provides a model: UNHCR was using its superior financial position to provide funding to the UN Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda (HRFOR) for the development of human rights programmes as they related to returnees. Although a small programme, it demonstrated an alternative to competition, namely having the stronger agencies exert leadership in collaboration with less powerful, less well-resourced UN partners.

135. In addition, all UN agencies need to be committed to tackling the challenging issue of how better to align humanitarian and development goals. Technical agencies, especially the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), were concerned about the appropriateness of expanded WFP and UNHCR activities, highlighting the increasing number of sectors in which the agencies were involved, e.g. agriculture, seeds and tools, health, etc. It was repeatedly argued that there had been little or no effort to link humanitarian activities with development objectives.[61]

136. WHO and FAO personnel were quick to recognize that an important part of the phenomenon of mandate creep is their own institutional weaknesses in responding to emergencies. Even after the rapid-onset phase of an emergency is over, the technical agencies' programming capacity is limited. FAO in Rwanda, to give but one example, has a skeleton staff with minimal capacity to contribute to the debate about emergency response or to help move into more sustainable programming. This has lead to considerable frustration and alienation.

137. Even staff within UNICEF, considered to be one of the ëbig three' operational agencies, recognized that it was slow to deploy resources during emergencies. For example, UNICEF staff members candidly recognized that UNHCR's dominance in eastern Zaire was in part a

function of their own slowness in deploying resources targeted at internally displaced or locally affected populations.

138. In areas of clearly defined mandates, there are mandate overlaps that generate interagency tensions and confusion. UNHCR indicated conflicts with UNICEF where the mandates of the two agencies coincided, especially in the area of women and children refugees and returnees. Similar confusion was noted between the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the operational agencies. The question, for example, of when a returnee stops falling within UNHCR's mandate and begins to fall under that of UNDP, is a difficult and challenging one. Agencies are working to address these issues, increasingly through the use of memoranda of understanding (MOU). However, MOUs signed at headquarters do not easily translate into smooth operations in the field. Both at headquarters and in the field, the difficulty of implementing an MOU is sharpest when it comes to the allocation of resources. In this area, as in many others, fund-raising pressure is an important source of conflicts over mandates. Donors play a significant role in this problem. Major donors have supported and funded the process of mandate creep and have been unwilling to fund the technical agencies to strengthen their technical capacity to provide expertise and balance.

139. In the Great Lakes Region, mandate overlap and confusion has been particularly noticeable in the area of shelter. In Rwanda, for example, the UN agencies were unanimous in describing the shelter programmeññone of the UN's top priorities in the countryññas disastrously uncoordinated. Dozens of humanitarian agencies are involved, including UNDP, UNHCR, Habitat, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), and numerous NGOs, as well as a number of sub-contracting companies. With primary responsibility for coordinating the shelter programme, UNHCR noted that its involvement in shelter had drawn insufficiently on the advice of the technical agencies. As a result many of the houses built are not integrated into the social and physical infrastructure of villages or markets. The resultñ widely evident in Rwandañis large numbers of houses standing empty, while shelter needs continue to be high.

140. There are also important gaps in the mandates of UN agencies, a fact that has been well documented outside of the Great Lakes Region. Particularly important is the gap regarding internally displaced persons. A former Humanitarian Coordinator for Rwanda has argued that "[t]he plight of IDPs is perhaps one of the most sensitive problems that the humanitarian community must confront."[62] The issue is the subject of an ongoing effort by the Secretary General and the humanitarian agencies, but has yet to be resolved.[63] In a region which has had, at times, hundreds of thousands of IDPs, this gap poses serious challenges for strategic coordination. This was particularly true in Burundi, where large sections of the population have been repeatedly displaced, both by fighting and by government policy. In a process known as ëregroupement', hundreds of thousands of Burundians have been forced into secured villages and camps constructed by the army. (See Section VI.E.2) For this and other reasons, the question of internal displacement is enormously political. Indeed, there are now a series of categories of displaced in Burundi: returnees, *les deplacés*, and *les regroupés*. UNHCR clearly has a mandate for one of these categories, returnees. The other categories fall into the mandate gap. The withdrawal of ICRC from Burundi has further highlighted these gaps. Confusion over what assistance should be provided by whom has been used by political actors to exacerbate the politicization of these categories.

3. Fund-raising and Visibility

141. Part of the problem of competition and mandate creep is a perceived need for continuous visibility as a tool for fund-raising. The pressure of visability is an important factor in the drive for new areas of operational responsibility, and hence in the mandate confusion detailed above. Here also donors have been part of the problem, pressuring UN agencies to provide visible attributions at project sites. "Gift of the Government" is a too-commonly read phrase in the Great Lakes Region. Donors are thus an important part of the proliferation of symbols and stickers for which humanitarian assistance is increasingly criticized, both in the region and elsewhere.

142. Donor pressure thus contributes to competition for resources. In an atmosphere of declining overall resources, however, competition for market share is increasing. Market share is protected and promoted through visibility and product differentiation. The competition for visibility, manifest in the explosion of UN agency emblems on trucks, cars, planes, T-shirts, flags, buildings, etc., has been encouraged by senior staff who are understandably concerned about the financial health of their institutions. Staff reported ëgetting into trouble' for failing to clearly mark their project areas with UN agency logos. This trend consumes energy and political resources, undermines the authority of local governments (who should be supported as the main service providers for affected populations) and discourages interagency co-operation, further undermining efforts at coordination.

143. The fund-raising issues also have an impact on mandate creep and confusion. The technical agencies in particular appear locked in a vicious cycle of weak emergency capacity leading to poor fund-raising performance which further hampers their emergency capacity. Donors understandably put their money where they get "the most bang for our buck"ññUNHCR and WFP.

144. Connected to this is the issue of media exposure. Visibility is achieved in part through media coverage, a fact which generates even further competition for market share for the more ëmedia-friendly' populations, such as unaccompanied children. For difficult caseloads, such as sanitation projects and prison assistance, fewer agencies are willing to work in these 'media-unfriendly' sectors. The perceived equation is that high-volume operations in media attractive operations generate visibility, which in turn generates funds, which facilitates expanded operational capacity, and so on. Of note, donors generally do not make their funding decisions on the basis solely of television coverage or visibility. Nevertheless, the visibility factorññreal or perceivedññis an important determinant of agency behaviour, competitiveness, and mandate confusion.

D. Conclusion

145. Not just in the Great Lakes Region, but system-wide, issues of competition for visibility, mandate confusion, and bureaucratic rivalry come at a time when the critics of the UN system, both in the north and in the south, are increasingly numerous. Those who would castigate the UN for bureaucratic jealousy and lack of focus on outcomes have fuel for their fires. Though this criticism does a disservice to the motivations of those involved, the phenomenon of competition for visibility is one which has grown to proportions where it undermines perceptions of the motivation of humanitarian action.

146. These are of course not the only realities of the UN. None of the above alters the fact that the vast majority of UN personnel encountered by the study team are genuinely concerned about the problems at hand, distressed by their own organizations' short-comings, and anxious to find better ways forward. Regrettably, humanitarian motivation and desire for improvement are all too often displaced by the factors mentioned above, sometimes as a result of deliberate manipulation by critics and opponents but also by pressure from the senior management of UN bodies.

147. In the Great Lakes, these issues have compounded the UN's already problematic history in the region. This combination of troubled history and fractious present were the backdrop against which the functions of strategic humanitarian coordination had to be performed. Those responsible for those functions were of course part of the UN system, they share its history and reputation, and are subject to all of the same pressures.

Notes:

55 The number of deaths in the Burundian conflict is disputed, partially because of the unreliability of data from the country. Official estimates put the death toll around 250,000; many close observers of the conflict believe that the actual death toll is substantially higher, perhaps approaching 350,000 deaths.

56 See inter alia Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report. (New York: Carnegie Commission of New York, 1998).

57 An early example was Major General Paul Kagame's talk at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, June 1995, and a similar talk at the National Press Association in Washington the following week. In both, Kagame attacked the international community, and the UN in particular, for a long-standing pattern of ignoring and abandoning Tutsis in Rwanda and neighbouring countries. Authors' notes of the meetings.

58 Joanna Macrae, "Humanitarian Ethics vs. Humanitarian Impulse", in Ethics and Humanitarian Aid. (ECHO Conference Report. Brussels: 1997).

59 Randolph Kent, "The Integrated Operation Centre in Rwanda: Coping with Complexity." in Whitman and Pocock, After Rwanda. p.64.

60 See Tripartite Team Study on Joint Logistics.

61 A number of personnel pointed to the shelter programme in Rwanda as an example of a humanitarian assistance programme taking insufficient account of development issues.

62 Randolph Kent, in After Rwanda, p. 64

63 Francis Deng, Protecting the Displaced, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995).

Strategic Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms

Section Summary

148. The preceding sections spell out the rapidly-evolving political context of the complex emergency in the Great Lakes Region to which the UN system was supposed to respond, and some aspects of the current state of the UN system. It is clear from the challenging context that only a sophisticated, tightly coordinated, system-wide response had any possibility of furthering a humanitarian agenda when it came in conflict with the political, military and economic interests of local and in some cases international actors. Instead, in part by design and in part by default, the UN utilized a plethora of strategic coordination *mechanisms* that did not amount to a single, coherent *system* of strategic coordination. The result was dissonance between the context of the crisis and the reality of the response by IASC members.

149. The mechanisms used for strategic coordination ranged from formal IASC arrangements, through agency roles, to informal mechanisms. Both in the field and at headquarters, the study team encountered a general attitude that equated formal coordination with DHA. However, while it is true that DHA has special responsibilities, there are a number of elements within the UN system that contribute to the functions of strategic humanitarian coordination (SHC), including: the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) under the chairmanship of the Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC), who is also the head of DHA; Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC) (and by implication, their home agencies), who report to the ERC on coordination; Emergency Field Coordinators (and also by implication, their home agencies); and others. In the Great Lakes Region, there were also Regional Humanitarian Coordinators (RHC), who reported directly to the ERC, an important innovation to the UN system. Other innovations included the creation of the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN). Informal processes and mechanisms are also considered in the report.

Table 2. Coordination Structures in the Great Lakes Region

Mechanism	**GLR**	**Rwanda**	**Burundi**	**Zaire**	**Tanzania**
RHC	*	*	*	*	*
RC/HC		*	*	*	
Regular Heads of Agency Meeting	(*)	*	*	*	*
- incl. NGOs		*		*	*
- incl donors			*	*	*

Sectoral Coord. Meetings		*	*	*	*
Informal Mechanisms	*	*	*	*	*
NGO Coord. Meetings		*	*	*	*
Govt. Coord. Meetings		*	*	*	*
Strategic Planning Process		*		*	
CAP	*	*	*	*	*
Others	*	*	*	*	*

150. These formal and informal mechanisms for strategic coordination did result in a number of positive instances where the UN adapted to challenging circumstances and performed well despite facing serious obstacles. Examples include:

- good collaboration between the Regional Humanitarian Coordinators, regional heads of the operational agencies, and emergency field coordinators in the area of negotiating with rebels in eastern Zaire; this was perhaps the most important place where strategic and operational coordination came together as an effective, manageable mechanism;

- good system-wide collaboration, drawing on the strengths of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to develop a common humanitarian policy on regroupement camps in Burundi, a policy solidly grounded in humanitarian law;

- ongoing efforts by Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators to maintain the difficult balance between good relationships with their government counterparts and respect for humanitarian principles;

- at the behest of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, non-governmental organizations active in the region were able to address the Security Council for the first time, increasing the profile of humanitarian issues at the political level of the wider UN system;

- at times, DHA staff wielded information to strategic effect, using superior knowledge of disaster conditions in the country to extract concessions from government counterparts and to forge collaborative strategies with civil society actors;

- in Rwanda, NGO representatives sat in on Head of Agency meetings, including on security issues, representing an added dimension in collaboration between UN and NGO sectors of the humanitarian community;

- the creation of IRIN, clearly the most successful element of the strategic coordination effort, represented a significant improvement in the collection, distribution, and use of information by UN humanitarian agencies and NGOs.

151. However, these successes were overshadowed by wider processes of political and military strategies that targeted civilians for attack, displacement, and death. Major violations of humanitarian law and principles were the result of deliberate policies of regional political and military actors, who frequently did not provide the context required for effective coordination. Pressure from donor nations to generate that context either was not forthcoming or was inconsistent and insufficient. The result was that UN humanitarian agencies and NGOs had to work under conditions of insufficient humanitarian space and respect for humanitarian principles.

152. Nevertheless, it is possible to review the UN's performance on strategic coordination from the perspective of the appropriateness of the structures in place, the extent to which those structures functioned, the obstacles that were or were not overcome, and innovations that improved performance from previous responses. In so doing it is possible to identify lessons for future responses. In reviewing the performance of the functions of strategic coordination, it was at all times necessary to separate performance from result. For example, a sophisticated and concerted negotiating effort by the UN system in eastern Zaire did not prevent killings, displacement, and other major violations of humanitarian law; positive lessons can be learned from the structure and method of the UN's response, while the outcome remains primarily the responsibility of local government and rebel actors. In other, more permissive, circumstances, lessons can be learned from weaker performance of strategic coordination functions.

153. In this realm, the evidence suggested that while different *mechanisms* for strategic coordination performed with varying degrees of effectiveness throughout the region, they never amounted to a coherent *system* for strategic coordination. Recent innovations represented improvements in existing practice that nevertheless a) were insufficient to meet the challenges at hand and b) did not address major, underlying problems such as the structure of authority and responsibility within the UN system and important outside pressures in the areas of finances and visibility.

154. Who has the authority to coordinate is a question that has bedeviled the UN's coordination efforts since the collapse of the Cold War and associated proliferation of complex emergencies that, by definition, require a system-wide response. The simple reality is that within the diverse UN family, no element has adequate authority to command, coerce, or compel any other element to do anything. As one senior coordinator explained, "I can't make anybody give me a paper clip, let alone follow a programme." DHA, of course, has formal responsibility for strategic coordination but in-country staff have none of the standard management tools for strategic coordination, such as budgetary authority, management authority, executive authority, etc., beyond the immediate confines of their own bureaucratic turf. This is a well-established reality of the UN, relating to its internal management structures, its governance arrangements, and a long-established culture of resistance to direction and of agency independence.

155. The closest the UN system has come to establishing a system of formal authority for coordination is the use of the lead agency model, used formally in the former Yugoslavia and informally in the 1994 response to the Goma crisis. This model was not used in the Great

Lakes Region during the time period under study, although at times UNHCR operated as *de facto* lead agency. However, it was frequently a subject of discussion at headquarters level. It was evident from these discussions that the lead agency model has not been sufficiently well definedññin terms of authority, administrative support structures, mechanisms, responsibilitiesññto ensure that coordination will clearly benefit all, separating the humanitarian coordination role from the agency's own role.[63] Formal and even *de facto* lead agency structures generated serious frustration, resistance, and discontent among those who worked with them. As one informant argued, "We have to avoid the lead agency model for the sanity of the system." Another observed, "Lead agency only works for the lead agency." There is, it should be noted, a higher degree of support for lead agency arrangements in the Secretary-General's office, and during the period when the team was conducting the study, two lead agency proposals were entertained by the Secretary General (UNHCR for Sri Lanka and WFP for North Korea).

156. As other studies on coordination have established, the issue of authority is typically handled within the UN by consensus building arrangements, based around information sharing as the core coordination function. This has been described by adherents and critics alike as "coordination light." With some minor exceptions, most of the coordination arrangements in the Great Lakes Region followed the "coordination light" model, where individual elements of the system are made responsible for coordination but given little to no authority to ensure it. This amounts to a "participate if you like" system of coordination. However, the Great Lakes Region also makes it clear that "coordination light" is insufficient to the task at hand.

157. At the heart of the variety of mechanisms deployed for strategic coordination were the UN in-country Humanitarian Coordinators, at times bolstered by an important innovation of the period, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinators. Where they functioned well, the country coordinators were an important connection between the various strategic coordination mechanisms, which still fell short of a strategic coordination system, but did fulfil a number of key functions. An important source of field support for these coordinators were humanitarian coordination cells established within their home offices, for example UNDP in Rwanda and Zaire. In some instances, DHA personnel or others helpfully bolstered these offices, though this was sporadic.

158. Where the country coordinators were weak, or where the political context demanded alternative arrangements, other mechanisms emerged to fill the void. The most important sources of this were a) the regional coordinators and b) informal arrangements between the major operational agencies. Working together, these actors provided a degree of regional overview to otherwise country-focused arrangements, and were critical where there was no recognized, formal governing authority, i.e., eastern Zaire during the first part of the Zaire war. This happened in an *ad hoc* way but was nonetheless important and constitutes an impressive example of adaptivity from UN humanitarian agencies.

159. Where there were measurable efforts in the representational functions of strategic coordination, and in particular in the negotiation of humanitarian space and respect for humanitarian principles, they must be credited largely to the negotiating strengths of the regional and country humanitarian coordinators and to informal mechanisms, especially those that enabled the operational agencies to support negotiations with rebel authorities. The regional and country humanitarian coordinators used a variety of formal and informal sources of authority available to them (e.g. diplomatic clout, personality, respect, relationships with

governmental authorities, relationships with key UN heads of agencies, appointment of emergency field coordinators) to persuade both government and rebel authorities to accede to elements of the humanitarian agenda when they were largely disposed not to do so.

160. This was, for the study team, a surprising conclusion. From earlier studies (especially the Operation Lifeline Sudan [OLS] Review) the study team was predisposed to the view that combining the Resident Coordinator (RC) and Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) functions into one individual was a problematic model. One of the major conclusions of the OLS Review was that the merging of the two functions weakened the independence of the humanitarian voice, to the detriment of humanitarian operations. The issues were different in the Great Lakes Region, varying both by the personality of RC/HC and by the nature of counterpart authority. The study team's conclusion is that, personality aside (a very important caveat), the RC/HC model is an appropriate one in situations where a single national authority is by and large able to control access throughout the country (e.g. Tanzania throughout, Rwanda during most of the period under study), whereas an independent humanitarian office is needed in situations where a country is divided between warring authorities, each of which controls access to some part of the territory (e.g., Zaire until the fall of Kinshasa). Of course, these represent end points on a spectrum, not absolute situations. Burundi, through much of the period under study, was nominally controlled by a single national authority but in fact had an important rebel presence in a number of regions.

161. However, even such successes as were recorded by the RC/HCs and the regional coordinators were largely dependent on the willingness of the region's authorities to provide a framework of consent for humanitarian agendas and operations. Humanitarian space was negotiated at the margins of political and military agendas. When these agendas were in conflict to humanitarian objectives, humanitarians were kept out, kicked out, manipulated, misinformed, and at worst, unwittingly put to military purposes. In each case, the various mechanisms for strategic coordination were insufficient to provide an effective humanitarian voice to negotiate more consistent consent or at least record clear humanitarian objections to military and political strategies that at times bore tremendously high humanitarian costs. It should be clear, however: responsibility for the failures of strategic coordination in these circumstances lies principally with those political and military authorities that denied or constrained consent for humanitarian action.

162. Some of the strengths and weaknesses of the various mechanisms for strategic coordination are considered below.

A. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee

163. Until the recent creation of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA), the IASC was the most senior body for humanitarian policy issues within the UN system. This standing is now somewhat in question, as the relationship between ECHA and the IASC has yet to be defined. During the time period covered by the report, the IASC was the body ultimately responsible for the strategic (and operational) coordination of humanitarian activities in the Great Lakes Region.

1. Structural issues

164. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee was created in 1992 by the same General Assembly resolution that created DHA. It is a unique body, in that its composition extends

beyond the UN system to include representatives of non-governmental humanitarian organizations and the Red Cross movement as standing invitees. It also has recently been expanded to include the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, a welcome step forward towards improving the balance of approaches needed in today's complex emergencies.

165. At the Head of Agency level, the IASC meets twice a year. A working group composed of senior staff meets more frequently to consider ongoing operations and policy issues. Informal telephone consultations are sometimes used to generate an IASC decision, though this has been less frequent than might be assumed. The IASC has not designated sub-committees to manage specific emergency operations[64] though the composition of the working group on some occasions reflects the substance of the agenda. The idea of forming a steering committee for the IASC, suggested in the Secretary-General's reform package, has not been adopted by the IASC.

166. The potential strength of the IASC is its composition. It is unique in the world system in having high-level representation from across the spectrum of the humanitarian community. Clear policy decisions by the IASC, effectively communicated to the field, would carry the considerable weight of a collective humanitarian voice. Unfortunately, that potential strength is little realized. In the Great Lakes Region, at least, the performance of the IASC has been disappointing and inadequate, both by the standard of its potential and by the standard of requirements. Throughout the recent crisis in the region, there was a strong need for clear decisions by a body representing the broad humanitarian community.

167. The IASC, which most participants agree has made significant efforts to improve collaboration between elements of the humanitarian system, has not overcome some important structural difficulties. Given the context of the crises in the Great Lakes Region, this has profound ramifications for humanitarian policy and strategic coordination. Repeatedly, the study team was told that IASC members participate in meetings, appear to agree to decisions, and then return to their agencies to conduct business as usual. This is understandable, given the current structure: each IASC member is accountable to his/her individual board and not in any way to the IASC. Some IASC members are accountable to the Secretary-General, others to the General Assembly, and some to neither. This of course relates directly to the question of authority: no one member of the IASC has authority over any other, nor do they even ultimately report to the same governing bodies.

168. In addition to weak linkages in accountability, IASC members' unwillingness to tackle sensitive issues may stem from tainted, "whitewashed", flows of information. Agency staff admitted to overwhelming pressure to maintain their agency's image, even if that meant not raising controversial topics. As is typical in bureaucratic organizations, less senior staff were reluctant to raise criticisms of their organizations with their superiors. Again, this is understandable given the incentive structure of the United Nations. What utility is there for UNICEF or WFP to criticize UNHCR's policies in the Great Lakes Region, or vice versa? This results in part in a common view from the field that the IASC deals with trivialities, does not engage in ëreal' political analysis and does not share information. With rare exceptions, the IASC has not projected its authority or its decisions to the field.

169. The IASC is a cumbersome body. Because it lacks any sort of steering committee or sub-committee structure, the capacity of the IASC to move quickly to make decisions is hampered by the very source of its strength, its wide composition. In Geneva, for example, DHA would host a routine meeting of all members of the IASC, a cumbersome process for discussing

some issues, especially those that were operational in nature. UNHCR thus hosted parallel meetings of only the most pertinent agencies involved in certain key issues. This resulted in duplication of meetings, a waste of time and a further source of inter-agency tension.

170. An important instance of the IASC fulfilling some of its potential occurred when it gave its backing to a common policy on regroupement in Burundi, drafted by the in-country team and negotiated primarily by Martin Griffiths, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (see Section VI.E. below). This was an example of the IASC using its unique position to send a clear humanitarian message to the relevant political authorities in Burundi and should stand as a case model of how the IASC should be used. Critically, in this instance the IASC members had access to unfiltered information directly from the field through Griffiths and his office, and hence the likelihood that information would be "whitewashed" by bureaucratic channels was considerably less.

171. This moment of fulfilled potential was the exception to a broader theme of insufficient assessment of the context of the crisis and meaningful action to fill policy vacuums, as well as of failure to respond to fast-breaking crises or to override the minority views of strong-minded members of the IASC when appropriate. There was a wide need for such action, as political and military authorities in the region repeatedly engaged in gross violations of humanitarian law, standards, and principles. The demand for a common humanitarian voice, and the need for guidance by the IASC, was repeatedly expressed by NGO and Red Cross movement personnel in particular.

172. There were, thus, a number of important lessons from the Great Lakes Region concerning the IASC. First, the need for an effective, functioning IASC is critical when the framework of consent for humanitarian action is under challenge, as it was in the Great Lakes Region. Second, the IASC must considerably improve its communications to the rest of the UN system, particularly to the field, to the wider humanitarian community, and to counterpart authorities. Policy positions and decisions taken in New York or Geneva have little relevance if they are not known or understood where operations are taking place and where a framework of consent must be negotiated. Third, the IASC needs to develop a committee system for providing guidance on humanitarian issues during ongoing operations. Two potential modifications include the creation of some form of steering committee and the appointment of sub-committees to handle specific emergencies.

2. The Emergency Relief Coordinator

173. The IASC is chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), who is also the head of DHA. It is important to note the key role that the Emergency Relief Coordinator must play to make the IASC an effective body. An activist ERC could have magnified the efficacy and clout of the IASC in the Great Lakes Region but this was not the case. The ERC was widely criticized for being unwilling to consult broadly and frequently with his IASC colleagues. This limited the effectiveness of the IASC, a body that could be a powerhouse of advocacy for humanitarian principles and effective humanitarian policy. On the positive side, the ERC was credited with effectively representing the IASC's views to the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

174. Both the strengths and weaknesses of the ERC's relationship to the IASC are revealed by the process through which a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator was appointed to the Great Lakes Region, a second instance in which the IASC played an important role during the crisis.

By mid-1996, discussion on this topic within the IASC had reached an impasse when UNHCR objected to the creation of the position. UNHCR's reasoning was that while the regional coordination function was important, the nature of the emergency was such that the lead agency model was the appropriate one, not the independent humanitarian coordinator model, given the enormity of the refugee crisis. This minority view blocked movement on this question until the appointment of a senior UNHCR staff person as the RHC, something that was not accomplished until the height of the crisis in eastern Zaire in November, 1996. Fortunately, the person in question, Sergio Vieira de Mello, was amply qualified for the job. This does not alter the fact that the process was critically disrupted by a single member of the IASC and hence, valuable time was lost, or that it was redolent of the too familiar UN process of appointing positions on the basis of the personal and political biases of Heads of Agencies (and powerful governments). The result was less transparency than desirable in the appointment of this high-level position, a fact that had important ramifications for the acceptability of any Regional Humanitarian Coordinator to UN field offices and authorities in the Great Lakes Region. It further added to the general feeling of coordinators being ëimposed' on field structures with little or no consultation.

175. Apart from the chairmanship of the IASC (and indeed partly through that responsibility) the other important role for the ERC is advocacy, i.e., lobbying both within the UN system and outside of it for respect for humanitarian law and principles and the provision of secure humanitarian space. On this front, there were both positive and negative aspects of the Great Lakes Region experience. On the positive side, humanitarian actors gained unprecedented access to the Security Council. Notably, a small number of international NGOs (CARE, MSF, and Oxfam) were invited to brief the Security Council on the situation in the Great Lakes Region.

176. Under-utilization of the IASC by the ERC certainly weakened strategic coordination efforts in the Great Lakes Region. More broadly, there is evidence for concern that the ERC did not act with sufficient energy and timeliness with respect to the evolving situation in eastern Zaire. Indeed, as late as the end of November 1996, the view was expressed by coordination staff that there has been insufficient attention paid to issues of access, protection, and human rights in the Region.[65] This was indeed a major omission; as one informant noted, for strategic coordination to add value to humanitarian operations, timeliness is of the essence.

177. Ultimately, efforts to defend humanitarian space in the region were largely unsuccessful due to the political context of the crisis (where those who had the ability to grant consent were unwilling to do so), but also because humanitarian space was not consistently defined and delimited by the UN as a system. There was not an overarching approach to determining what humanitarians could and could not accomplish in the extremely politicized and militarized context of the conflicts. No "lines in the sand" were drawn that reflected a commitment by the UN system to fundamental humanitarian principles. Instead, each agency (and indeed, each field office) pursued its own set of standards and priorities, determining on an *ad hoc* basis what was acceptable and what was not. They were guided by little more than loose restrictions from the distant UN Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), the very immediate threats to staff survival and well-meaning humanitarian intentions.

178. In short, the ERC and IASC failed to ensure that the parts of the coordination efforts summed to a whole of a strategic coordination system that was adequately informed by the context of the crisis.

B. Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA)[66]

179. The secretariat function of the IASC is provided by DHA, which also has wider bureaucratic responsibilities. In the Great Lakes Region, DHA has had a continuous field presence since the establishment of the UN Rwanda Emergency Office at the height of the 1994 crisis. There are also DHA offices in Burundi and the DRC, as well as DHA's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) in Nairobi. DHA also provided resources to support the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator.

180. The performance of DHA in the Great Lakes Region has been decidedly mixed. The potential of DHA has long been compromised by a crippling cycle of under-funding and under-performance, in addition to a lack of commitment on the part of UN agencies to work out coordination arrangements.[67] The poor reputation of DHA, and in some key instances poor performance, has had the effect of sullying the reputation of the coordination function more generally in the Great Lakes Region. Indeed, it is perceived to be almost an embarrassment to admit to having coordination responsibilities for fear of being associated with DHA. The need for strategic humanitarian coordination, on the other hand, was and is very high.

181. In many ways, DHA is its own worst enemy. That DHA has a poor reputation among other UN agencies is unsurprising and not new. The dimensions of and lessons from DHA's performance, however, need to be spelled out here. It is important also to recall the impetus for the creation of DHA. DHA was formed in the wake of the Gulf War at a time when it was widely perceived that the UN system performed badly in attempting to meet the humanitarian consequences of war. Strong and effective coordination was needed and thus, DHA was formed as one part of an adaptation of the UN system. The lessons reviewed here, however, would indicate that DHA thus far has not solved the problems that led to its creation in the first place.

1. Management Issues

182. DHA, once again, spent a year on uncertain footing. Unsure of what the effects of UN reform might spell for the organization and its staff, DHA offices worldwide were characterized by distraction, short-term foci and administrative weaknesses. Moreover, DHA, like other parts of the UN Secretariat, lacks independent administrative capacity. Accordingly, its ability to station staff or properly equip field offices in a timely fashion is particularly compromised. Moreover, by common admission, its personnel management capacity is disastrously weak, an issue exacerbated by the additional fact that many DHA positions are funded by voluntary contributions from member states and are thus tenuous.[68] This requires continual attention to fund-raising, expending energy better spent on management.

183. As a result, critical field posts go unfilled for months and, in the case of a telecommunications officer in Burundi, for over one and a half years. In Burundi and Rwanda, local DHA offices have identified highly qualified candidates for key posts, only to see those candidates hired by other UN agencies during an untenably long interim between candidate identification and job offer. Staff contracts tend to be short because of the uncertainty of overall funding. The quality of staff working for DHA has suffered as a result, with DHA offices often understaffed. Moreover, many staff are dissatisfied by conditions and often keen to move to different agencies or Secretariat departments. It is important to note

that, these factors notwithstanding, the study team met some excellent staff within DHA field offices.

184. DHA headquarters is similarly uneven in the quality of its personnel. Again, the study team met with some excellent personnel within DHA headquarters. However, DHA is the first to admit that there were serious gaps and weaknesses in the quality of personnel and the duration of their terms of employment. Seen from the field, some of these gaps were evident. Also, discussions with other agencies revealed clear instances of weak or antagonistic personnel in key interface positions. For example, such was the rate of DHA staff turnover in Rwanda that some UN agencies requested DHA/Rwanda to stop scheduling briefing appointments for new staff; they simply were consuming too much time. Such views amplified already poor relations between DHA and the other agencies.

185. The sporadic quality of DHA personnel is matched by the uneven manner in which DHA offices are equipped. While some DHA offices are impressively outfitted, this has not always been the result of DHA assessing its needs and appealing to donors. Rather, donors have provided assistance in kind. Given DHA's administrative difficulties, this is a welcome and effective way of equipping DHA. DHA must be cautious, however, not to be driven by what it is given. At times, DHA's equipment base was extremely unbalanced, such that DHA/Rwanda, for example, at times had telecommunications equipment beyond what was required but had no money to pay local staff.

186. Partly as a result of these administrative factors, there has been enormous variability in DHA's presence and role in the region. DHA has been characterized by: a high turnover of coordination staff; many coordination positions going unstaffed; a changeable public face; and frequent and unpredictable alterations in the assigned (or self-assigned) role of DHA offices.[69] These fluid roles involved DHA serving, *inter alia*, as information focal points, support units to humanitarian coordinators, backstop for the office of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, or at times, no discernible role or function.

187. This last point in particular reflects an ongoing lack of clarity on the question of DHA's mandate and field role. A consistent objection to DHA "becoming operational" has at times been seen to suggest that DHA should have no field presence at all, even for coordination functions. The study team found no evidence that the IASC's distinction between strategic and operational coordination had clarified the role or responsibility of DHA with respect to these issues. The relationship was more clear in the case of the RHCs (see below.) However, partially because of the poor reputation of DHA, the RHC's did not seek to emphasize the DHA aspect of their identity. On the contrary, they went out of their way to underplay their relationship with DHA field offices. Moreover, the existence of the RHCs and especially of the Office of the RHC (ORHC, which was temporarily based in Kigali and was then moved to Nairobi) confused the question of the position and role of the other DHA offices.[70] This was particularly acute when the ORHC was in Kigali, yet was physically distinct from the pre-existing DHA office (which was still further separate from the Humanitarian Coordination office located in UNDP). For the "consumers" of coordination, having to deal with more than one coordination office rather defeated the point.

188. Finally, there has been an insufficient level of contact and communication among DHA offices in the field. When the study team was traveling in the region, and schedule arrangements were being communicated between DHA offices, this was in some instances the first time that the respective DHA personnel had been in contact with one another. Moreover,

briefs and reports, including security reports, are not shared directly between the offices in the region. Thus, when the Humanitarian Coordinator in Rwanda wanted information about Burundi that was not publicly available (which in some instances has important repercussions for Rwanda), he sometimes had to get this information by contacting New York directly. This lack of communication and collaboration between the DHA offices reflects an excessive centralization in DHA management that further weakens their field capacity. It is important to note that increasingly through the period under study, IRIN often filled the breach in terms of publicly available information with electronic and faxed country reporting.

2. DHA Resources

189. None of the above takes into account the fact that DHA has among its arsenal of resources a series of teams and/or capacities that can be deployed at short notice to support the coordination function, and that they are under-utilized. DHA did deploy some of these resources to good effect, including the Military Civilian Defence Unit (MCDU)ññsent in to support the process of liaison with the forward military planning units sent to Uganda under the auspices of the proposed Multi-National Force ññ and the Field Coordination Support Unit (FCSU)ññsent to the field to bolster DHA's field capacity, principally by strengthening the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator.

190. However, the deployment of the FCSU and MCDU, while generally a positive element of DHA's performance, is simultaneously an object lesson in one of DHA's principal weaknesses: the lack of consistency with which its resources are used. The specific case of the FCSU's deployment for example, was a function of the fact that the Deputy RHC at the time, Martin Griffiths, was also head of DHA Geneva and as such was familiar with DHA's resources. Griffiths referred to his ability to call on such resources within DHA as a "privilege" of his position as director of DHA/Geneva. However, such resources should be a right, not a privilege, and should automatically be at the disposal of Coordinators, whether regional or national, irrespective of their prior relationship with DHA. That such resources are not routinely used by all coordinators equates with wasted potential and is part of the continuing poor reputation of DHA and inadequately coordinated humanitarian responses.

191. In similar fashion, one staff member from DHA's UN Disaster Management Training Programme (UNDMTP) was at one stage sent to Kinshasa to support the coordination function within UNDP Kinshasa's Humanitarian Coordination Unit. This, it was generally agreed, was a successful experience, with this DHA/UNDMTP staffer coordinating the first assessment visit to Shabunda, site of some of the "missing refugees". True to fashion, however, the actual UNDMTP training programme itself had been under-utilized. For example, as the study team was visiting Rwanda in November 1997, DHA was attempting to establish its first disaster management training programme for the country. The vast majority of those working in the Great Lakes Region have undergone no formal training on complex emergencies or on the region. This of course is an issue that extends beyond DHA, and relates to a far wider phenomenon of the underutilization of training resources such as the UN Staff College at Turin.

192. Responsibility for the under-utilization of DHA's resources is shared between DHA and other elements of the coordination system that fail to make sufficient use of these resources. DHA inadequately communicates to relevant elements of the system the availability and strengths of such resources. This does little to counteract a too-ready belief on the part of the rest of the UN system in the limited usefulness of DHA. Most damagingly, however, at key

moments when other elements of the coordination system have requested support from DHA, such support has been slow in coming. For example, when a UNHCR staff member was appointed local coordinator for Goma by Martin Griffiths, he agreed to have DHA appoint a coordination assistant to work with him. DHA did not fill this position for three months, an epoch in the life of an emergency. This administrative weakness made DHA an absent part of the coordination function in the Goma region during this period, which in many respects was the front line of the recent crisis.

3. The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP)

"The CAP is a folder, not a process."
DHA official, New York, October 1997.

193. DHA also contributed little to the strategic coordination of resource mobilization, which in theory is one of its central responsibilities, and is one of the functions of strategic humanitarian coordination. This resides in DHA's responsibility for the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). The CAP should be a logical vehicle for strategic coordination, but is far from being so. Indeed, by all accounts, the CAPs are little more than a stapling together of already developed agency funding proposals. It is not the result of a system-wide process of assessment, prioritization, programme planning and review. It does not work as described in theoryñ ñthat is, by establishing system-wide priorities at the country level and then filtering them up through the UN system and out to the donors. Nor does it functioned as a process for generating system-wide strategic decisions, or for engendering strategic monitoring and evaluation.

194. Moreover, the CAP has little impact on the allocation of resources among agencies and programmes. Typically, the largest UN operational agencies have fared well under the CAP, especially WFP and UNHCR. This fund-raising success, however, had more to do with those agencies' fund-raising networks and systems, which have nothing to do with the CAP. Many agenciesñ ñincluding DHA!ñ ñbegan their fund-raising before the launch of the CAP. Those who need the CAP, because they have no such independent fund-raising mechanisms, are the least serviced by it. Technical agencies such as WHO and FAO are chronically under funded.

195. It is not surprising that the CAP is a non-process, considering that DHA has not been given any authority to ensure participation in or the effective functioning of the CAP. CAP funds are not filtered through DHA, nor are agencies responsible to DHA for moneys raised by the CAP. Were DHA to be given control over resources leveraged by the CAP, a considerable degree of coordination authority would thereby accrue. It is very clear, however, that there is adamant resistance to this throughout the UN system, even if UN agency constitutional and fiscal regulations would allow for such consolidation of resources.

196. Finally, there is little strategic monitoring of the funding of programmes through the CAP. When DHA releases global figures for donations against assessed needs, for example, it masks donors' weak responses to WHO's appeals with the full commitment to UNHCR's or WFP's appeals. When the regional CAP failed to meet the needs of a specific sector or country (e.g., UNICEF was only 30% funded for its regional programme) agencies complained that they had limited alternative access to local representatives of international donors.

197. The energy required to improve and maintain funding has been hard on the UN's capacity and reputation in the Great Lakes Region. The time and energy applied has been at the expense of human and material resources available for programme activities. Host governments have taken notice and objected, especially when fund-raising efforts for relief programmes have appeared to conflict with fund-raising processes for development (e.g., the Round Table process).

198. The question of the Round Table process, which is managed by UNDP, and the tension between the Round Table and the CAP processes, leads directly to the question of the sometimes uncomfortable marriage of development and humanitarian responsibilities in another element of the strategic coordination system, namely the UN Resident Coordinators who served as Humanitarian Coordinators in the region.

C. Country Humanitarian Coordinators

199. In Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire, the UN Resident Coordinators (RC) were designated by the IASC to serve as the country Humanitarian Coordinators (HC). In Tanzania, no HC was appointed, but the RC *de facto* served in this role in that his coordination function extended to cover the UN's operations in Tanzania as they intersected with the Great Lakes Region crisis, particularly in terms of Tanzania's large refugee population. The manner in which the RC/HCs fulfilled their functions differed somewhat from country to country. By and large the RC/HCs were the linking element of the strategic coordination system in the region, with their strengths and weaknesses a principal determinant of the strategic coordination performance. Only in Zaire was this central role limited by the division of the country into separate zones, with only a portion of the country controlled by the government of Zaire-Kinshasa. (In each case, the RC/HC was also the Resident Representative of the UNDP. In Kenya, the UNDP Resident Representative/UN Coordinator for Kenya also served as the UN focal point for the Burundi sanctions committee, which is based in Nairobi.)

200. Based on literature reviews (especially the OLS Review), the study team was predisposed to believe that the designation of Resident Coordinators as Humanitarian Coordinators was problematic, especially in terms of the capacity of one person to simultaneously manage a close working relationship with their counterpart government (an absolute necessity of a Resident Representative function) and maintain the impartiality required for effective humanitarianism. However, the study team's findings in the region challenged this view in important ways.[71]

201. In the Great Lakes Region, RC/HCs were responsible for elements of both strategic and operational coordination, though their responsibilities were not presented in this manner. This lack of division of responsibilities is a major reason why each of the RC/HCs the study team met with expressed mixed support for the analytical division between strategic and operational coordination. The RC/HCs and their offices, more or less in combination with DHA, had principal responsibility for the entire gamut of coordination functions: negotiating with counterpart authorities (both government and rebel) for access to affected populations; advocating respect for humanitarian principles; setting strategic goals, priorities, and plans (at least in theory); facilitating operational coordination; security; information flow; communications coordination; etc. Some of these functions existed only on paper, while others went largely unfulfilled.

202. The relationship of the RC/HC to the DHA field offices also varied. In Rwanda and Zaire, the HC function was supported by an office that was independent both of the Resident Coordinator's office and DHA. In these cases, the staff of both offices indicated that the division of responsibilities between them was vague and unspecified. In Rwanda, the presence of DHA as a separate office (initially as the UN Rwanda Emergency Office) had been established before the appointment of an RC/HC, and a sense of its separateness continued, amplified by its physical separation from the HC office. When the study team was in the field, the relationship was well managed, but this appeared largely to be a function of the personalities in the respective offices, and staff made clear the potential for confusion and/or duplication. In each case, the offices of the Humanitarian Coordinators were staffed by personnel who had remained in their jobs for considerable periods of time (especially in Zaire) and had clear and consistent job descriptions throughout their appointment. This was in contrast to the DHA offices, where the staff composition had varied greatly throughout the same time period, growing and shrinking and changing function as staff were recruited, lost, replaced, lost again, replaced again, etc. In Burundi, for example, there were three people in the senior DHA post within the time period under study, with a substantial gap between the first and second persons. Similarly, in Zaire, there had been three people in the one position with significant time periods when the position was not filled.

203. In Burundi, there was no separate HC office; DHA was the only humanitarian coordination support to the RC/HC. When the study team was in the field, this connection was working well, in particular since the recent appointment of a fairly senior, very experienced and highly qualified person to the top DHA position. However, frequent turnover in DHA staff in Burundi had undermined and continues to undermine the office and the broader RC/HC function. In Tanzania, there was an office supporting the RC that covered humanitarian functions, and no DHA office. It was indicative of the perception of DHA that staff in Tanzania expressed satisfaction that they did not "have to deal" with a DHA office.

204. Throughout the region, and irrespective of the variation in structures of their offices and relations, personality was the key to the performance of the RC/HCs and their offices. This was the unanimous view of all those who were in contact with the office, as well as the RC/HCs themselves. Personality also had an impact on every aspect of their work: on the degree of authority and respect accorded to the RC/HCs by their UN colleagues; on their relations with key donors, who were often harsh critics; on their ability to walk the fine line of negotiating a constructive relationship with their counterpart governments while still being able to represent difficult humanitarian positions; and on their relationship with the headquarters of both their home and host agencies (e.g., UNDP and DHA) and the headquarters of the major operational agencies, as well as Secretariat bodies.

205. Particularly important in this last respect was their relationship specifically to UNHCR. Such is the importance, power, scope, and influence in the Great Lakes Region that good relations with UNHCR were a requirement of effective strategic coordination, at all levels. This was a serious challenge for some RC/HCs and their staff, given that many UNHCR staff acknowledged the organization's tradition of independence, distaste for DHA (and for coordination bodies in general), and what one senior UNHCR staff member called "a culture of superiority". This was an important, concrete aspect of the issue discussed in Section V: the nature of the system being coordinated is an important determinant of the performance of the coordination system.

206. This raises a key point regarding the prominence of personality, upon which most field and headquarters personnel were agreed. The dominant perspective the study team encountered was that the "simple reality" was that personality was the central determinant of strategic coordination. The study team agrees that personality was an important variable in the Great Lakes Region and notes that a central task of leadership (i.e., of the ERC and the IASC) is of finding the right people for the right jobs. However, the study team interprets the importance of personality in part as a reflection of the weakness of the structures, and in particular of the authority of the coordination function, especially as it concerns strategic coordination. Earlier studies of coordination have noted this issue, arguing that coordination ". . . relies on the goodwill and reliability of others over whom it has no authority and little influence."[72] While it is true that personality will always be an important variable, the emphasis placed on it in discussions of coordination mirrors the inherent weakness of the coordination system, and the fact that once again "coordination light" was the default model.

207. The weaknesses of the "coordination light" model as used in the Great Lakes Region include: poorly understood coordination functions; negative overall disposition of UN personnel towards coordination; coordinator authority limited to personality; and inadequate resources (staff and fiscal) used for coordination. As a result, coordinators must be diplomatic yet forceful, respected and liked, consultative and cajoling, first among equals but not overshadowing the collected egos of their colleagues, experienced but untainted, independent, trusted, knowledgeable, charming, and above all, incredibly thick-skinned. It should be no surprise that the personalities of the RC/HCs were in some instances widely considered to be a limitation of their capacity to perform. Where the RC/HCs were not well liked or well respected, the coordination function suffered accordingly.[73]

208. It is worth noting that in some instances, issues that are referred to as "personality" questions are in fact matters of personnel and management skills. Typically, international organizations and bureaucracies train their staff on a variety of technical and general skills or substance areas, but do little to provide personnel management or leadership training. Staff who rise through the ranks at a certain stage arrive in a position of considerable authority without necessarily having been directly trained for the task. While RC/HCs do receive training on a number of development, humanitarian, and planning issuesññindeed, a common complaint is that RC/HCs are too frequently out of town, often for trainingññit is not clear that there is an adequate structure in place to ensure that RC/HCs receive training specifically on the skill sets needed to perform well in that demanding position.

209. Those SHC responsibilities that the RC/HCs were able to fulfil they discharged through a number of channels, including: chairing the UN Disaster Management Team/Heads of Agencies meetings; establishing sectoral coordination mechanisms; interacting with NGO coordination processes; interacting with government coordination processes; and negotiating with government counterparts. There were also informal channels, which are considered in a separate section below. The efficacy of these channels varied from country to country.

1. Heads of Agencies meetings

210. The composition of the principal coordination meeting varied from country to country. In Rwanda, it reflected the IASC membership in including NGO and Red Cross representatives. In Zaire and Burundi, it varied periodically, expanding at points to bring together the UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross, and donors. In Zaire, notably, the meeting was often chaired not by the HC himself but by the head of the Humanitarian Unit. In

Tanzania, its composition varied according to the agenda, with the major operational agencies and UNDP routinely meeting and smaller agencies attending as relevant.

211. Composition is one issue; comportment is another. Many of the participants in these meetings expressed their dissatisfaction with the atmosphere and content of the meetings, in which large quantities of time were spent disputing small amounts of money, tertiary decisions, administrative matters, and protocol. Some of those whose behaviour in these meetings was most disruptive acknowledged in separate interviews that they made little effort to take these meetings seriously. They communicated a lack of respect not so much for the person of the RC/HC, as for the office. This was a source of enormous frustration to the RC/HCs, who found it extremely difficult to discharge their coordination functions in a serious way when their colleagues did not approach the process respectfully. The RC/HCs had no independent authority to compel them to do so.

212. Important substantive issues did not come up in these meetings. In separate interviews, those responsible for the agendas acknowledged that the lack of comportment at the meetings was a disincentive to raise serious issues. Substantive discussion of the evolving political and military environments in which they were working was generally absent. In particular, there was no process of shared analysis of the implications of changes in the environment for the UN's programme. There were separate security meetings, which the study team was not able to attend. From interviews and a review of minutes, however, it was evident that the security meetings were narrowly focused on threats to UN personnel and discussion of security "incidents." The implications for the day-to-day operation of established UN programmes was discussed in these meetings, but there was little or no strategic discussion of the security situation, broadly defined, and its relation to the UN's goals.

213. This lack of discussion was in fact part of a wider gap in the functions of strategic coordination: namely, the minimal effort given to what might reasonably be called strategic planning and goal setting (as distinct from reactive planning). The study team found little evidence of medium- to long-term thinking, analysis of the changing political situation, or development of humanitarian strategy. This is not to suggest that there was no such strategic thinking. Indeed, in meetings both with RC/HCs and other heads of agencies, it was evident that many agency heads routinely engage in various forms of strategic thinking within their offices. However, there was nothing that linked such thinking into a coordinated process or linked strategic planning in one agency to any of its UN counterparts.

2. Sectoral Coordination

214. The absence of strategic goal setting and planning by the joint heads of agencies reduced the overall strategic impact of coordination through a second channel, sectoral coordination mechanisms. In each country in the region, there were important sectoral processes of coordination. In Rwanda, for example, the RC/HC had established "thematic groups" that brought together the agencies and partners working on specific sectors such as shelter and justice. The study team did not substantially investigate these mechanisms, as they fell largely into the field of operational coordination and hence, to the tripartite team reviewing operational coordination.

215. There was, however, an important nexus between strategic and operational coordination at this level. First, by establishing sectoral coordination mechanisms, and ensuring their functioning, the RC/HCs in important ways shaped the nature of operational coordination.

The breakdown of sectors, for example, differed from country to country, and had an important impact on who was coordinating what with whom. However, the impact of this nexus was weakened by the absence of strategic planning and goal setting at the system-wide level. Ideally, overall goals and strategies for humanitarian action in a given country would drive the goals and strategies of coordination at the sectoral level. In their absence, however, this relationship was reversed. In that there were any, the overall country goals were usually simply a compilation of programmes established at the sectoral level. This was evident in processes such as the CAP that should have drawn an overall picture of UN operations. In each instance, however, it worked from the sector up to the country level, not the other way around.

3. NGO Coordination Systems

216. A third channel for coordination available to the RC/HCs was to intersect with existing NGO coordination mechanisms.

217. In each of the countries of the region, the NGO community had established their own systems of coordination, more or less formally. The most structured was in Rwanda, where in 1995 the NGOs established an NGO Coordinating Committee, which undertook to evaluate the broad range of NGO programming in collaboration with the government and had an executive committee that met regularly to discuss issues of joint concern. This highly structured mechanism was in part a reflection of two challenges that were greater in Rwanda than elsewhere in the region: the sheer number of NGOs operating in the Rwandan context (over 250 at the peak of the 1994 crisis, down to roughly 60 in 1995, and then rising rapidly again during the onset of the Zaire war, with the influx of roughly 80 new NGOs) and the tense relations between the NGOs and the government.

218. These NGO mechanisms intersected with the UN's coordination structures in different ways. In Burundi, the NGOs had their own coordination forum, from which representatives met with the RC/HC and heads of agencies to discuss issues of joint concern. In Tanzania and Zaire, the NGOs participated in some UN Heads of Agencies' meetings. In Rwanda, a representative of the NGO coordinating committee sat in on the Heads of Agencies meeting. In some countries, NGOs participated in the UN's sectoral coordination meetings; in others, there were parallel sectoral coordination processes. Aside from these interactions, NGOs and UN agencies jointly participated in some government coordination mechanisms and informal coordination networks.

219. Finally, in Rwanda, though not in other countries, the NGOs were regularly represented in the UN security meetings. Being excluded from security meetings was greatly resented by NGOs, who viewed the UN's perspective on security as narrow, exclusively focused on incidents relating to UN personnel and expatriates. Given that many NGOs are the "front-line" partners in UN programmes, including them in security briefings would seem a reasonable arrangement.

220. The RC/HC offices also interacted with NGOs in less structured ways, some of which were of great value. One of the best examples the study team encountered of an RC/HC office using their coordination resources to facilitate an NGO's work was in Zaire. There, a local NGO sought the assistance of the Humanitarian Coordination Unit at UNDP in tackling the emergency health care system in Kinshasa, which was under-equipped to cope with the increase in demand as the front-line advanced towards Kinshasa. The head of the HC Unit

brought together on a one-time basis NGOs engaged in similar activities, donors who had an interest in the health sector, and the relevant UN agencies. By the end of the meeting, the programme was fully funded and coordinated with other NGOs and UN agencies. This exercise in operational coordination was also strategic, in that it reflected the HC Unit's view that emergency health was a priority sector. There were other similar examples of elements of the UN's strategic coordination system performing coordination functions for NGOs in this manner.

221. Although difficult to measure with precision, there did seem to be a correlation between the degree of NGO interaction with the UN coordination system and the level of NGO frustration with the UN. Where interaction had been the lowest, in Burundi, the degree of frustration was highest. Correspondingly, although UN-NGO relations in Rwanda have at times been difficult, the high degree of interaction between the two groups provides a series of venues for dealing with joint problems and resolving differences. Certainly, the lesson to be learned is that RC/HCs can, through establishing good mechanisms for interaction and signaling interest in them, impact on the extent to which the UN and NGOs work together in pursuit of humanitarian agendas, rather than against one another. This single issue will not completely alter the degree or effectiveness of overall coordination, but is certainly a piece in the puzzle.

4. Relations with Government

222. A fourth channel through which strategic coordination occurs is the interaction of both UN and NGO coordination mechanisms with those established by governments. Government coordination mechanisms exist at a variety of levels. A number of these fall quite clearly in the realm of operational coordination, such as sectoral meetings with technical ministries. These were not explored by the study team.

223. Each government is facing different political situations, for example weak versus strong military, weak versus strong central authority, stable versus unstable government, etc. Each affected country has its own structure of authority, while technical counterparts are generally weak and administratively unsophisticated (e.g., Burundi, Rwanda, DRC). Governments have demonstrated little capacity for sectoral or operational humanitarian coordination. The notable exception to this is the Government of Tanzania where an organized authority has facilitated the UN agencies to function in a coordinated manner. This is possibly because the UN, as a system, is designed to support "traditional" structures of governments (i.e., a clear centre of authority supported by technical line ministries). In today's post-adjustment states, humanitarian agencies sometimes find themselves without strong and consistent counterparts and hence, have difficulties functioning as mandated.

224. At the strategic level, the UN and local government counterparts interact for coordination purposes in a variety of direct and indirect ways, which again varied throughout the region. At the operational level, coordination by governments has been demanding yet uneven. Counterparts themselves are insecure due to internal struggles for power, making it extremely difficult for outsiders to know who holds ultimate authority for granting access or project approval. The landscape of power in the Great Lakes Region is unpredictable, resulting in implementing agencies often being confused as to who in government is coordinating operations or who is responsible for overall strategy. At one point in 1996 in Rwanda, the Minister of Telecommunications emerged as a key counterpart for NGOs in all sectors, primarily through controlling access to MAF-Net, a communications facility used

widely by the humanitarian community. In similar fashion, in eastern Zaire, Kabila at one stage instructed relief agencies to deal only with civilian authorities yet the bulk of decision-making power lay in the hands of the then-rebel movement. Moreover, these counterparts sometimes used their position vis-‡-vis IASC members to block effective strategic coordination.

225. Apart from formal coordination mechanisms, RC/HCs related to government through the channels of representation and negotiation. In these channels, the RC/HCs had an important role in negotiating access to affected populations and respect for humanitarian principles. Again, the management of this channel varied throughout the region. This channel was perhaps strongest in Tanzania, where the RC had the most comprehensive relations with the government; and in Rwanda, where the RC/HC had requested that Heads of Agencies not approach formally the highest levels of the government of Rwanda except through his office and had received a fair degree of compliance on that request. This channel was less forcefully used in Burundi and Zaire for reasons that had to do both with the personality and styles of the RC/HCs and the strength and degree of independence of other heads of agencies in their relationship to the respective governments.

226. Here it is important to note that the study team's predisposition against the RC/HC combination was not borne out by the findings in at least two cases, Tanzania and Rwanda. In these cases, the good working relations between the RC's office and the government in many ways facilitated rather than constrained the humanitarian agenda, though this was not entirely unproblematic. In both instances, prior history and reputation had so weakened the position of the UN and of humanitarian actors, that a good working relationship with the government was indispensable. A sharply independent humanitarian voice would likely have been consigned to irrelevance.

227. In Rwanda, the issue of the balance between the Resident Representative function and the humanitarian responsibilities of the HC portfolio arose, in particular in relation to debates between use of the CAP and of the Round Table process, an issue noted above. When in 1997, the government of Rwanda objected to being included in a regional CAP, arguing that unlike the rest of the region Rwanda was no longer in crisis and that its needs could better be addressed through a Round Table process, some criticized the RC/HC for not having stood up to the government in support of the CAP process. However, two issues are relevant here. First, there is certainly an argument that at the moment in question, the Rwandan government's position was credible, that after two years of humanitarian operations the country's needs for reconstruction and capacity building could in fact be addressed properly through a Round Table process. Second, when the team was in the field, the issue was again being raised, and for 1998ññin light of renewed conflict in the northwest of the countryññthe Rwandan government did agree to be included in the CAP. If one were to hold the RC/HC responsible for the Rwandan government's non-participation in the CAP in 1997, it would be logically necessary to credit the RC/HC for the change in 1998. A more powerful explanation is that in both cases, the Rwandan governmentññwhich by 1996 was perfectly capable of making its own strategic calculations vis-a-vis the UN systemññmade the two different decisions on its own terms.[74]

228. Critically, the question of a combined RC/HC function in Zaire played out very differently. The principal difference between Zaire and the rest was that for the bulk of the period under study, Zaire was not controlled by one governmental authority, but progressively split between territory controlled by Kinshasa and territory held by the ADFL. Having to

negotiate access with two separate authorities amplified the importance of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinators as independent humanitarian voices and of the major operational agencies present in the field. These issues are discussed in the following sections. The question of balance and tension with the RC/HC combination was also problematic in Burundi, although to a lesser degree than in Zaire, for in Burundi the rebels do not separately control territory per se.

229. More generally, the record of RC/HCs' involvement in the negotiation of access to affected populations in the Great Lakes Region was decidedly mixed and contains important lessons. The willingness and ability of counterpart government authorities to provide a framework of consent for humanitarian action was of paramount importance. Of second order importance was the willingness and ability of donors to exert pressure to that end. Finally, their success or failure in negotiating access also depended on the prior reputation of the UN system and its relationship to the governments in question. Of particular relevance in this last respect was UNHCR's history in the region. UNHCR has an independent statutory mandate for refugees, which gives it an important role in negotiating with host governments for compliance on international refugee statutes, respect for humanitarian principles regarding refugees, and the provision of secure humanitarian space for relief operations. This relationship limits the scope of the RC/HCs' role in this strategic coordination function.

230. Some more complex examples illustrate the intersection of UN, counterpart government, and donor politics:

- the RC/HC in Rwanda was able to use his relationship with the government of Rwanda to shift its opposition to humanitarian operations in eastern Zaire in the early stages of the ADFL war. Negotiating through the Rwandans, the RC/HC was able to meet with Kabila, and gain agreement for an advance mission to be sent.

- the RC in Tanzania had worked with UNHCR to facilitate humanitarian access to the country's significant population of Rwandan and Burundian refugees. Tanzanian compliance with refugee law and humanitarian principles had been exemplary. This changed significantly in late 1996, when the Tanzanian government collaborated with the Rwandans to force the return of refugees to Rwanda. Part of the reason for the shift in Tanzania's position was that the refugee camps were being used to train and arm militia groups and were potentially seriously destabilizing. Added pressure came from the American government that sent the clear message that the US was not likely to continue funding for the camps into the indefinite future. It was shortly after this message was conveyed to Tanzania that the refugees were expelled. The UN offices in Tanzania subsequently acknowledged that they felt they had little option but to collude with this decision.

231. More generally, the efforts of the RC/HCs and other elements of the UN system, including UNHCR, other agencies, and the Regional Coordinators, were insufficient to combat a broad unwillingness on the part of governments and rebels to consent to humanitarian operations, and at best a sporadic willingness on the part of donors to pressure them to do so. The access that was provided was in the margins, not in territorial or numerical terms, but in terms of need. Thus, for example, when refugees were being moved back to home communes in Rwanda, following the mass return from eastern Zaire, what had been routine access was denied precisely at the moment when the fate of those returnees was most critically vulnerable. At key moments, government and rebel leaders turned to strategies that

involved mass forced population movements, large-scale attacks on civilians, mass internments, and even mass killings. At these, and other important times, access was denied and major violations of humanitarian law and standards occurred:

- in November 1996, the Rwandan army attacked the Goma area camps and, by the government's admission, forcibly moved over 500,000 refugees out of the camps and towards Rwanda;

- the UN and NGOs were denied access to the refugee population while it was being moved, including when people were being resettled in home *préfets*. Tens of thousands have since been jailed without due process of any kind, and there are credible eye- witness reports of some of these returnees being executed at the instant of their arrival; moreover, the areas where the forced and unscreened return was concentrated are now the site of renewed conflict;

- Tanzania, long one of the states most compliant with refugee law, evicted over a quarter of a million Rwandan refugees, including, most recently, refugees who had been settled in Tanzania since the 1960s;

- several hundred thousand people have been interned in *regroupement* camps in Burundi, despite opposition from the humanitarian community;

- thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of people who had been in UN-managed refugee camps, were killed in eastern Zaire by the Rwandan forcesñ̃again by the Rwandans' own admission.

232. There is no doubt that the principal source of decision-making in these instances of major violations of humanitarian law and standards was the relevant political and military authorities of the countries involved, with the backing of important regional actors involved in the ADFL operation, such as Uganda. The absence of significant donor pressure in most of these instances reflected a combination of limited leverage over governments in the region, a lack of interest in exercising what leverage was available, and weak support for the humanitarian agenda. In the absence of consent, the ability of RC/HCs to fulfil the key functions of strategic humanitarian coordinationñ̃namely to negotiate and establish a basis for consent for humanitarian actionñ̃was highly constrained. The same was true for the Regional Humanitarian Coordinators, to whom the report now turns.

D. Regional Humanitarian Coordinators (RHC)

233. Appointing a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (RHC) to the Great Lakes Region was an innovation for the IASC that reflected an important degree of learning about the need for strategic response to complex political emergencies.

234. Even describing the RHC position, let alone assessing its performance, is complicated by the fact that in the brief time under review, three very distinct personalities filled the position at three very different phases of the emergency: Sergio Vieira de Mello, who was also Assistant High Commissioner of UNHCR, filled the position from November 7 to late December 1996, a period characterized by mass population movements, by the war in eastern Zaire moving into high gear, and by active negotiations over the proposed Multi-National

Force; Martin Griffiths, who had served as de Mello's deputy and was also the head of DHA Geneva, filled the position from late December 1996 to mid-March 1997, a period that saw numerous developments, including the fall of Tingi-Tingi to the ADFL, the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees, and the intensification of the ëregroupement' process in Burundi; and Pierce Gerety, whose most recent prior position was as head of UNICEF's regional office for the Great Lakes Region, filled the position from mid-March 1997 through the rest of the period under study, a period which began with the fall of Kisangani, and the attendant massacres. The job has since been filled by Ambassador Dinka, formerly Special Representative of the Secretary General in Sierra Leone.

235. The process by which de Mello was appointed has already been touched upon in the section on the IASC. When de Mello returned to full-time UNHCR duties in December, Griffiths was designated to take over the post following consultations between the ERC and some members of the IASC. When Griffiths returned to his DHA duties in Geneva, Gerety was appointed through the same process, having previously worked in collaboration with Griffiths in his UNICEF job, occasionally even filling in for Griffiths when the demands of the job required two people in two places. The strength of this process was that there was an element of continuity among the discontinuity of having three RHCs in the space of five months.

236. This continuity notwithstanding, the high degree of turnover in the position was a weakness, as it was in other coordination positions. Here, the reasons were not administrative, but the demands of the job and the difficulty of freeing good calibre, senior staff from their other important responsibilities. For example, neither de Mello nor Griffiths were released from their respective responsibilities with their ëhome' agencies. The pressure to return to these longer term responsibilities ultimately caused each to turn over the position to a new person. The study team was encouraged to learn that Ambassador Dinka's appointment appears designed to be of longer duration.

237. On the appointment of all of the RHCs, there was insufficient communication from the IASC to the rest of the UN system, to donors, to NGOs, and most importantly, to counterpart governments about the nature of these appointments. Many interviewees recalled a continuing sense of confusion over who was the senior coordinator. This also related to the fact that inadequate measures were taken to clarify and communicate the independent nature of the RHC. For example, for many interlocutors, there was little distinction between de Mello wearing his UNHCR hat and Griffiths wearing his DHA Geneva hat and their functioning as an RHC. Gerety was criticized by some for being excessively close to UNICEF and by others for being excessively close to UNHCR (with whom he had previously worked and now serves as Regional Coordinator). The fairness of these judgements to the RHCs is questionable, but there is no doubt that too little was done to establish clearly the independence of the RHC. This issue was of particular concern with de Mello, given UNHCR's controversial profile in the region. Critical in this regard is that none of the RHCs was accredited to the governments in the region, or to a regional body such as the OAU.

238. The terms of reference for the RHC position were punishing. Their responsibilities mirrored those strategic functions that would normally fall to an in-country coordinator, including negotiations for access and advocacy on humanitarian principles (but multiplied by the number of governments and rebel authorities involved), with added responsibilities for liaising and negotiating with international political and military authorities, assisting the ERC with representation to the Security Council, and ensuring the overall regional coherence for

the UN's response. The terms of reference would be challenging for a small bureaucracy, let alone for an individual.

239. Given the extensive terms of reference assigned to the RHCs, it was unreasonable to expect that any one person could fulfil all of the functions. The first task for the study team, then, was to determine what it was that the RHCs contributed towards the overall fulfilment of strategic coordination functions. In the study team's view, the responsibility of the RHCs was not to perform all of the strategic coordination functions, but to ensure that the functions were filled, and to weigh in with their own efforts when there were particular problems or weaknesses. By and large, this appears to have been the chosen methodology of all of the RHCs. The challenge, then, was to make some sort of assessment of their choices of focus, relative to needs, and the manner in which they implemented these choices. Moreover, the study team sought to identify lessons from the interaction of the RHCs with other important elements of the overall response, including in-country coordination teams.

1. Area of Focus: Eastern Zaire

240. Each for different reasons, the RHC's focused the bulk of their attention on the war and humanitarian crisis in eastern Zaire. de Mello's focus during much of his brief tenure was on negotiations with the advance forces of the Multi-National Force (MNF). Griffiths deliberately choose to focus his attention on Zaire and Burundi, and in fact spent the bulk of his efforts on Zaire, with one notable exception. Gerety focused his attention on the issue of the fate of the "missing refugees", and the killings in the forests of eastern Zaire.

241. For many who were facing acute humanitarian crises in Rwanda and Burundi, in particular, these foci were troubling. In Rwanda, there was a high level of tension surrounding the massive forced return of Rwandan refugees from Zaire and Tanzania. Civil war was ongoing in Burundi, as were regional and international sanctions; and in Tanzania, traditionally one of the most treaty-compliant refugee hosting nations, several hundred thousand refugees were sent back to Rwanda on a "not quite voluntary" basis, to use the words of one UNHCR official. Each of these issuesñ̃and innumerable othersñ̃demanded high level attention and focus.

242. However, there is a very strong case for arguing that the front line of the regional dimensions of the crisis was indeed eastern Zaire, and in particular the progress of the ADFL-RPF war. Quite apart from the military and political implications for Zaire, the humanitarian implications of the progress of that war were never less than overwhelming. It was military tactics in the war that produced the mass movements of refugees back to Rwanda from the Goma region, dispersed refugees west and north-west into Zaire, and resulted in the large-scale killings that occurred there. The military logic of the conflict in the Uvira region made it necessary for the Rwandan army to move through north-western Burundi to access Zaire, which had important humanitarian implications in terms of the accessibility and security of that region, and the degree of sanctions-busting. In short, eastern Zaire was the place where the logic of the regions' multiple conflicts came into contact. It was therefore, a highly logical choice for a focus of regional strategy.

243. Moreover, whereas in Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania the RC/HCs had by and large only to negotiate with one set of political authorities, in Zaire there were two sets with whom consent had to be negotiated. Access to the east of the country was controlled by Kabila's forces and backers, in particular the RPF. This instance (when two separate political/military

authorities control access to major parts of a country) is precisely where, in OLS, the RC/HC model had been problematic. It would have been very difficult for a UNDP Resident Representative based in Kinshasa to have had a negotiating relationship with Kabila and his forces. The presence of the RHCs lessened this pressure, creating an independent humanitarian voice that could negotiate simultaneously with both sides. This role was played by both de Mello and Griffiths. (By the time Gerety held the office, the Kinshasa government was on its last legs.) This role was critically important in the early decision to launch humanitarian operations for eastern Zaire from Rwanda. This decision to run Rwanda-based operations in what was still formally Zairian territory would have been a difficult one for a Resident Representative serving as RC/HC to negotiate; an independent humanitarian coordinator was needed. This point strengthens the conclusion noted in the section pertaining to RC/HCs: that when territorial access is controlled by more than one political or military authority, it is necessary to have an independent humanitarian coordination structure.

244. Interviews with the RHCs and examination of their travel schedules and the documentary record make it evident that balancing the humanitarian negotiations between the UN and Kabila, on the one hand, and the UN and Kinshasa, on the other, was the task that occupied the bulk of their strategic effort. This issue was also of the greatest importance in negotiating with the Multi-National Force advance team. de Mello stands out in this respect for having by all accounts played a highly constructive role in negotiations with Kinshasa and in Kigali, making a strong and impartial case for humanitarian assistance. Griffiths spent much of his time as RHC involved in negotiating access with Kabila's forces and with Mobutu and in attempting to ensure that the manner in which humanitarian assistance was provided in ADFL-held territory did not overly complicate negotiating relations with Kinshasa.

245. To establish an effective negotiating relationship with both Kabila and Kinshasa, the RHCs were able to call on a number of elements of the UN humanitarian system to create a negotiating structure. First, for both strategic and operational coordination reasons, the RHCs worked with the agencies to have Emergency Field Coordinators appointed to different "zones" within Zaire (see below). This was a strategic negotiating tool, and one that carries important lessons. By breaking Zaire into different "zones", and having available for negotiation with Kabila a variety of levels of UN representation, the RHCs were able to cope with the challenge of negotiating with an actor that was first an uncertain presence in a diffuse alliance, then an important rebel actor in eastern Zaire, and finally a major threat to Mobutu, at the same time as maintaining access through Mobutu. The zoning structure had operational implications as well, though these are not addressed here. More importantly from the strategic coordination perspective, they were a negotiating tool worth learning from. Second, the RHCs worked with the regional heads of the operational agencies, in some instances effectively deputizing them to serve on the RHCs' behalf (see below, Informal Mechanisms). Finally, the RHCs were able to call on the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and the Department of Political Affairs, which was backstopping the SRSG.

246. Working with these resources, the RHCs were at the centre of what amounted to a multi-level system for negotiating with Kabila. Initially, some of these negotiations were held at the field level, which was useful in terms of avoiding the diplomatic fallout in Kinshasa of being seen to be "recognizing" the rebels. As Kabila's authority grew, other levels of representation were more significant in conducting negotiations, and when they were blocked, the SRSG at certain points weighed in to do what he could to shift the opposition. The SRSG also on

occasion arranged for meetings between Kabila and UN coordination staff, including the RHCs.

247. Even following the overthrow of Mobutu, the RHC position was important in dealing with Kabila. In Gerety's case, the RHC office served an important humanitarian representation function in a period of strained relations between the senior UN staff, who had worked with Mobutu, and a new government that was avowedly opposed to anything tainted by Mobutu's legacy. The difficulty for a Resident Representative in attempting to forge a new relationship with the Kabila forces was amplified by their long-standing distrust of the UN. While this was of course also an issue for the RHC, the fact of his position made it less difficult to manage.

248. At the structural level, the coordination structure in eastern Zaire represented an impressive degree of adaptability on the part of the UN system, and provides an object lesson in how to structure negotiations with rebels, controlling the diplomatic difficulties of being seen to recognize non-sovereign authorities. It also highlights the fact that elements of the UN coordination system normally considered operational (e.g., Emergency Field Coordinators) can make a substantive contribution at the strategic coordination level. Indeed, the negotiating structure in eastern Zaire was perhaps the most significant instance where strategic and operational coordination came together as an effective, manageable mechanism. As argued in the framework section of this paper, the nexus between operational and structural coordination in such instances is significant, and rather than drawing sharp divisions, the role of operational actors in contributing to strategic coordination functions should be emphasized. As also argued in the framework, strategic coordination should be a system-wide concern.

249. Thus, the RHCs both chose to and were compelled to dedicate a major portion of their energies to serving as independent humanitarian coordinators for Zaire. There are important lessons in this. The first is that the task of providing strategic coordination to a region containing four sets of unwilling authorities, three civil wars, and a regional war, is well beyond the scope of one individual, no matter how senior or how talented. The more important lesson is that when a country is divided between two (or more) sets of political/military authorities, an RC/HC model will likely not function well. In this circumstance, it is far more appropriate to have an independent humanitarian coordinator.

250. What is striking then, is that even with a series of high-profile, talented, senior, experienced, and well-connected individuals serving as *de facto* independent humanitarian coordinators for eastern Zaire, drawing on a variety of elements of the UN system, eastern Zaire was also the site of the most critical violations of humanitarian and human rights law and principles. At the same time as negotiations were being held with Kabila over access to affected populations and refugees, Kabila was involved in orchestrating a wider political and military campaign that involved direct attacks on civilian populations. This amply illustrates the major conclusion of the report: that even when the internal workings of the UN strategic humanitarian coordination system are solid, the outcomes of strategic coordination are primarily dependent on the existence of a framework of consent and the presence or absence of significant international political pressure.

251. There were, of course, some successes on access issues in the Great Lakes Region, some of which already have been mentioned. De Mello and other UN actors successfully negotiated with the Kinshasa government for permission to mount humanitarian operations in the east of the country. Critically, the UN received important donor backing in this negotiation, as the Kinshasa government was much out of favour with the west. For the RHCs, as for the

RC/HCs, donor pressure was a critical variable for the performance of key SHC functions. Even when such pressure was absent, as it generally was with respect to ADFL-held territory, the RC/HCs and RHCs were able to negotiate with the authorities to gain partial access. Some NGOs were allowed into ADFL held territory during their offensive, although that access was strictly limited and controlled.

252. These points notwithstanding, humanitarian space was provided only at the margins of military strategies in eastern Zaire (though as argued elsewhere in the paper, the margins of these strategies contained tens of thousands of people whose lives were saved or suffering reduced by UN and NGO action.) At least tens of thousands of people, including at least thousands of women and children, were slaughtered, both by the ex-FAR and by the rebel alliance; over a million people were forcibly evicted from refugee camps, again by both the ex-FAR and the rebel forces, and sent into areas where their security was far from guaranteed. The UN was unable to account for roughly 200,000 of these refugees. At the extreme, humanitarian actors were unwittingly enlisted in the execution of these strategies. An appalling example involved MSF, which at one stage was "given access" to a refugee population in hiding near Kisangani. MSF's presence and the availability of desperately needed food was sufficient to attract thousands of people (men, women, and children) out of the forest. At this stage, the forces of the rebel alliance moved in, forced MSF to retreat from the area, and began to slaughter the refugees. Thousands were killed in this episode, which was but one of its kind. The collapse of the framework of consent for humanitarian action was total.

2. The Exception: Regroupement in Burundi

253. The humanitarian costs of military and political competition in Burundi have also been tremendously high, if never quite as intense as in Rwanda or eastern Zaire. Here, strategic humanitarian coordination was also strictly limited in its capacity to shape events or mitigate the human costs of war. In Burundi, however, the international community at one stage was at least able to register what amounted to a joint protest, significantly absent from eastern Zaire.

254. It was argued above that when a country is split between controlling authorities, an independent humanitarian coordinator may be a more appropriate model than that of an RC/HC. It is noteworthy in this regard that Burundi was the second focus of the RHCs, for while not actually split between two authorities, Burundi had a significant rebel presence throughout the period under study. This exception, Martin Griffiths' role in negotiating a common policy on regroupement has already been mentioned, but should be expanded on here, as it also contains important lessons about the potential role to be played by an independent humanitarian voice in strategic coordination.

255. In December 1996 and January 1997, Griffiths and his office spent over a week in Burundi (a significant amount of time, relative to the RHCs' frantic travel schedules) facilitating the process of developing a common humanitarian policy in response to the Burundian government's growing programme of *regroupement*. Under this programme, first tens and then later hundreds of thousands of Burundians were forcibly displaced from their homes and interned in camps and/or new villages constructed by the Burundian army, and strategically located along major highways. The programme was another variant in the ëif you can't kill the fish, remove the water' counter-insurgency tactics that have been used by governments in the region. By removing villagers from their homes, the Burundi government aimed to isolate rebel forces and make it more difficult for them to operate and conceal

themselves in the affected regions. The humanitarian implication is yet more displacement among a population that has been repeatedly displaced by insurgency and counter-insurgency. (It should be noted that Burundi's Minister for Resettlement described the mass displacement as "voluntary"; however, even senior church and civil society figures who are sympathetic to the government and the policy acknowledge that there is nothing voluntary about these movements.)

256. In the early stages of regroupement, the humanitarian community debated the appropriate response. It was evident that the regrouped populations had significant humanitarian needs as a result of the disruption to economic activity, loss of settlement, increased disease and malnutrition levels, etc. However, providing humanitarian aid in these camps might have facilitated the regroupement process and potentially be interpreted as supporting the Burundian strategy.

257. By all accounts, Griffiths played a central, catalytic role in bringing together the UN agencies, the NGOs, and donors into a common policy. Griffiths consulted those NGOs and UN agencies who were closest to the scene and negotiated with the major donors, who had their own strong views about the appropriate response. He also consulted with the ICRC about the legal basis of regroupement, something that is too infrequently done by humanitarians. This was an important step, as it revealed that regroupement processes may actually be legal under the Geneva Conventions, so long as certain conditions apply. These conditions were by and large absent in Burundi. Having recourse to specific legal texts and conditions improved the humanitarian community's negotiating position.

258. Those involved in these consultations credit Griffiths with an informal, inclusive style, very helpful in particular in winning the trust of the NGOs, who were generally put off by the "special envoy jet set". Critically, Griffiths was able to add access to the members of the IASC, some of whom reviewed a draft policy document. When a common UN-NGO policy document was agreed to in Bujumbura, it had the weight of the joint backing of the IASC. This linkage between the political weight of agency headquarters, an understanding of the application of the relevant humanitarian law and policy, and direct-from-the-field information about the real situation, all combined to result in a common humanitarian policy: this is at the heart of what ëstrategic humanitarian coordination' should mean.

259. (This strategic policy-making process in Burundi also serves to highlight the absence of a similar system-wide process with respect to the refugee camps in eastern Zaire, prior to the onset of war. There were only sporadic efforts to tackle critical ethical and security issues in eastern Zaire through strategic policy making, and these were never system-wide. This weakened the humanitarian community's ability to resist the manipulation of humanitarian relief.)

260. There were weaknesses in the policy process. First, there was no follow-through. When the study team visited Burundi in October 1997, it found that the policy had not been revisited, despite some evolution in the situation on the ground, such as extensions of what were initially deemed to be temporary internments. From the perspective of some of those outside the UN system, the UN-NGO regroupement policy had been effective in its first few months, but had failed to adapt to changes in the way the politics of different forms of regroupement were being managed by the Burundians, as well as the way they had been affected by humanitarian action. Thus, for example, it was repeatedly argued that the differential manner in which the UN was dealing with returnees, internally displaced, and the

regrouped was being used by the warring parties to reinforce the political divisions between these groups. It was not within the capacity of the study team to make an independent assessment of this case; it was notable, however, that this flagship policy of the humanitarian community in Burundi had not been subject to ongoing strategic monitoring and re-evaluation.

261. Second, there was evidence from donors, NGOs, and UN agencies that Griffiths' role in facilitating the common policy process had further undermined the already somewhat weak position of the humanitarian coordinator. The fact that the regroupement policy is known as "the Griffiths policy" reinforced the fact that it had not been the HC who had taken this lead role. If the perception was that the HC did not have the position, personality, or profile to develop this sort of policy, he should have been replaced; if that was not the assessment, his position should have been reinforced by a high-level intervention, not undermined.

262. This leads to the question of the RHCs' relation with the in-country coordination teams, and indeed with other elements of the SHC system.

3. Relationship with other coordination mechanisms

263. The RHCs related to the other elements of the coordination system in a variety of ways, but two issues may be highlighted here, from which useful lessons can be drawn. The first pertains to the way the RHCs interacted with established coordinators, e.g., the RC/HCs; the second, to the RHCs' role in establishing local coordination structures. A third, related issue concerns the nature of the Office of the RHC's relationship to other DHA offices; some points on this are made here, but the issue has been principally tackled earlier in this report.

264. Not surprisingly, the RC/HCs expressed very different views on their relationships with the RHCs than were conveyed by the latter. From the RC/HC perspective, the relationship between the country and the regional coordinators was strained and difficult. In particular, the RC/HCs expressed concern about the manner in which the regional coordinators affected their relationship with government counterparts.

265. One element of this has already been mentioned, namely the potential for a high-profile visit by an RHC to undermine the authority of the country coordinator. This is an issue with a long track record in diplomatic circles, where the parallel is to the appropriate relationship between an ambassador, who is accredited to a government, and a visiting foreign minister or special ambassador. The privilege of being the senior representative of a government (or an international body such as the UN) in a particular country is a jealously guarded one, not just for egotistical reasons. When visiting senior officials do not work to reinforce the voice of their appointed ambassadors, it can seriously undermine the ongoing relationship that ambassador has with the government. The appropriate relationship between a regional director or coordinator and in-country representatives should be that expressed to us by an NGO official in an analogous position: "I'm here to back up my country directors." In the Great Lakes Region, this issue was not always handled by the RHCs with as much care as desirable.

266. A similar difficulty expressed by the RC/HCs was their need to expend political capital with host governments when the regional coordinators visited on what might be called "information mining" expeditions, i.e., high-speed trips through countries to collect information. The RHCs were routinely castigated for flying into a capital city, sometimes

having changed their arrival schedule at the last minute but still expecting to have high level meetings with the government, and then flying out, doing little by way of providing information or solving problems at the country level. This infuriated government counterparts. The perception of the RHCs as moving too fast through each country, rarely stopping to get a real grasp on what was happening in the country, to the great inconvenience of all concerned, was widespread. As noted before, the RHCs had punishing terms of reference and can hardly be blamed for the speed at which they traveled. It is also clear here that the RHCs were not the only offenders on this count, with other special envoys of various descriptions acting in similar ways. It was the cumulative effect of this that was negative. Nevertheless, it is clearly the case that the rest of the coordination system paid a significant price for the presence of the RHCs. In those countries where the RHCs did not focus their own contributionsññRwanda and Tanzaniaññit was not clear that the price was worth paying.

267. The second issue worth highlighting was eastern Zaire, where the RHCs did focus their attention. Here the RHCs interacted with the coordination system in a much more productive way, in that they helped to establish local coordination mechanisms at the front lines of the emergency. The strengths and weaknesses of this aspect of their work reveal important lessons about the interaction of the SHC mechanisms and the rest of the UN.

268. The first notable instance of this was the decision taken by Griffiths, in consultation with de Mello and Madame Ogata, to appoint an Emergency Field Coordinator for the entire Goma sub-region. To facilitate the decision, UNHCR agreed to expand the remit of their Goma sub-office to cover most of what was then AFDL-controlled territory. There was, at this level, excellent co-operation between the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator and the agencies. As has already been noted, the Emergency Field Coordinator position made a substantive contribution to the performance of a key strategic coordination function, namely negotiations with political and military actors over humanitarian space and respect for humanitarian principles. Moreover, the appointment itself constituted a substantive decision by IASC members to construct a structure for strategic and operational coordination in eastern Zaire.

269. The experience of local coordination in Goma was not all positive. There were several complaints that UNHCR was too dominant in the Goma region, which resulted in an imbalance in the response, in particular with respect to locally affected populations. Moreover, UNHCR's history in the region, with respect to the use of the Goma camps as a base for the ex-FAR's rearmament, meant that the organization had a controversial profile in the region.[75] There are several issues here. On the one hand, there is not much evidence to support an argument that any other UN agency would have had better success than UNHCR in gaining access to the refugee and IDP populations being moved by the ADFL and RPA. Also, the emergency field coordinator was respected and had the personality and local experience required to play the role effectively. In addition, UNHCR had by far and away the largest operational presence in the region and could move the most quickly to respond to extremely fast-breaking movements on the ground. On the other hand, it is probably true to argue that having a UNHCR staff member serve as Emergency Field Coordinator for Goma had a downside in terms of the organizations' historical relationship to the political authorities. Moreover, a number of UNHCR staff who commented on this role routinely confused the position and function of an emergency field coordinatorññ who happened to also work for the dominant agency in the areaññwith a ëlead agency' structure. Those within UNHCR who were closest to the IASC process were firm about the distinctions and clear that the distinction was an important one. However, the distinction was poorly understood in the field. Having

UNHCR staff talk as if the organization were lead agency alienated a number of other agency personnel.

270. More importantly, other aspects of the rest of the UN's system response contributed to the lack of balance. UNICEF was candid in stating that the speed of their own responseññnot in terms of establishing presence, but in terms of mobilizing sufficient resourcesññto the breaking situation in Goma left much to be improved, and as a result they were unable to balance UNHCR's operations with others more specifically targeted at locally affected populations. Instead, UNHCR extended their programming in this direction, filling a critical gap. Equally striking is the fact that the Emergency Field Coordinator agreed with Griffiths that DHA would appoint someone to work with him as an assistant on coordination. DHA took over three months to fill the position, an epoch in the lifetime of the situation in Goma. In this instance, the RHCs' role in establishing a local coordination mechanism was partially undermined by weak performance by other agencies, and by the paucity of the understanding of essential coordination concepts.

271. Strikingly, the operational balance between the agencies was very different in Tingi-Tingi, the second major operational zone in eastern Zaire. There, UNICEF had programmes up and running before the other agencies established a presence, including response to refugees. However, here again, speedy presence was not backed up by quick deployment of resources. When UNHCR did start programming in the Tingi-Tingi camps, they were able rapidly to deploy enormous resources. In so doing, they also assumed the lead role with respect to refugees, as per their mandate.

272. The experience of establishing an Emergency Field Coordinator for Kisangani again reveals the importance of the interaction between those formally responsible for strategic coordination and the rest of the agencies, and also the critical element of relations with the local authorities. Here, the need for an emergency field coordinator was agreed by Griffiths and the regional heads of the major operational agencies (an important informal SHC mechanism discussed below). However, the agencies were reluctant to take on the coordination role in Kisangani. Kisangani was a political "hot potato", as it was widelyññand correctlyññperceived to be the last place in Zaire that the ADFL/RPF would engage the ex-FAR and the militias. It was also a major psychological border for Zaire-Kinshasa: when the Zairian army failed to make any significant stand at Kisangani, it was taken as a given that the ADFL would quickly take Kinshasa. According to staff of both UNICEF and UNHCR, these issues were critical in convincing their agencies to decline the request made by the RHC that they should take the coordination role for Kisangani.

273. Eventually, WFP agreed to take on the role, which in fact it was already *de facto* fulfilling. At this point, however, WFP appointed a staff person who was widely considered to be inappropriate for the job. This judgement was borne out, as coordination in Kisangani in the ensuing period was very weak. Correspondence between UN agencies on the subject refer to "total confusion on operational issues" and a "total lack of coordination".[76] Graphic evidence of the lack of coordination was found on the Kisangani airstrip on the day the UN and the NGOs were forced to evacuate the camps: two separate sets of evacuation arrangements had been made, one by the UN, which was delayed, a second by NGOs who did not trust the UN's arrangements. The evacuation was characterized by confusion over arrangements and a scramble for seats on the planes. Eventually, WFP terminated the contract of the coordinator. By this point, however, the military battles and associated massacres of

Kisangani were well underway. At this critical and most bloody point in the regional war, the UN's presence was characterized by confusion.

274. Strikingly, this example strongly confirms the overall argument of the paper. Critical to understanding the weakness of the coordination arrangements in Kisangani were four factors. First is the political role played by the ADFL. Rather than supporting UN coordination, the ADFL was actively disruptive, hampering coordination arrangements by making, then unmaking, decisions, providing, then denying, permission for access, and otherwise interfering with coordination efforts. Related to this was a very tense security situation for the agencies. These factors were critical. However, internal communications make it clear that "interagency competition"[77] also contributed to the weakness of coordination functions. Finally, the element of personality played a role. The UN's own weaknesses played contributed to poor performance in this case; it should be abundantly clear, however, that responsibility for the disastrous humanitarian situation in Kisangani rests with the ADFL and their backers.

275. At the conceptual level, this example also reaffirms the point that the distinctions between strategic and operational coordination are blurred at the field level. Here again, the strategic and operational mechanisms were mutually dependent. The regional coordinators relied on the co-operation of the agencies to establish local coordination mechanisms. The degree of co-operation, and the quality of the agency people assigned to the relevant posts were critical determinants of the success of the coordination function. The overall point is that it requires performance both by the various formal strategic coordination mechanisms and by the agencies for the functions of strategic coordination to be performed effectively.

276. A third aspect of the RHCs' relationship with the rest of the SHC system has been touched on in terms of the relationship between the Office of the RHC and the other DHA field offices, especially in Kigali. This is considered in more depth below. Also considered later is the relationship between the ORHC and IRIN.

4. The Gap: Strategic Planning

277. In reviewing the areas where the RHCs focused their efforts, and their relationship with the other elements of the SHC system, one major gap stands out. The study team found almost no evidence of performance on one of the major functions of strategic coordination, namely strategic planning and the establishment of overall goals. Rather, throughout the time period, the UN's response was exactly thatñ̃responsive. The only exception to the broad lack of planning was in contingency planning, which itself is purely reactive unless tied to some strategy of lobbying, negotiating, and advocating for particular outcomes.

278. There is one example of the first steps in strategic planning being taken, only to be buried within the system. The example, which predates the RHCs, is of Manuel da Silva, then a senior staff member of DHA, who led a team to look into the conflict in the Masisi region of eastern Zaire in May 1996. The Masisi region had also been the subject of an analytical IRIN report earlier in the year. An insightful report resulted which a) looked at the humanitarian developments in the region b) identified their political roots c) projected the likely implications along a medium term timeframe and d) proposed action designed to tackle the causes, rather than simply waiting to respond to the next decline in humanitarian conditions. The report both contained a forward-looking element, and assessed the local events in Masisi in terms of their far wider regional political context. The report was buried because it was

politically "hot". This it was; but it was heat that the UN system needed. The UN ended up having to deal with the heat from Masisi, but only later when it had become an open fire, and was much more difficult to handle.

279. This type of forward looking analysis, taken in the regional political and military context, was largely absent from the UN's response throughout the period under study. By and large, the efforts of the RHCs, who should have been best placed to take a longer, wider view of specific events, were instead focused on the immediate and short-term implications of events and responses. While this focus was entirely understandable in the context of a fast-breaking, rapidly evolving military and political context, it was arguably as a function of limited prior strategic thinking, or of misuse of strategic analysis as exemplified by the handling of the Masisi report. Once war had broken out in eastern Zaire, day-to-dayñ̃or certainly week-to-weekñ̃ñ̃events continually overwhelmed ongoing planning efforts such as were made.

280. The only area of strategic planning in its broadest, and weakest sense, was in the realm of contingency planning. Contingency planning was done by various elements of the UN at the outset of the ADFL war, and at various stages through it, such as prior to the fall of Kisangani. Serious limitations were placed on UN contingency planning by local governments. Local governments were frequently concerned to restrict UN contingency planning around events which represent political setbacks or hostile actions on their part. Examples of local government restrictions on contingency planning include the Rwandan government's unwillingness to allow the UN to plan for the refugees' return on foot from eastern Zaire, and Kinshasa's resistance to the UN planning for the fall of Kisangani.

281. Even within these constraints, the UN's contingency planning capacity was limited. Missing from this process in particular were determined efforts to bring together the different elements of the UN in the region that were engaging in contingency planning, to share insights and develop joint strategies. Most notable in this regard is the issue of the potential fall of Kinshasa. Those agencies and coordinators working east of Kisangani long down-played the likelihood of an outright victory by the ADFL, and instead focused planning on alternative scenarios involving Zairian resistance at Kisangani or elsewhere along the ADFL's route. Strikingly, in Kinshasa, the contingency of an ADFL victory was taken seriously from early on, despite Zairian government resistance. Whereas for the UN agencies dealing with eastern Zaire from Kigali the events in the Goma and Uvira regions were extensions of the Rwandan civil war, and therefore conceptually confined to the Kivu regions, from Kinshasa the war was immediately understood as an attack on Mobutu's regime. In January 1997 the RHCs did launch a regional contingency planning process, though this faltered when events moved more quickly than the process.

282. This themeñ̃ñ̃that events moved more quickly than planning processesñ̃ñ̃is a recurrent one, and valid to a point. However, just as in a different dimension the importance placed on personality of coordinators can be taken to reflect a weakness of structures, so the issue of the speed of events can be taken to reveal a weakness of systems. Indeed, the idea that a *contingency* plan can be taken over by events suggests that there are important weakness in that planning process, for it is in the very nature of contingency planning to plan for the unplannable. The weakness of contingency planning within the UN system is a recurring theme in evaluations and studies.[78]

5. Informal Mechanisms

283. Quite apart from the structured relationships between the RHCs and the rest of the strategic coordination system, there were important informal arrangements and processes which contributed to the SHC functions. From the study team's perspective, there were lessons to be learned from these informal mechanisms, and the fact of their informality did not lessen their importance. The important issue was whether and how the functions of SHC were fulfilled, not whether the system conformed to neat bureaucratic descriptions. Indeed, the study team found at least one important example of formalistic, bureaucratic issues interfering with highly effective informal arrangements.

284. The informal networks that added an element of overall strategic coordination were wide ranging: loose networks among UN colleagues; personal networks that tied UN staff into the broader humanitarian community (people sharing houses, dining together, etc.); informal political networks that linked national or religious groups; informal contacts between UN heads of agencies and diplomatic missions, such as the "cocktail party circuit"; donor meetings with "their" NGOs; and the informal, practical groupings that typically develop in the field among like-minded working-level staff. Also very important were informal contacts between senior UN staff and local counterparts. In particular, the capacity of the RC/HCs to maintain informal contact with government contacts appeared to be an important determinant of their ability to manage effectively the UN-government relationship.

285. Such informal networks among UN, donors, and NGOs are typically important in fostering a sense of humanitarian community, and a shared analysis of the environment. Where this sense of community exists, it is an important factor in generating action and pressure, in fostering joint plans, and as a source of morale and relief from stress. In some parts of the region, the study team found ample evidence of this. This can influence people's willingness to participate in more formal coordination processes. The study team found some evidence of willingness to go to coordination meetings, for example, because of respect for the person in charge.

286. An important example of informal networking was the collaboration between the RHCs, RC/HCs, and the regional heads of the primary operational agencies, UNHCR, WFP, and UNICEF. A series of informal meetings and telephone calls between members of this group played a key coordination role for a time. This forum was used by de Mello and by Griffiths in particular to gain initial, informal support from key IASC members for decisions such as the appointment of local Emergency Field Coordinators, decisions that did not require formal endorsement by the IASC but would not work without support from the major players. This informal group would also set priority targets for relief supplies. The RHCs provided a degree of strategic overview to decisions that might otherwise have been made on more narrow operational considerations, while the regional heads added operational depth to the RHCs decision-making process. This grouping was also used to support the RHC in the performance of his functions. As already noted, Gerety was sometimes deputized by Griffiths to stand in for him.

287. This was an important place where strategic and operational coordination came together as an effective, manageable mechanism. Limited to the key decision makers who were managing the vast bulk of relief supplies, this forum operated in a reasonably efficient manner. While telephone conversations continued, the meetings became untenable as they

attracted the criticism of the smaller technical agencies who were not part of its operation. They objected to decisions being taken by this "cabal", rather than by the wider group of agencies represented in the IASC. These meetings as a result were expanded to include the wider IASC membership, which limited their utility.

288. Here the weak aspect of the IASC, especially the absence of a Steering Committee, was reflected in the field and the regional SHC system. Any coordination official should have the explicit right to call a small meeting for coordination purposes, and should be responsible to the IASC for ensuring that agencies are included in such meetings only as relevant. It is appropriate that during fast-breaking operations, predominance in decision-making should be given to those agencies carrying the bulk of the effort. While the technical and development agencies do have a legitimate concern about the way they have become marginalized in emergencies, insisting on equal representation in such informal meetings may not be the best way to rectify the problem. It further contributes to the sense of the technical agencies complicating and adding little to response operations during rapidly-changing emergency conditions. It might be appropriate in some instances for the IASC Working Group to designate a "field steering committee", comprising the major agencies and such other agencies as relevant. The study team noted that in Tanzania, where inter-agency relations were far less tense than in the rest of the region (though not without complications), disaster response was coordinated by a small disaster management team comprising the major operational agencies and others as required, under the chairmanship of the RC.

6. The Office of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator

289. The position of the RHC was backed up by an Office of the RHC (ORHC), a grand sounding term for what was in fact a small, varying team of people who supported the RHCs. There are lessons to be learned from the way the office was composed.

290. Under the first RHC, de Mello, there was in fact no office of the RHC. For logistics and communication support, de Mello relied on the pre-existing capacities of UNHCR. This decision was understandable, as UNHCR had a strong, standing support capacity to which de Mello could tap in instantly. However, this did have the downside of reinforcing the confusion about his function and position. Notably, de Mello also had Martin Griffiths as a senior deputy; he was the only RHC to have a senior number two to provide him with backup.

291. Griffiths also relied on his home agency to capacitate his office, though since his home agency was DHA this more naturally aligned with his position as an independent humanitarian coordinator. Griffiths' capacity to draw on the MCDU and FCSU has already been discussed. Griffiths also established a formal Office of the RHC. There were strengths and weaknesses in how this office was established and how it performed.

292. In its first incarnation, the ORHC was in Kigali, a reasonable choice given the centrality of the Rwandan government in the regional dimensions of the crisis. The ORHC was established as a separate office from that of DHA Rwanda, again a reasonable decision given that the two offices had very different functions. However, both decision had deleterious consequences for the coordination system in Rwanda. Having two DHA offices was confusing for users, as has already been mentioned. More importantly, having the regional office in Kigali was perceived as weakening the position of the RC/HC and straining relations between his office and the government. Given the later experience with regroupement in Burundi, this perception was probably accurate. Griffiths deserves credit for recognizing the

issue, and acting by moving the office to Nairobi. Again, this decision had pros and cons. The positive side of being in Nairobi was easy access to regional offices of the UN and major NGOs, and to good transportation links, communications capacity and other facilities. The downside was its distance from the heart of the crisis. In Kinshasa in particular the decision to move the office to Nairobi was read as indicating a profound lack of understanding of the position of Kinshasa. For Kinshasa, Nairobi was a world away, far outside of typical circles of political reference. The move was cynically viewed as having more to do with the housing available in Nairobi than any strategic factor. Given how infrequently the RHCs slept at home, this was unfair. The rationale usedñ̃that Kenya was a neutral pointñ̃was viewed sceptically in Kinshasa, for Kenya was in fact not neutral in the Great Lakes Region, having provided important political support to the former Rwandan government, including by allowing several of its members to live in exile in Nairobi. However, Kenya was certainly less directly involved than other countries, Nairobi seems a defensible choice for the location of the ORHC. An alternative that was not explored was Kampala, a capital obviously directly involved in the crisis (as was Kigali, the first site), but one with no Humanitarian Coordinators and with good facilities. Irrespective of the choice, the issue is that once again communication to the field about the nature of choices and decisions at the RHC level was less than desirable.

293. In Nairobi, the ORHC was thinly staffed. Neither Griffiths nor Gerety was assigned a senior deputy, although Griffiths occasionally asked Gerety to serve informally as deputy for specific tasks. The office did not comprise a bureaucratic structure designed to support the functions of strategic coordination. At all times, the office was a personal support office to the individual RHC. Given the magnitude of the tasks assigned to the RHC, and their limited capacity to tackle even a portion of these tasks across the whole region, the ORHC was inadequate to fill the breach. In the words of one of the RHCs, "there was no office of the RHC."

294. It should be emphasized that the ORHC was staffed by excellent people. Appointments or secondments to the office were strategically chosen, including a mix of people with regional backgrounds, coordination experience, and knowledge of the IASC. A good example was the secondment of UNHCR's IASC liaison officer for UNHCR. This officer's contacts within UNHCRñ̃always a key resourceñ̃and his knowledge of the IASC system added depth to the RHC's comparative advantage, namely their ability to draw on the political weight of the IASC. Also, high quality personnel from DHA were assigned to the office. As important as the personnel was the support the office got from other UN agencies, notably UNHCR. The clear lesson is that when DHA and the agencies collaborate, rather than compete, there are sufficient resources within the UN to draw together a good team that blends the regional knowledge, bureaucratic skill, and coordination experience necessary to support a senior coordination post. The question of whether this type of support officeñ̃as distinct from a programme officeñ̃was sufficient to the task is a separate issue.

295. When first established in Nairobi, Griffiths tried to have the ORHC incorporate the pre-existing Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), DHA's field information cell. The connection between the two offices, and the broader issues about the strategic management of information, forms the next topic of the report.

E. Information

296. The management of information in the region was simultaneously a highlight and a weakness of the SHC system and of DHA in particular. During the period under study, there was a significant and innovative improvement in the collection, compilation, and dissemination of useful information by DHA. However, the were also serious weaknesses with respect to the strategic use of information, i.e., the use of information to support broader humanitarian goals and to help carve out humanitarian space. This fault critically undermined the UN at key junctures when information became an important battleground between military and humanitarian agendas.

1. ReliefWeb and IRIN

297. On the positive side, IRIN was clearly the highlight of DHA's performance in the field. The creation of a regional information unit was an important innovation in the SHC system. Established in late 1995, for the entire time period under review, IRIN provided daily, sometimes twice daily, summaries of the major humanitarian developments in the Great Lakes Region. Initially, IRIN covered only Rwanda, Burundi and those parts of Tanzania and Zaire affected by refugees from those two countries. While these areas remained a key focus, the regional scope broadened to follow both the front lines of the ADFL war and the strategic backdrop to it. Thus, by early 1996, IRIN was covering events in the whole of Zaire, Uganda, events related to the ICTR, and related developments in southern Sudan. It later extended its coverage to incorporate Congo-Brazzaville, after that country's internal conflicts intersected with the retreating ex-FAR and refugee population from the Goma region. As well as providing daily and weekly summaries, and key official documents and press releases, by mid-1996 IRIN was also providing some useful background pieces, especially on political developments in Kinshasa.

298. IRIN was also connected to an Internet site managed by DHA, known as ReliefWeb. In headquarters and western capitals, many involved in the response made routine use of ReliefWeb. Indeed, from the launch of ReliefWeb in October 1996 to May 1997, the number of documents read on the site rose from ca. 5,000 a day to ca. 12,000 a day. Pages relating to the Great Lakes Region were the most commonly utilized. In the field, however, ReliefWeb was little used, as most field offices do not as yet have Internet access. Also, one of the principal uses of ReliefWeb was to access IRIN.

299. IRIN received wide ranging praise from UN agencies both in the field and at headquarters, donors (headquarters and embassies), and NGOs. These were also its key sources of information. IRIN had developed reasonably good access to the local embassies and to the regional UN and NGO offices in Nairobi. It is indicative of the state of communication in the UN system that IRIN often had most difficulty getting daily situation reports from UN offices in the region, and relied on its Geneva office to get copies of these from agency headquarters.

300. An important issue is that IRIN is little used, indeed little known, by local actors in the region. This was seen as a strength by some, a key weakness by others. Government actors are not generally part of IRIN's audience, despite some efforts to make them so. Local NGOs and church officials were also generally not on the distribution list, despite the availability of

a faxed version of IRIN reports in either English or French. That such actors were not on the distribution end of IRIN also means that they were not feeding into IRIN. In this sense IRIN reproduces the general UN information bias towards other agencies, western embassies and international NGOs.

301. IRIN did attract criticism from some of those who supplied it with information and were concerned by its "journalistic" nature. A number of UN officials in particular objected to being "harassed" by IRIN to provide information that had already been sent to DHA in New York or Geneva by regular channels, or to being pushed to reveal more sensitive information, particularly with respect to political and military developments. In some instances, IRIN reporting created difficulties for its sources; the coding of sources was too readily transparent in places where the community was small. This problem was quickly dealt with by IRIN, and even those who made such criticisms acknowledged that IRIN had improved during the period under study. There were also important disagreements within the system about the extent to which sensitive information should be made public through IRIN. A DHA document on the subject refers to a need for "more rigour" in avoiding making delicate political negotiations more difficult.[79]

2. Strategic Information

302. While IRIN stands as an important success in the information realm, other aspects of the strategic use of information were less well handled. Indeed, mismanagement or weak strategic management of information by the broader coordination mechanisms was an important issue in the overall UN response.

303. First, many elements of the UN system do not trust DHA as a whole with sensitive information. From their perspective, "DHA [treated] information as a public good and had no sense of its strategic value." This perception was strongest among the triad of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and UNHCR. A number of staff in the Secretariat bodies acknowledged that they routinely shared information amongst themselves that was held back from DHA. This of course seriously compromises DHA's position and function, and in particular its negotiating position within the New York bureaucracy. For a coordination body to be out of the information loop is obviously a major problem. This also initially compromised the reception of IRIN; however, once it established its separateness from the rest of DHA, this reservation diminished.

304. In some instances, DHA's weak position was counteracted by staff (particularly in the Complex Emergency Division) being proactive and energetic in their pursuit of information. While this is admirable at the individual level, DHA being cut out of the information loop is clearly counterproductive. However, whereas at the outset the study team was prepared to ascribe this pattern of non-sharing of information to agency hostility towards the DHA, the study team's findings validated some of the concerns about DHA's management of strategic information. By and large, DHA treated information as a public good rather than as a strategic tool, and sought to disseminate some information that would better be used to negotiate access and co-operation with political authorities.

305. There were exceptions. The study team was privileged to sit in on two meetings when the senior DHA staff member in Burundi used her extensive knowledge of conditions throughout Burundi, and her acute sense of the political situation, to win important negotiating points with government ministers and generate collaboration with key church

leaders. This is one particularly important strategic use of information, i.e., not just the collection, compilation and dissemination of information, but the deliberate deployment of a relevant and restricted commodity for bargaining purposes. This was an excellent example of how information can be used to reinforce humanitarian space.

306. Unfortunately, these episodes were exceptional. Typically, DHA did not know how to handle strategic information. Critically, in at least one major instance, DHA's response to having key strategic information (da Silva's Masisi report) was to bury it. The clear lesson was that DHA's lack of strategic capacity with respect to information was a serious weakness which unfortunately validated and reinforced UN agencies' unwillingness to bring DHA "into the loop".

307. The difficulties of properly managing strategic information were not limited to DHA. An important example of the UN as a whole struggling to deal with strategic information was the "numbers game" that in October and November 1996 became the key battleground between humanitarian imperatives and military strategies. Faced with powerful actors who opposed humanitarian agendas, and used and misused information to their own purposes, the UN's capacity to counter this information campaign was minimal. As local, British and American actors presented information that seemed to undermine the case for the MNF by appearing to show no refugee populations where the UN said there were "missing refugees", only UNHCR was able to provide any in-depth counter-evidence. This was of course problematic in that UNHCR was considered suspect by those who opposed the humanitarian agenda, given its role in "harbouring" the very forces now the target of Rwandan and ADFL attack, and also given its purported financial and bureaucratic interests in the existence of such refugees. UNHCR refugee figures were painted as inflated, suspect, and unreliable. In some cases in good faith, and in certain cases with malice, information gathering with respect to the "missing refugees" led to the conclusion that there were no "missing refugees".

308. At this juncture, an independent humanitarian body capable of wielding information to strategic effect could have played a critical role. The strategic management of information also entails countering incorrect and misperceived information or outright disinformation. Amongst UN humanitarian agencies there was broad agreement on the numbers. Publicly, however, a clear presentation of the humanitarian side of this debate, from an element of the UN not burdened with UNHCR's particular role and history, could helpfully have countered some of the worst of the rhetoric. At best, this might have led to more serious options being considered by the MNF, which was on stand-by, but in the absence of any "missing refugees" did not find a role for itself. The costs of the weak strategic use of information at this juncture can only be guessed at, but were certainly high.

309. Information was also necessary to counter the too-ready perception that anyone who had not returned to Rwanda in the first wave was necessarily a *genocidaire*, and therefore not deserving of humanitarian assistance. In point of fact, it is now clearñ̃ñand was evident from past experienceñ̃ñthat the military elements among the refugee population were deliberately pushing part of the refugee population ahead of itself to shield itself from attacks by the RPA/ADFL. These people became four times victimized: having been forced out of Rwanda by the genocide armies in 1994, and then intimidated, harassed and oppressed by those same armies in the Goma region camps, they were in 1996 again forced to flee as a population shield, and many of these people were killed in the ensuing fighting. In the words of one senior Rwandan official, "if there were women and children in the way [of fighting the ex-FAR], we couldn't be naive. This is war."

F. Relationship between SHC and international political / military actors

310. Apart from UN humanitarian actors, SHC mechanisms and officials interacted with a host of international political and military actors, both from within the UN system, and from western governments. These relations both conditioned and, more importantly, were conditioned by the broader questions involved in the willingness and ability of the governments in the regions to consent to humanitarian action, and the willingness and ability of the donor community to pressure these governments to provide humanitarian space. They were key determinants of the SHC system's capacity to negotiate and maintain secure humanitarian space.

1. Relationship with UN Special Envoys & Representatives

311. In the May 1996 report from Masisi, da Silva recommended that the Secretary General appoint a Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region to tackle what has always been at heart a political crisis. This recommendation was shelved along with the report. However, when the conflict escalated exactly along the lines forecasted by the Masisi report, the Secretary General did appoint a special envoy, Raymond Chrétien, then Canada's ambassador to the United States. Chretien's other duties kept him in Washington until late October.

312. The lag between the Masisi report's recommendation and Chrétien's ultimate arrival in the Great Lakes Region stands as a critical missed opportunity. By the time Chrétien arrived, key decisions had been taken, strategies had been set, and the war was in motion. The scope for strategic action by political and humanitarian actors was already sharply constrained by the absence of strategic action in the earlier period. Nevertheless, ChrÉtien worked closely with humanitarian actors in the region, and particularly with the Regional Humanitarian Coordinators and the humanitarian coordinators in Kinshasa and Kigali, to develop what alternatives he could.

313. From the outset, there was collaboration between Chretien and both political and humanitarian elements of the UN system. Chrétien was ably supported by the Department of Political Affairs, which backstopped the Special Envoy position. The head of the Humanitarian Coordination Unit of UNDP Kinshasa was seconded to Chretien's staff. This was an inspired choice, as the staffer had the confidence of the RC/HC in Kinshasa, an excellent knowledge of the region, and most importantly a solid grasp of the political scene in Zaire. With this as a core team, ChrÉtien also collaborated directly and closely with Bakhet in Rwanda, Diallo in Kinshasa, and with de Mello, both in his role as deputy at UNHCR and in his RHC role.

314. Chrétien traveled widely through the sub-region, including to Ethiopia and South Africa, dealing with two major issues: the proposed Multi-National Force for eastern Zaire; and negotiations between Kabila's movement and the Mobutu government. However, excellent collaboration between political and humanitarian elements of the UN at this stage did little to alter the direction of the war, or to mitigate the human costs of the strategies employed. That this is so can be explained primarily by two factors: the limited will for political action on the part of western governments, which translated into late action on the political front by the UN. These two factors narrowly constrained ChrÉtien's scope for action.

315. Relationships between humanitarian actors in the region and the second UN political representative to the region appear to have been less effective. Ambassador Sahnoun, appointed UN and OAU Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, was universally characterized as having "played it solo". Contacts between Sahnoun and the RHCs were somewhat sporadic. While Sahnoun was available to support the RHCs in their negotiations with Kabila and Mobutu in particular, and did so on important occasions, nevertheless the RHCs expressed the view that more systematic interaction would have been desirable. Other actors in the region also expressed concern at the distance and aloofness of Sahnoun's style.

316. Sahnoun's major contributions in the Great Lakes Region were two: first he outlined a five point plan for peace and security in the region, designed to culminate in an "anti-Berlin" conference in which issues of state boundaries, citizenship, and trans-boundary movement were to be discussed; second he attempted to negotiate first a peaceful settlement and then a peaceful transition between Kabila and Mobutu. The first effort, the five-point plan, had the positive characteristic of addressing the underlying political and security problems of the region as a whole, rather than focusing on surface manifestations of those problems. However, there is little evidence of the plan having been viewed by the governments of the Great Lakes Region as a way forward to a solution to the regional crisis. Certainly, by the time Kabila had taken Kinshasa, the five-point plan had moved off of the main agenda. From a humanitarian perspective, it is possible to question the timing of this plan, outlined at a moment of acute crisis and critical humanitarian needs.

317. The later effort was pursued alongside the South African government, with both President Nelson Mandela and Vice-President Thabo Mbeki playing important roles, and the Organization of African Unity. The involvement of the South Africans had first been explored by Chretien, who traveled with his team to meet Mandela and Mbeki, and at one point attempted to organize a meeting between Kabila and the South Africans. Sahnoun and Mandela each held high-level diplomatic negotiations with Mobutu and Kabila, including one set of talks held on a naval ship parked outside of Zairian territorial waters. Other international diplomats, especially Ambassador Bill Richardson of the United States were holding parallel discussions with the parties. In some aspects, all of these talks had the characteristics of "talking without negotiating": as Kabila talked to the diplomats, he continued his quick march to Kinshasa, constantly moving ahead of the negotiating agenda. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the Sahnoun-Mandela talks were important in smoothing the entry of Kabila into Kinshasa and the exit of Mobutu. Given the potential for dangerous reactions to Kabila's entry into Kinshasa, the relative ease with which it eventually transpired should probably be credited in part to the Sahnoun-Mandela initiative. During the course of these negotiations, as has been previously mentioned, the SRSG at times weighed in with his diplomatic clout to aid the negotiations of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinators, at their request, albeit perhaps with less regularity than desirable.

2. Interface with Donor Governments

"The Great Lakes Region experienced a bad case of envoy fatigue'."
Western diplomat, Kigali.

318. As is common in complex emergencies that enjoy high media focus, there was a plethora of special envoys appointed to the Great Lakes Region over the past year. A host of donors, including the United States, the European Union, and Belgium, each appointed at least one envoy whose brief included frequent visits to the region.

319. These visits were uncoordinated and placed tremendous demands on limited in-country staff time and capacity. The result was "envoy fatigue", a real problem in the Great Lakes Region for both humanitarian staff and members of governments who were often called at the last minute for meetings with envoys, some of which took place aboard envoys' planes at the airport. Envoys provided little advance notice (frequently no more than 24 hours), demanding everything from special flight clearances to meetings with the presidents of countries. The protocol of diplomacy was conspicuous in its absence. The western embassies and the UN expended significant political capital in order to meet the demands of these envoy. This ëenvoy fatigue' is disconcerting given the continuing nature of the crisis in the Great Lakes Region. Responsible, effective, high-level representation is much-needed. As with other aspects of coordination in the Great Lakes Region, the need for these functions to be filled is paramount; the study team's observations are directed toward the uncoordinated manner in which they were filled.

320. From the perspective of senior humanitarians in Rwanda, Tanzania, and Kenya, and of western ambassadors in these countries, this host of envoys made at best a marginal contribution. They were only questionably worth the opportunity costs associated with their hastily arranged visits. Somewhat more positive views on the envoys were expressed in Burundi and Zaire.

321. The differing views on the envoys is arguably related to the broader political relations and interests of the donor community with the respective government. As has been argued, there was a broad degree of sympathy for the Rwandan-centred coalition, including for their operation in eastern Zaire. The special envoys, as a result, had little interest in bringing pressure to bear to alter the Rwandan agenda, and little capacity to do so. In Zaire and Burundi, however, the governments were less in favour. It is notable that in these two cases there was much more evidence of envoys having exerted what pressure and influence they could to shift the agendas of these two governments. At times this pressure was useful in creating space for humanitarian actors. For example, in the early stages of the ADFL war Emma Bonino, the EU's Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, is credited with having pressured the Mobutu government to meet with the UN when it was resisting doing do so. Elsewhere, especially in Rwanda, where donor nations and the UN system's agenda often were not in harmony, envoys did little to create humanitarian space, or to pressure for consent to humanitarian action.

322. The limits on the willingness of key donors to exert pressure for the creation of humanitarian space was sharply apparent in the experience of the MNF. The MNF process involved a number of consultations with ranking humanitarian actors, notably UNDP/Rwanda Resident Representative Bhaket and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, de Mello. The humanitarian community was clear and explicit in its expectations of the MNF, i.e., separation and exclusion of armed populations from refugees. For political and military reasons, this expectation proved impossible for the members of the Security Council to fulfill, despite the good efforts of the Government of Canada. In subsequent analysis, it is obvious that even if the refugees had not ëspontaneously' returned, the MNF would not have been adequately supported to launch the sizeable military operation necessary to separate civilian from military populations. It was abundantly clear, as it had been in 1994, that there was profoundly inadequate political support among western nations to contribute the sort of force required to engage in military activity to tackle the real problem, namely the security threat posed by the ex-FAR, and their continued intimidation of legitimate refugees in the camps. It

is important to note the task of separation was significantly greater in 1996 than in 1994; this was an key reason why the US government in particular balked at aspects of the Canadian proposal once the dimensions of that proposal became clear. However, this should only serve to reinforce the notion that early political action in response to complex emergencies is critical; the longer the delay, the more difficult the challenge.[80]

323. Quite apart from the issue of the non-deployment of the MNF, the contribution of the advance teams to overall humanitarian response was highly mixed, given their role in aerial surveillance and interpretation of the location and size of refugee populations in the dense forests of eastern Zaire. As noted in the background section, differing interpretations and what has been called "demonstrably false remark[s]"[81] about aerial surveillance and satellite intelligence, seriously disrupted humanitarian activity at a time when the fate of large numbers of refugees was in the balance. Most frustrating was the fact that the MNF was camped nearby in Uganda as the tragic events of eastern Zaire unfolded. This not insignificant military presence pondered the question of what humanitarian role they could play, and found none. This was emblematic of a wider passivity on the part of the donor community. This passivity had a number of elements. Paraphrasing the words of the ambassador of a major donor to Rwanda:

- we couldn't stop the Rwandans from attacking the refugee camps, and in any case we didn't really want to;
- we couldn't stop them from pursuing the ex-FAR into the forests, and we didn't have much sympathy for the ex-FAR anyway;
- but we do deplore the fact that they killed innocents, including women and children, as they did it, and we should have brought pressure to bear on this point.

324. At times, passivity slipped into neglect.[82] Military commanders slipped in the language used to interpret surveillance photography, saying "there are no refugees" instead of the more accurate comment "we can not see any refugees". The technology used to generate this assessment was incapable of providing it. According to American and British diplomats, the satellite technology was unable to provide accurate pictures under the prevailing conditions of heavy cloud cover and dense forest. Even low level overflight was insufficient to penetrate the forest cover, and also was confined to narrow corridors. Most accurately, overflights and other assessments could have reported "we can't find the refugees" or "we can't prove they are there", but not, "they don't exist". Most regrettably, as the "numbers game" developed, some actors within the donor community were blatantly obstructive, accusing UNHCR in particular of lying about the number and fate of refugees, for fund-raising purposes. Such acts critically undermined the UN at a critical juncture, when the military strategies in Zaire were diametrically opposed to humanitarian agendas. What one western diplomat called the "grotesque debate" over the location of refugees that were once in the Goma camps continues today in a most unproductive fashion, with tensions particularly high between those who believe that up to 200,000 refugees remain unaccounted for and those who argue that the original population size of the camps was grossly overestimated. The issue is at a stalemate with no one asserting a leadership role.

325. The lack of ëpure consent', the weakness of ëpressured consent' and the unwillingness to engage in ëenforced consent' resulted in a collapse of the framework of consent precisely at those moments when humanitarian space was most brutally denied. This set sharp limits on

the space available to the UN system for strategic humanitarian coordination, seriously constraining negotiating relationships and the success which advocacy efforts could achieve. The result was what one senior UNHCR official called "a total failure of protection."

326. At best, some donor nations had learned the lesson from 1994 that humanitarian action should not substitute for political action, but failed to apply the lesson adequately. More state actors either had not learned this lesson or chose to ignore it, finding little interest in expending military and political resources in managing a conflict whose political outcomes were broadly in their interests. That this conflict had enormous humanitarian costs, and moreover continues to fuel further rounds in the cycle of insurgency and counter-insurgency, genocide and counter-genocide, was not sufficient motivation to generate the political will to tackle the underlying security threats and political conflicts which continue to make the Great Lakes Region enormously volatile.

Notes:

63 Recent academic work on coordination arrangements has also cited problems with the lead agency structure. See in particular, S. Alex Cunliffe and Michael Pugh, "The UNHCR as Lead Agency in the Former Yugoslavia"Journal of Humanitarian Assistance (1 April 1996); and James Ingram, "The Future Architecture for International Humanitarian Assistance" in Thomas G. Weiss and Larry Minear (eds.) Humanitarianism Across Borders: Sustaining Civilians in Times of War. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1993).

64 An exception: the IASC did form sub-working groups for its task force on the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) capacity review.

65 DHA correspondence, 25 November 1996.

66 Since the period under study, DHA has been renamed the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and has changed somewhat in composition. The study uses the name, DHA, which was current during the period under study.

67 Jurgen Dedring, in ëAfter Rwanda'.

68 ibid.

69 For example, a DHA document on the subject noted that they had been discussing the role of DHA in Rwanda for the better part of the year without reaching a conclusion. (DHA, September 19, 1996). The same document noted continuing problems with the calibre of DHA staff and the frequently brief duration of their contracts.

70 DHA correspondence (December 1996) referred to the confusion of having "for all intents and purposes two DHAs in Rwanda".

71 For similar findings in other academic literature, see Koenraad Van Brabant, "The Coordination of Humanitarian Action: the Case of Sri Lanka" Relief and Rehabilitation Network Paper Number 23, December 1997 (London: Overseas Development Institute.)

72 Dedring, p.47.

73 This finding echoes that of the former Special Representative of the Secretary General in Angola, reflecting on the humanitarian coordinator there: "[t]here is no doubt that the appointment of a person so well qualified, both professionally and personally, proved a major element in ensuring successful coordination..." Margaret J. Anstee, "The Experience in Angola, February 1992-June 1993" in Whitman & Pocock, p. 171.

74 According to DHA correspondence (31 January 1997), during the same meeting in which the Rwandan government expressed its opposition to inclusion in the regional CAP, it also expressed its unwillingness to accept a Political Office in Kigali (following the

appointment of Ambassador Sahnoun as Special Representative of the Secretary General). This further revealed the government's concern to assert its sovereign rights.

75 For example, in September 1996, Zairian government accusations of UNHCR support to the Banyamulenge had resulted in the dispatch of Assistant Secretary-General Ibrahima Fall to Zaire; this mission resulted in the Zairian government's agreement that UNHCR had not been involved in such activities. UN and UNHCR documents, 14 October 1996.

76 Internal UNHCR correspondence (5 March 1997).

77 Internal DHA correspondence (29 April 1997).

78 For a pertinent example, see Adelman and Suhrke, "Early Warning and Conflict Management" for the discussion of the limits and weaknesses of UNAMIR and the UN system's contingency planning for events in Rwanda in 1994.

79 DHA Correspondence, 28 November 1996.

80 For a discussion of the costs of weak preventive action, see Stephen Stedman, "Failed Preventive Diplomacy in the Great Lakes Region" Paper presented at the Center for International Security and Arms Control, November 24, 1997.

81 Lionel Rosenblatt, "Foreward", Refugees International, The Lost Refugees.

82 Two excellent sources on the numbers game are Refugees International, The Lost Refugees, and Nicholas Stockton, "Rights and Racism." Also internal DHA correspondence, November and December 1996.

Conclusions and Lessons Identified

The main conclusions reached by the study team, and the major lessons identified, follow.

327. The context for UN strategic humanitarian coordination was a challenging and complex political and military environment dominated by actors whose strategies were at times diametrically opposed to the UN's humanitarian agenda. The ideal of negotiating that environment with enough clout to establish a basis for sustained consent for humanitarian action was, in the absence of significant pressure from donors, a hopeless task. The collapse of consent at critical moments should not be held to be the responsibility of UN strategic coordination mechanisms. Rather, those mechanisms performed well on the functions of negotiating access and liaising with international political and military actors, and moderately well on advocating respect for humanitarian principles

328. The challenge of providing clear and unified humanitarian policy in opposition to strategies which threatened civilian populations, frequently eluded the UN's strategic humanitarian coordination effort; at times the mechanisms lived up to the ideal, but in more instances fell short. When strategic policy processes did succeed, they did so through the combined efforts of senior coordination personnel, especially at the regional level, field staff, and the IASC. Moreover, they worked best when grounded in specific tenets of international humanitarian law.

329. In the essential task of providing a degree of overall coherence in the UN's efforts, within the very strict limits set by the region's governments, the UN system showed important signs of having learned some of the lessons of the 1994 response and of making a serious effort to achieve better results. However, important problems remained in such areas as mandate gaps and overlaps which were not resolved, and in the realm of linkages between development and humanitarian action. The UN also faces an increasing challenge in bringing human rights operations more fully into the overall response system. These issues continue to pose series obstacles for effective strategic coordination by the UN system.

A. Lessons from General and Framework Issues

- As with the 1994 international response to the Rwandan crisis, and despite this lesson being highlighted in *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience*, humanitarian action once again occupied the space left by partial and insufficient international policies on political and security issues in the region. Continued international failure to tackle the political and security dimensions of the crisis, combined with sustained use of humanitarian assistance to fill the resultant policy vacuum, undermined the credibility, reputation, and long-term viability of humanitarian action both in the region and more generally.

- Strategic humanitarian coordination is a function of interaction between elements of the wider UN systemññincluding member statesññand those political and military actors that are legally, morally and materially responsible for the welfare of affected populations, i.e., national governments, local governments, armies, and in some instances, rebel authorities. Local political and military authorities set the stage for strategic coordination through their willingness and capacity to provide a framework

of consent for humanitarian action, alternatively referred to as the provision or not of humanitarian space. In situations where local authorities do not provide full consent for humanitarian action, pressure by foreign governments will be a secondary determinant of the scope for humanitarian action, both in terms of access and effective strategic coordination.

- Within the space defined by a framework of consent, the UN's performance of a series of strategic humanitarian coordination functions is an important facilitator or constraint on its ability to minimize the human costs of war and conflict.

- Inter-agency competitiveness and distrust continue to pose obstacles to improved strategic coordination. Fund-raising and visibility pressures amplify competition between agencies, undermining effective collaboration and thus impeding strategic coordination. Underlying problems about the nature of authority within the UN system also continue to bedevil efforts to improve strategic coordination.

B. Lessons from Strategic Humanitarian Coordination Issues

- The distinctions drawn by the IASC between strategic and operational coordination are blurred, and overlap, especially at field level. Even when the functions of strategic and operational coordination are conceptually distinct, there are significant interactions between them such that successful performance in either realm depends in part on successful performance in the other. At field level, there is little distinction between operational and strategic coordination. Moreover, the structure of operational coordination arrangements can themselves be a strategic coordination construct.

- While the UN system has innovated in the creation of a variety of *mechanisms* for strategic coordination, it has not yet succeeded in establishing a coherent *system* for strategic coordination. The Emergency Response Coordinator, through the combined roles of chair of the IASC and under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs, links the various structured mechanisms for strategic coordination. The energy and activism of the ERC will be a critical determinant of whether the various mechanisms for coordination equate to a coherent system for coordination.

- In terms of the UN system's performance on the composite functions of strategic humanitarian coordination, some comments can be made about the various composite functions. Here we should recall the distinction made in the framework section of the paper between ërepresentational' and ëpolicy' elements of strategic coordination.

1. Representational Functions

330. The ërepresentational' functions of strategic coordination include: negotiating access to affected populations; advocating respect for humanitarian principles; and liaising with international military and political actors, including those of the UN. To use different language, these are the functions of establishing consent or securing humanitarian space. The general performance of the UN system on representational functions is reasonably high, with a variety of departments and agencies making substantive contributions through an adaptive series of mechanisms. In this realm in particular, structure and process must be kept analytically separate from results; in critical instances, access was denied and humanitarian principles grossly violated, but responsibility for this lies squarely with local political and military actors.

- Because it is necessary to establish and maintain consent, humanitarian access is not an unchanging or stable condition, but a fragile and politically contested reality, requiring sustained negotiation and advocacy.

- Regional humanitarian coordinators filled critical gaps in the structure for negotiating access and advocating respect for humanitarian principles, and by creating an operational coordination structure in eastern Zaire that supported strategic negotiations with both government and rebel authorities. However, it should be noted that establishing a regional coordination structure imposes political and management cost on country-based coordination structures, which must be taken into consideration in determining whether regional structures are warranted.

- Senior UN coordinators at country levels made a substantive contribution to fulfillment of the representational functions of strategic coordination. Diplomatic skills, personality, and informal networks were critical determinants of their capacity to make this contribution, reflecting the weak authority given to coordination figures within the UN system.

- An important determinant of the viability of strategic coordination is a degree of structural coherence between the basic structure of UN coordination arrangements and the structure of political and military authority in the country. Where one coherent governmental authority controls access throughout a country, this suggests that combining the Resident Coordinator position with the Humanitarian Coordinator function is an appropriate structure. Where access is divided between warring authorities, this suggests that an independent Humanitarian Coordinator distinct from the Resident Coordinator is needed.

- An energetic and consultative Emergency Response Coordinator can use his or her position and access to the Secretary-General to be an effective advocate for humanitarian affairs and to increase the profile and weight accorded to humanitarian policy and issues. During the period under study, the ERC engaged in advocacy with less energy than desirable.

- To be most effective, interaction between political and humanitarian representatives of the UN system in a given region should by systematic and consistent. A proliferation of political representatives of foreign governments, regional organizations, and the UN imposes substantial management and political costs on in-country systems, diminishes the effectiveness of those representatives, and can impede effective strategic coordination. For international military actors to make a substantive contribution to the humanitarian agenda, substantial liaison between them and the strategic humanitarian coordination structure must occur before the basic goals and parameters of military action are established.

2. Policy Functions of Strategic Humanitarian Coordination

331. The ëpolicy' functions of strategic coordination include: setting overall goals for the humanitarian programme; developing a strategic plan and allocating tasks and responsibilities within it; ensuring that resource allocation corresponds to priorities; and, monitoring and evaluating overall performance.

- With the exception of contingency planning, the UN system engages in minimal levels of system-wide strategic planning. Even on contingency planning, most planning is agency specific, not system-wide. Regional humanitarian coordinators did attempt to engage in system-wide contingency planning, but this exercise was less than wholly successful. In some instances, strategic analysis linked to policy proposals did occur but was lost to inaction at the ERC and IASC levels. This was true especially of early analysis of impending crisis.

- In other instances, strategic analysis linked to system-wide policy proposals did result in the adoption of a common humanitarian policy, e.g. the Burundi regroupement policy. The key factors in the success of this strategic policy exercise were: use of specific instruments of humanitarian law as a basis for policy; and direct links between the field and the IASC through the person of the regional humanitarian coordinator. System-wide policy making processes, if well managed, result in common humanitarian positions which strengthen the community beyond the issue at hand. Basing policy around specific instruments of humanitarian law increases the negotiating position of the humanitarian community and the likelihood of unity within that community.

- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has the potential to be a powerful, unified voice for humanitarian principles and policy, combining wide representation of the humanitarian community with links to development and political actors in the UN system and access to the Secretary General. To date, the IASC has only sporadically lived up to this potential.

- The authority accorded to RC/HC's for the performance of their strategic coordination function is weakest in the areas of strategic planning, setting of priorities, and allocation of tasks. The Consolidated Appeal Process in no way fulfills its theoretical function of driving a system-wide strategic planning process. Rather, the CAP is a non-process in need of bottom-up revision.

- The mechanisms for allocating tasks within established priorities are driven not by overall strategic coordination but by existing capacities and mandates. This is not necessarily a weakness; prior agreement about responsibilities and roles is an effective tool for coordination. However, the varying capacity of agencies to mobilize humanitarian resources, especially personnel, is a significant factor in determining which agencies will play what roles in emergency response. The UN system suffers from the lack of balance among operational agencies' response capacity. In particular, the limitations of the emergency response capacities of the technical agencies results in unbalanced responses, and increases the difficulty of building links between humanitarian action and development.

- Moreover, the UN system has not resolved ongoing issues concerning mandate overlaps between agencies, in such areas as returnees and child refugees; these pose obstacles to effective strategic coordination in the realm of allocation of tasks and responsibilities. In particular, the UN system has not resolved a major mandate gap concerning internally displaced persons; this poses a serious obstacle to effective strategic coordination, and results in confusion and unbalanced response. The cost to the system and to beneficiaries in particular of continuing gaps in mandates is high.

- Furthermore, the UN system continues to face difficulties in ensuring that humanitarian and development goals are balanced within the overall UN programme. In similar fashion, the UN system has yet to solveññand in some realms, has yet to tackleññthorny questions about the interaction between human rights law and the humanitarian imperative.

3. Information Management Functions

332. Absent from the IASC's list of functions relating to strategic humanitarian coordination are those of information management and analysis, which is relevant to both the representational and policy functions of strategic coordination (and to operational coordination). In this area there was significant, and successful innovation by the UN. However, there was also room for continued improvement.

- Information collection and dissemination was an area where the UN system made significant strides towards improved strategic coordination. The creation of a regional information collection and distribution network significantly eased pre-existing information flow difficulties.

- Available, clear, uninterrupted lines of communication between the field and the senior policy makers at the IASC level can contribute to the development of strong, clear, unified humanitarian policy positions.

- Information can be used as a strategic toolññit is a scarce resource which aids the process of negotiating access to affected populations and respect for humanitarian principles. There were important instances of coordination staff recognizing the strategic value of information, and wielding it to effect; however, such instances were less frequent than desirable, and there is room for improvement on this issue.

4. Other Lessons and Conclusions

- The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has important resources designed to fulfill or support coordination functions; these are underutilized by the UN system in general.

- However, DHA's capacity to fulfill or support strategic coordination functions is hampered by weak administrative capacity. DHA is forced to attempt to respond to fast-breaking field conditions with burdensome administrative procedures characteristic of a headquarters Secretariat. In particular, DHA's weak capacity to hire, deploy, and retain qualified personnel undermines the credibility of coordination functions. A high-level of staff turnover in coordination posts is antithetical to coordination functions.

- Informal networks between relief personnel can be an important facilitator of strategic coordination; informal networks between senior agency staff made a substantive contribution to both strategic and operational coordination functions. Informal mechanisms for consultation between operational agencies and senior coordinators were the most important locations where strategic and operational coordination came together.

- At all levels, personality and personnel skills are critical factors in the performance of strategic coordination functions. In particular, operational experience, diplomatic skill,

personnel management skills, good relations with agencies, and training specifically on coordination tasks are essential features contributing to the successful performance of the senior coordination functions at the country or the regional level.

333. With these conclusions and lessons in mind, the report now turns to recommendations and suggestions towards building on the positive lessons, overcoming continued obstacles, and achieving improved strategic humanitarian coordination.

Recommendations

334. The study team was concerned to emphasize from the outset a degree of discomfort with the standard process of having outside consultants draft recommendations that they are not required to implement. Elsewhere, it is standard practice to combine the responsibilities for identifying necessary changes and implementing them, whether this is done by internal management or external consultants charged with both responsibilities. It is the study team's belief that various elements of the UN should consider the lessons examined here, and seek consensus on what actions are required. The recommendations contained in this section are intended to serve as suggestions, not as a delimited list of possibilities. In addition, while many of the recommendations are addressed specifically to the Great Lakes Region, they hold wider relevance for UN emergency relief operations world-wide.

335. The lessons reviewed here are sobering. There are no ëquick fixes' to the problems facing the Great Lakes Region. Indeed, previous studies have put forth excellent recommendations that still deserve consideration. The study team's first recommendation is that all who work for the United Nations in the Great Lakes Region be required to read at least the Synthesis Report: The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons From the Rwanda Experience (i.e., volume one of the multi-donor evaluation of the 1994 Rwanda genocide). There can be no excuse for not studying such a well-documented history and working to incorporate the still-highly relevant lessons into the UN response to emergencies in central Africa and beyond. (The document is available in its entirety on ReliefWeb.) Additionally, UN staff should have access to training programmes which draw on the lessons identified in the multi-donor study and similar lessons learned exercises.

In addition, the IASC and the ERC should address formally the major lessons outlined in this study and answer four questions:

A) How can a framework for consent be assured in the Great Lakes Region?

B) How can the UN system engage in humanitarian operations in a principled fashion?

C) How can the issues of competition and distrust among UN agencies be addressed so that effective, system-wide responses to complex emergencies become standard for humanitarian operations?

D) How can the IASC strengthen existing coordination mechanisms, and create a system capable of effective strategic humanitarian coordination?

A. Assuring a Framework for Consent in the Great Lakes Region

336. The UN alone does not define the framework for consent for humanitarian operations in the Great Lakes Region. Governments and rebel authorities have primary control over this all-important function. Donors and other foreign governments hold secondary responsibility. Humanitarians run a weak and distant third. The IASC, then, must work to assure a framework of consent with these realities in mind. How can the authorities in the region be engaged? What can the UN do about donors who simultaneously pursue both humanitarian

and non-humanitarian agendas? What should the UN do when the framework for consent collapses?

Recommendation 1. The IASC should engage authorities from the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania to obtain a commitment to providing a framework for consent for humanitarian action in the Great Lakes Region. This should be done in collaboration and consultation with ECHA.

Suggestions:

- Through the good offices of Ambassador Dinka (and building on a similar UNHCR initiative currently in process), the UN should initiate a process of dialogue leading to a high level conference of relevant authorities of governments in the region, donors and UN agencies to reach open commitment to a framework for consent, including consensus on actions to be taken when actors (governments, donors, UN agencies) violate their commitment to the framework.

- Through the regional humanitarian office and in close co-operation with authorities in the region, routinely monitor the framework and pursue consistent action when the framework is violated.

- Given that a framework for consent is defined by the intersection of political, humanitarian, military, economic and social interests of authorities in the region, UN offices should routinely engage in multi-disciplinary analysis of these aspects of conflict. Authorities in the region and other foreign governments should respect the need for the UN to conduct this analysis insofar as it relates to defining, delimiting and protecting humanitarian space.

Recommendation 2. The IASC is in a weak position to influence the motivations of donor governments who pursue inherently conflicting policy goals (humanitarian, military, economic, political); however, foreign governments should re-evaluate the consequences of encouraging/tolerating a culture of violence in the Great Lakes Region.

Suggestions:

- All involved in Great Lakes Region crises must learn the central lessons of 1994, i.e., that humanitarian action should not serve to fill a political void, and of (1994-1997) that when humanitarian responses operate in such a void, humanitarian aid will be put to political purposes, undermining the reputation of humanitarianism and potentially fueling cycles of conflict.

- Strengthen the advocacy function of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs through aggressive leadership by the new ERC.

- Recognize the need for the ERC to engage the media in order to educate the general public and counter campaigns of misinformation.

- Lobby actively among donor nations to strengthen their commitment to humanitarian action.

Recommendation 3. The IASC should define the process whereby, when a framework for consent has collapsed, suspension of activities and non-intervention are

systematically evaluated and employed as rational responses to some aspects of complex emergencies. This process must be supported by information flows that are high in integrity and low in ëagency spin'.

Recommendation 4. ECHA should define the process whereby, when a framework for consent has collapsed, the potential role of the UN Security Council in creating humanitarian space through Chapter VI or if necessary Chapter VII operations is considered.

Recommendation 5. The IASC should: formulate policies for system-wide suspension of humanitarian activities that ensure the protection of humanitarians (in both the UN agencies and partner NGOs) and to the extent possible, humanitarian assets, when conditions of operations become untenable; institute routine analysis in emergencies to determine the role of humanitarian assistance in the survival of populations, including not only immediate survival but longer-term considerations; and, develop systems for determining what conditions of operations are untenable or where there is an unacceptable risk of doing more harm than good with the provision of humanitarian assistance;

Suggestions:

- Formulate an IASC policy on how and when UN agencies will suspend humanitarian activities, including the necessary procedures for communication among UN agencies and also partner NGOs, non-partner relief organizations, host authorities and donors that would be affected by the suspension of humanitarian activities. Include in the policy formulation consideration for the process through which humanitarian activities will be resumed. Closely review the experience of Operation Lifeline Sudan/southern sector in formulating this policy, and build on NGO experience in Liberia with codes of conduct based around ëdo no harm' principles.

- Transmit this policy clearly and unanimously to all UN agencies, NGOs and governments in the region.

- Formulate an IASC policy on what necessary conditions of operations are to be considered acceptable and what conditions are untenable.

- Transmit this policy clearly and unanimously to all UN agencies working in the region, in effect giving permission to UN staff to consider the possibilities of suspension of activities or non-intervention (an option most feel they currently do not have except where limited by extreme insecurity).

- Use conflict impact assessment tools to plan humanitarian activities, monitor their ongoing impact, and assess their contribution to sustainable processes of peacebuilding.

- Mandate CETI and the DMTP to train UN staff in evaluating coping mechanisms employed by populations affected by complex emergencies in order to generate a better understanding of the often peripheral role played by humanitarian assistance in human survival in conflict;

- Charge monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officers in UN agencies and personnel in the offices of humanitarian coordinators with the task of analyzing the intended and unintended consequences of assistance through the combined efforts of UN agencies, and basing personnel evaluations on this task;

- Charge logistics personnel with the task of incorporating information generated by M&E systems into operational decisions, and basing personnel evaluations of logistics officers on this task;

- Require training of the majority of UN staff working in the Great Lakes Region in how aid does harm by developing a special programme through the DMTP or CETI, or by contracting individuals and institutions already engaged in this work;

- Make a deliberate effort to attract and place individuals with adequate skills and experience to evaluate the political, military, social and humanitarian context of the crisis in the Great Lakes Region, placing them as key advisors to UN staff responsible for key operational and strategic humanitarian coordination decisions in the region.

B. Engaging in a Principled Fashion

337. The abuse of humanitarian space and resources is endemic in the Great Lakes Region. Protection of vulnerable populations has been effectively abandoned, refugee law has been routinely violated, and humanitarian principles have been made a mockery. The use of humanitarian assistance for political, military and economic purposes is not limited to the governments, armies and militias of the Great Lakes Region; political and military actors within the donor and UN communities have likewise abused the role of humanitarian assistance. Those responsible for advocacy of humanitarian principles, and the establishment and maintenance of humanitarian space have not fulfilled their obligations. Considerable dedication is required now to begin the long process of rehabilitating the sullied nature of humanitarian efforts in the Great Lake Region. The ERC, with the support and co-operation of the IASC, should shoulder much of this responsibility.

Recommendation 6. The IASC should design and implement ground rules for principled engagement specifically for the Great Lakes Region.

Suggestions:

- Recognizing that the framework of humanitarian principles used in Operation Lifeline Sudan/southern sector is flawed and insufficient but nevertheless represents the UN's best effort to date, the IASC should consider a similar system of principled engagement for the UN agencies and their partner organizations in the Great Lakes Region. Such a framework would include a regionally-specific definition of humanitarian space, broadly agreed upon interpretations of fundamental humanitarian principles, mechanisms for contextual analysis of humanitarian interventions in the region, a renewed commitment to protection responsibilities, etc. As outlined above, suspend interventions or refrain from providing assistance where such a framework can not be honoured.

- Actively include the participation and input of key authorities in governments and relevant rebel movements in the region in the formation and implementation of a framework for engagement.

- Build on existing training modules within CETI and ensure that staff have access to training modules on humanitarian principles, and that senior staff as relevant have access to training modules on how to negotiate humanitarian space and respect for humanitarian principles.

Recommendation 7. The new Emergency Relief Coordinator should increase co-operative liaison efforts between the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs and other elements of the UN Secretariat, particularly DPA, DPKO, and the UN Development Group, so that humanitarian policies and advocacy efforts are respected.

Suggestions:

- Through an expanded "DPA/DPKO/DHA(OCHA) Framework", further educate staff on fundamental humanitarian principles, emphasizing the importance of respect for the humanitarian obligation of neutrality, an obligation that precludes the use of humanitarian efforts for political purposes.

- Train the staff of the OCHA in the strategic handling and use of sensitive information.

- Convene a meeting of the OCHA, DPA and DPKO to review the obligations of the liaison functions among offices and departments in the Secretariat, stressing that liaison responsibilities involve more than the simple exchange of information (although even this basic function needs to be strengthened) but also extend to co-operative and strategic working arrangements.

Recommendation 8. The IASC should work to address the question of how human rights and humanitarian organizations can more effectively work together.

Suggestions:

- Build on the recent inclusion of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights into the IASC and ECHA.

- Through CETI and DMTP and with the technical support of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, routinely train UN humanitarian staff in human rights law.

- Review the relationship between human rights law and UN agency protection mandates.

Recommendation 9. The entire UN system working in the Great Lakes Region should recognize that unacceptable human tragedies continue in the Great Lakes Region and take measures to ensure that the primary humanitarian obligation to save lives and reduce human suffering remains a focus of the UN system in the region, while working through such fora as the Secretary General's Task Force on Relief, Reconstruction and Development to address underlying problems and long-term solutions.

Suggestions:

- Work to counter the ënormalization of violence' among relief workers, the international community and the general publics by redoubling efforts to report on emergencies in the Great Lakes Region. Focus reporting efforts on the continued loss

of life, displacement and disruption, recognizing that it requires constant vigilance to maintain interest in such a complicated and distressing complex emergency.

- Review the appropriateness of the application of the ërelief to development continuum' in the region, given the deepening of civil conflict in Rwanda, the continuing conflict in Burundi, and renewed conflict in the DRC. Recognize the need for ongoing humanitarian operations in Rwanda, and the vital importance of ensuring that humanitarian and developmental activities in the country are complimentary, reinforcing common objectives.

- The IASC should review the balance of UN priorities in the region (as reflected in each agency's operations and the CAP) to ensure that humanitarian assistance, protection of human rights and the execution of justice are adequately represented and supported in the overall UN programme in the Region, recognizing that development, human rights, and humanitarian activities are mutually compatible and reinforcing.

Recommendation 10. OCHA, in conjunction with UN offices in Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and elsewhere in east and central Africa, should continue to monitor the affects of regional sanctions on vulnerable populations in Burundi.

Suggestions:

- Through the office of the regional advisor, OCHA and IASC, redouble efforts to bring attention and assistance to those who suffer in Burundi's silent crisis.

- At his discretion, appoint a high-level, well-respected and qualified individual to serve as Senior Humanitarian Deputy to Ambassador Dinka to enhance the office's capacity to address humanitarian concerns in the region.

C. Reducing Competition, Building Interagency Trust

338. UN agencies were not designed to work in close collaboration with one another. The wording of each agency's mandate specifically defines responsibility for what once were nearly unrelated issues: refugees, development, children, etc. The end of the Cold War has brought new and still unresolved challenges to the UN system. The crisis of competition and distrust are but symptoms of the UN agencies discomfort with having to work in such close concert with one another. The hard realities of complex emergencies demand that the UN reform itself to conform to these challenges and become what it never has been: a system of agencies that cooperate in pursuit of common goals. Competition must be reduced; trust must be built; shared visions must be forged.

Recommendation 11. The IASC should develop mechanisms to increase system-wide accountability and ownership of humanitarian operations across UN agencies.

Suggestions:

- Convene a conference of reconciliation, hosted by the Secretary General, among UN heads of agencies to address the crisis of interagency competition and distrust.

- Before the end of the Secretary General's term and as part of his efforts to establish a "single UN house", abolish the use of UN agency logos in countries affected by complex emergencies. Require that only the common UN symbol be used in order to

foster a sense of system-wide accountability and visibility. In the interim, obtain a commitment by the UN members of the IASC to reduce the use of their logos in the Great Lakes Region.

- Require that all agencies appeal for emergency funds only through flash appeals or a strengthened CAP. By IASC consensus and commitment, empower the Emergency Relief Coordinator or country humanitarian Coordinators, as appropriate, with a line-item veto for parts of agency appeals that do not conform to system-wide, agreed upon strategic objectives.

- Ensure that all UN agencies contribute to the costs of coordination efforts, exploring options such as increasing each agency's overhead associated with contributions against the CAP by less than one-half of one percent, or as determined by the IASC. Agencies, in turn, should transfer these funds to the CERF, the primary mechanism through which coordination arrangements for any part of the UN system should be funded in advance of contributions against flash appeals or the CAP.

- Through the OCHA, seek the input of key UN staff in Burundi, Tanzania, Rwanda and DRC and key authorities in governments in the region on the design and staffing of humanitarian interagency regional coordination mechanisms.

D. Building a system for Strategic Humanitarian Coordination

Recommendation 12. The IASC and ERC should seek to increase system-wide ownership of and participation in coordination.

Suggestions:

- The IASC should effectively communicate to the field coordination concepts such as strategic and operational coordination, including the distinction between strategic and operational coordination.

- The Working Group of the IASC should consider the question of coordination in detail, and develop a system-wide "terms of reference" for coordination, specifying to the degree possible the responsibilities of all elements of the system, not just those of Coordinators, e.g., UN agency participation in coordination sessions, provision of DHA resources in support of Coordinators (regardless of host agency), etc.

Recommendation 13. The IASC should recognize that coordination structures must take into account the nature of counterpart authority.

Suggestions:

- The IASC routinely should ask OCHA to conduct analyses of the regional and international context in terms of the framework of consent for humanitarian operations, and include such material in determinations of appropriate coordination structures.

- In particular, the IASC should consider the nature of counterpart authority, willingness to provide consent, ability to support humanitarian operations, and degree of territorial control.

- When in-country UN offices must negotiate with two or more separate political / military authorities to establish consent, the IASC should consider the appointment of an independent humanitarian coordinator.

Recommendation 14. The IASC should seek to strengthen existing mechanisms for strategic coordination.

Suggestions:

- Recognize the key role played by RC/HCs in coordination, and where they are used, bolster the system-wide degree of support for their function.
- In particular, UNDP and the OCHA should be tasked to work together to further develop the coordination function as deployed in a RC/HC setting, including, through OCHA personnel being seconded to RC/HC staff.
- Recognize the need for personnel identified as potential RC/HCs to receive training on the professional skills involved in successful fulfillment of this function, in particular with regards to negotiating humanitarian space, management, and personnel skills.
- Recognize the importance of RC/HCs having operational experience in previous emergencies, and work with UNDP to ensure that a suitable portion of RC posts are filled by personnel with such experience, particularly for posts dealing with ongoing emergencies.
- Recognize the necessity of working with smaller groupings of agencies than the entire IASC to ensure quick, effective coordination during rapid-onset phases of emergencies; if necessary, appoint a "field steering committee" of the IASC.
- Recognize the important contribution made by IRIN and continue to support efforts and regional information collection, analysis, and distribution.
- Recognize the need for improved capacities for strategic analysis with strong links to operational and strategic decisions, and work through the DPA/DPKO/OCHA framework to ensure that the IASC has sufficient access to political and strategic analysis of the political and military context of humanitarian issues.
- Work with existing training capacities such as CETI and the Turin Staff College, and with agencies and Secretariat departments, to place increased emphasis on inter-agency training, recognizing that such training will contribute to improved multi-dimensional planning and the creation of cross-agency networks.
- Work to enhance the substantive contribution of the CAP process to strategic planning of overall UN response.

Recommendation 15. The IASC should task OCHA to support coordination functions irrespective of where they occur, by reliably and consistently providing high quality coordination support staff to coordinators, or in some instances directly fulfilling coordination roles.

Suggestions:

- The ERC should ensure that OCHA makes a significant investment in improving its internal management, administration, and especially personnel policies.
- Build up especially the personnel management capacity of OCHA, critically by solving the problem of the reliance of OCHA on voluntary contributions.
- The ERC should seek to ensure that OCHA is a source of consistency and continuity in coordination arrangements that may vary in response to changes in the political and military context. If coordination arrangements change (e.g. from an independent humanitarian coordinator to a RC/HC office), coordination staff should remain constant, moving from one office to the next.
- OCHA should improve its roster of experienced personnel, within OCHA, among other agencies, and outside the UN system, and strengthen systems for ensuring some such personnel are available on short notice for extended coordination assignments.
- Where NGO personnel are seconded into UN coordination positions, the UN should absorb part of the financial cost to NGOs.
- With renewed vigor, rotate other agency staff into OCHA, and vice versa, to develop the combination of agency and coordination experience, and start to break down departmental rivalries.

Recommendation 16. The IASC should energetically seek to resolve issues of mandate overlaps and gaps, in particular with respect to internally displaced persons.

Recommendation 17. The IASC should seek to improve the balance of UN responses to complex emergencies.

Suggestions:

- Work in particular with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and NGOs to address questions pertaining to links between humanitarian activity and human rights monitoring and reporting.
- Work in particular through ECHA and with the UN Development Group to build both understanding and concrete programmes concerning the common objectives pursued by humanitarian, human rights, and development activities.
- Technical agencies should second staff to operational agencies during emergencies. This would reduce the need for all agency participation in coordination sessions while simultaneously developing a cadre of trained staff within the technical agencies.

339. To reiterate, the study team strongly feels that the IASC must review the lessons outlined in this report and consider the recommendations offered here as possible solutions. Whatever the route, it is critical that the IASC address the four challenges the lessons pose the UN system: how to assure a framework for consent, how to engage in a principled fashion, how to reduce interagency competition, and how to strengthen existing mechanisms and systems for strategic coordination.

340. The crisis in the Great Lakes Region posed enormous challenges for those tasked to respond to the massive, urgent humanitarian needs of suffering populations. Some of the

problems faced were unique to the region; many are problems faced by the UN system across the globe. These problems are formidable; the solutions require a high level of interagency collaboration and commitment to humanitarian principles. However, learning these lessons, and translating lessons learned into improved structures, procedures, and systems for strategic coordination are an essential tasks if the UN is to lessen the humanitarian costs of complex political crises with tremendously high human costs.

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