

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE DEPUTIES FORUM

SUMMARY RECORD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Geneva, 3 February 2020
ERCC, Palais des Nations, Geneva / S-2725 UN Secretariat Building, New York

Session 1: Update from the IASC's Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG)

Mr. Geir Olav Lisle, Deputy Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council and co-Chair of the IASC's Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG), briefed the Deputies on the developments and achievements of the OPAG and its five Results Groups since their establishment in May 2019, as well as on the priorities for 2020.

Mr. Lisle recalled the initial guidance provided to the Results Groups, including to: (a) be concrete in their deliverables; (b) aim to focus on activities that will have the most impact on field effectiveness and/or will support IASC Principals' vision, decisions and/or advocacy efforts (i.e. activities that will have the best return on investment); and (c) be inclusive and ensure systematic engagement with key non-IASC members. He stressed the importance of focusing on a few critical priorities and capitalizing on the expertise within and beyond the IASC membership to deliver results. He also noted it had been an intense period attempting to strike a balance between delivering concrete and time-bound results and working more collaboratively with other IASC structures, while new members and Chairs of the different groups adjust to their roles and working methods.

Mr. Lisle noted recent achievements by the OPAG and the five Results Groups, including:

- a. The finalization and endorsement of the first-ever *Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*.
- b. The critical work being conducted on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)/Sexual Harassment and Abuse (SHA), including updating of the Six Core Principles Relating to PSEA, the finalization of the terms of references of PSEA/SHA Coordinators and training guidelines on PSEA/SHA led by IOM.
- c. Strengthened linkages between the OPAG and the Emergency Directors Group (EDG), with the OPAG taking on a number of normative issues that the EDG requested the OPAG's support with, namely: mainstreaming protection, addressing bureaucratic impediments faced by NGOs, and addressing the impact of counter-terrorism legislation in humanitarian action.
- d. Provision of analysis on financing instruments supporting humanitarian interventions with development co-benefits.

Mr. Lisle drew the Deputies' attention to the Results Groups' 2020 priority areas of work, which had been shared as a background document, and suggested pursuing a better balance between UN and NGO representation in terms of participation and contribution in the OPAG and the Results Groups.

In the discussion that ensued, Deputies expressed their strong support for the work of the OPAG and its Results Groups during a critical period. They called for further strengthening of the linkages between the OPAG, its Results Groups and the EDG. Furthermore, they suggested greater investment in applying normative guidance at operational levels and translating guidance into action, as well as a continued focus on a few key deliverables of immediate relevance to humanitarian operations. The Deputies noted the collective responsibility to share IASC outputs with field-based partners and to facilitate the operationalization of the normative work. Some Deputies also called for further delineating between the work and roles of the OPAG, the Deputies and the IASC, and suggested strengthening transparency in the OPAG's working methods, in particular around decision making

The Deputies representing non-governmental organizations urged UN partners for greater solidarity around the issue of mitigating the negative impact of counter-terrorism legislation on humanitarian operations and the imposition of bureaucratic impediments. They further noted that frontline NGOs were disproportionately affected, and only collective action could effectively address this issue.

The IASC Deputies Forum recommended:

- The OPAG to ensure focus on a few critical deliverables between now and end of year (with the conclusion of the 2019-2020 biennium strategic plan).
- The IASC to undertake efforts to strengthen linkages between the OPAG, the EDG, and other key IASC structures.

Session 2: Regional humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin *(with the participation of RC/HCs from Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad)*

Ms. Ursula Mueller, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and Chair of the Deputies Forum, opened the session by providing a brief overview of the crisis in the Lake Chad region, where more than 9.5 million people need humanitarian assistance and protection. Ms. Mueller elaborated on the impact of violence and insecurity on civilians, including for women and girls who face heightened protection risks. Humanitarian space is shrinking and there are increasing attacks against humanitarian workers, which are forcing the suspension of aid operations and the withdrawal of actors in some key locations. Given the regional dimension of the crisis, the Chair underlined the need for strong collaboration across the IASC, and among development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors.

Mr. Edward Kallon, RC/HC in Nigeria, highlighted the extremely challenging and complex humanitarian operational environment in Nigeria. He noted in particular the depth of the protection crisis, and the challenges faced by humanitarian actors to uphold humanitarian principles amidst shrinking humanitarian space in a counter-terrorism environment. He noted the importance of rebuilding livelihoods and conflict mitigation, and underlined the need to focus on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to ensure integrated joint programming, which can help tackle the many challenges faced in Nigeria as well as to contribute towards addressing their root causes. This requires dedicated investment. The RC/HC noted the importance of deploying personnel with the required skillsets to work in this complex environment. Mr. Kallon also called upon the Deputies to advocate for increased and flexible funding for protection programming, and noted the effectiveness of the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF) to enable a timely humanitarian response although funding for the NHF is on the decline.

Ms. Allegra Baiocchi, RC/HC in Cameroon outlined the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Cameroon, noting that it is one of the worst funded humanitarian crises in Africa. She agreed with Mr. Kallon on the need for regional solutions in the Lake Chad and the broader Sahel, and also emphasized the importance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to tackle the many challenges faced in Cameroon. Ms. Baiocchi presented several recommendations to the IASC Deputies, including: exploring ways to present humanitarian needs at the regional level; increasing awareness-raising; and ensuring that regional strategies are bottom-up rather than top-down. She also requested the Deputies' support in establishing stronger regional linkages with international financial institutions, including the World Bank. Finally, the RC/HC appealed to the Deputies to scale up high-level advocacy in support of Cameroon, including through high-level missions as well as arranging high-level events on both the humanitarian situation and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Ms. Violet Kakyomya, RC/HC in Chad, noted the regional repercussions of the worsening crisis in Chad. In particular, she highlighted the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries and the increase in Boko Haram attacks. Ms. Kakyomya identified persistent and significant access challenges in some of the areas where there is greatest humanitarian need, and highlighted that the humanitarian response in Chad was significantly underfunded, despite a recent CERF allocation. On a positive note, the RC/HC welcomed the recent constructive dialogue with authorities to overcome access challenges. Ms. Kakyomya called upon the Deputies to support raising the regional profile of the Lake Chad Basin crisis, and strengthening UNDSS's capacity and presence in Chad, including at sub-national levels, which is critical for the continuation of operations in areas experiencing active conflict.

The Deputies thanked the RC/HCs for their interventions and their continued excellent leadership in very challenging environments. In the ensuing discussion, the Deputies discussed the importance of humanitarian actors engaging effectively with governments and investing in capacity building. They also called for strengthening government-led coordination and investing in undertaking joint analysis, while also ensuring and upholding a principled humanitarian approach. Some Deputies raised the need to strengthen collaboration with the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration (JSC).

Deputies representing non-governmental organizations raised the continued negative side effects of counter-terrorism legislation and bureaucratic impediments imposed on humanitarian operations, appealing for a collective effort to mitigate these effects. The Deputies emphasized the need for collective action to maintain and preserve humanitarian principles and a reinforced focus on the most vulnerable, and agreed on the need for greater dedicated flexible funding, including for humanitarian-development-peace interventions. They further noted the need to strengthen existing coordination mechanisms instead of creating new ones, and reinforce advocacy on human rights violations and abuses in the region.

The IASC Deputies Forum recommended the Deputies to:

- Support efforts to ensure that qualified staff with the right profile are deployed to Nigeria.
- Support efforts to strengthen, prioritize and resource protection efforts on the ground, particularly in Nigeria and Cameroon.
- Make an effort to raise the profile and mobilize resources for the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, including through high-level missions to the region, a possible high-level event and through bilateral advocacy with key donors.

Session 3: AOB

Locusts:

Mr. Thomas, Deputy Director-General, FAO, briefed on the locust infestation affecting Eastern Africa and beyond, and its ensuing impact on food security. He noted that urgent funding is needed and that resource mobilization efforts are underway to address the infestation.

Deputies Forum:

Several Deputies suggested to further explore the purpose of the Deputies Forum, noting the potential to strengthen its role to support humanitarian action. The Deputies exchanged ideas on areas in which they can play a more proactive role including in terms of identifying sensitive issues that require follow-up and resolution (such as specific PSEA/SHA issues, normative/thematic issues, strengthening linkages between the operational and policy arms of the IASC, etc.).

The IASC Deputies Forum recommended:

- The IASC secretariat to develop an options paper on strengthening the Deputies Forum's role for consideration by the Deputies.
