

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE****SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS**

New York, 13 March 2020

**Introduction**

Mr. Mark Lowcock, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Chair of the IASC, called for an IASC Principals meeting to discuss the latest COVID-19 pandemic developments; , jointly consider an aggregated global humanitarian response plan for the pandemic; agree on the required IASC guidance to respond to the outbreak; and finally to discuss challenges impacting staff across IASC partners, especially given the implementation of travel restrictions.

The ERC noted that the World Health Organization (WHO) was at the forefront of the response and commended its efforts, including on preparedness. He noted space for other IASC members to support further and address needs outside the scope of WHO efforts.

He outlined thinking on a potential global humanitarian response plan, which would be an opportunity to ensure coherence across the system and donors around resource mobilization. A consolidated appeal would aggregate and support, not replace, WHO's Strategic Response Plan appeal, as well as other individual agency appeals. The plan would also take into account critical humanitarian gaps not yet captured in any existing appeal (including on key areas such as water and sanitation, hygiene, etc.). The ERC envisioned an appeal covering initially a 6-9 months period, which would be regularly updated to reflect the evolving situation. He also suggested that such a consolidated global humanitarian appeal for COVID-19 would not, for now, include spill-over food security issues or the economic impact of the pandemic, as it would overwhelm the appeal.

**2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) - World Health Organization**

Dr. Mike Ryan, Executive Director, Health Emergencies Programme of the WHO, provided a brief update on the 2019-nCoV, noting that the fatality rate was at about 10 to 20 per cent in key vulnerable groups (the elderly and immune-compromised). He noted concerns regarding the risk of fragile countries with weak health systems and vulnerable populations, particularly in camps or camp-like settings, being affected by the pandemic, and stressed the need to be prepared. He also underscored the need for an integrated response beyond public health issues, including in terms of coordination, financing, supply chains, transport and logistics, among others.

UNICEF inquired about the rate at which the pandemic was affecting children; whether those that recover from the virus have the risk of being infected again or transmit the virus, particularly staff to be able to determine whether they can take up emergency response duties; and any challenges on supply chains. UNICEF underscored the need for the Global Appeal to include schools and indicated that UNICEF's communication capacities at the country levels are available to support the system as deemed necessary. WHO indicated that the infection rate

amongst children is mild and it was also encouraging to see that they are not key transmitters of the virus. Also, unlike the flu, no outbreak at schools have occurred yet.

In referencing the interim guidance on camp and camp-like settings, which had been shared with the Principals, IFRC noted that this was developed with WHO, UNHCR and IOM and they welcomed its accelerated adoption as IASC guidance. This was also supported by UNHCR, IOM, WHO, and SCHR.

InterAction expressed that the NGO community was sharing various protocols amongst themselves particularly around duty of care and preparedness, and that the field infrastructure was the backbone to this. The concern from health-focused NGOs was on maintaining their supply chains and access to materials. Challenges related to this were hindering their ability to continue operations. InterAction added that a number of the large NGOs had moved to remote work functions. SCHR added that there should be consideration of the need to use existing mechanisms in any response involving COVID-19 so that humanitarians, NGOs, donors, affected governments, among other key stakeholders are familiar with and can access.

UNHCR expressed strong support to come together at the global level, including on preparedness. She noted that there is no evidence of overlaps between the top 25 refugee crises and the pandemic; however, this can change any moment and needs to be monitored closely. IOM noted the need to raise awareness of the impact on migrants, and ensure that migrants are better aware of the risks. UNDP noted that regarding the pandemic, coordination is very much welcome but that it was important to synchronize humanitarian and development system capacities at the country level. DCO added that it welcomed coordinated appeals; however, it was important to ensure clarity regarding the populations of concern being targeted by the proposed global humanitarian response plan, and to ensure coherence at the country level.

ICVA noted the need for collective engagement with donors on accountability, the need to safeguard humanitarian funding, and the importance of engaging with NGO fora at country level. FAO underscored the need to assess the likely impact on livelihoods. WFP expressed support for a global humanitarian appeal which integrated the WHO appeal; this would also allow WFP to include the various common services at its disposal. However, they suggested that for some partners a shorter appeal timeframe might be valuable. OHCHR added that it was important to ensure that affected populations were part of consultations and mitigation measures. It also expressed concerns with regards to transit centers for migrants and refugees as well as prisons, and offered to share draft guidance on the latter issue.

In conclusion, the ERC concluded with a summary of the key action points as follows:

- Move forward with the production of a aggregated global humanitarian response plan for COVID-19. The appeal will be updated as needed to reflect the evolving situation. OCHA will be in touch with WHO and other partners.
- Rebrand existing relevant guidance for COVID-19, such as the near finalized guidance on camps and camp-like settings, as IASC products (The IASC secretariat will follow-up with UNICEF on any guidance developed for schools as well as OHCHR for guidance developed for prisons for accelerated endorsement).
- Regular EDG meetings on COVID-19 to continue, with a follow-up Principals meeting in the coming days.
- It will be important to sustain funding for Humanitarian Response Plans while global attention is diverted by COVID-19. We cannot afford to exacerbate vulnerability by

leaving needs unattended. Therefore the ERC asked participants to think carefully about programme criticality and how they could ensure they remain able to stay and deliver across the system.

- Donor attention will be increasingly diverted; as a humanitarian system we will need to think carefully about donor engagement, pledging events, etc.

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### **List of participants:**

#### IASC Members:

1. Mr. Mark Lowcock, Emergency Relief Coordinator and Chair of the IASC
2. Dr. Mike Ryan Executive Director, Health Emergencies Programme, WHO
3. Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF
4. Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, UNDP
5. Mr. António Vitorino, Director General, IOM
6. Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-HABITAT
7. Mr. Sam Worthington, CEO, InterAction
8. Mr. Xavier Castellanos, Under-Secretary-General for Programmes and Operations, IFRC
9. Ms. Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner, UNHCR
10. Mr. Manoj Juneja, Assistant Executive Director RM and CFO, WFP
11. Mr. Antoine Grand, Deputy Director of Operations, ICRC
12. Ms. Laurent Thomas, Deputy Director-General, FAO
13. Mr. Ignacio Packer, Executive Director, ICVA
14. Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Assistant Secretary-General a.i, OCHA
15. Dr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Executive Director (Management) a.i., UNFPA
16. Ms. Jennifer Poidatz, Vice President, Humanitarian Response, Catholic Relief Services
17. Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner, OHCHR
18. Ms. Maria Immonen, Vice-Chair of SCHR and Director, Lutheran World Federation
19. Mr. Gareth Price-Jones, Executive Secretary, SCHR
20. Mr. Roger Yates, Regional Director, Plan International, ICVA Chair
21. Ms. Martina Caterina, Senior Legal Advisor to the SR on HR of IDPs

#### Guests:

Mr. Robert Piper, Assistant Secretary-General, DCO  
Mr. Bill Miller, Director, UNDSS

#### IASC secretariat:

27. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head of IASC secretariat