

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE**IASC PRINCIPALS AD HOC MEETING ON THE COVID-19 RESPONSE****SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS
Virtual, 4 September 2020****Introduction**

Mr. Mark Lowcock, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Chair of the IASC, convened an ad hoc IASC Principals meeting to discuss the COVID-19 response, including an update on the health situation, logistics, and protection of IDPs.

The ERC highlighted the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic especially in countries covered by the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) and noted that the situation is likely to deteriorate further in many of the countries. The ERC noted the continued deterioration of key health services including immunization, malaria prevention and control, HIV/ AIDS, and basic services for pregnant women and newborn children, as a consequence of COVID. Available research shows that a combination of these factors, and increased conflict, were leading to increased fragility. He informed members that he would update the Security Council as part of the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution 2532 on COVID, which calls on the UN Secretary General to provide updates to the Security Council on the UN efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic in countries in situations of armed conflict or affected by humanitarian crises. The ERC will provide updates on food insecurity and livelihoods. He noted that food insecurity has been exacerbated in a significant number of countries due to COVID-19 and conflict. The ERC encouraged IASC Principals to share any points for the Security Council briefing.

The ERC updated members on the current funding level of the GHRP, which stands at US \$2.4 billion, a coverage of 23 per cent of the total \$10.3 billion GHRP request. He noted, there is need for enhanced advocacy efforts and continued reporting to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) for increased funding. He stressed the interest of donors in gender-based violence and asked members to show how resources were being used to prevent and address gender-based violence.

The ERC noted that preparations for the 2021 Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) was underway with field offices already in preparations. He encouraged members to build a robust picture of the needs and requirements and contribute to the preparation of the GHO. The ERC recognized challenges related to data collection due to the impact of COVID-19 and expressed his appreciation of members' efforts to present a credible GHO, which will facilitate an effective fundraising campaign.

In terms of funding to NGOs, the ERC noted that the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) had allocated approximately \$152 million as of August 2020 to international and national NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies and other partners. He added that CERF and CBPFs would continue to make disbursements to NGOs and encouraged NGOs to report on any funding issues they were facing.

The ERC also underlined that several field operations were reporting increased restrictions on INGOs to obtain visas as well as other bureaucratic impediments. He informed members that the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) was looking into this issue further, with information being collected to better understand the nature and scale of the problem.

Finally, the ERC noted that WFP COVID flight support services have been scaled down or discontinued in some locations due to the resumption of commercial flights. He expressed his appreciation of WFP's work on providing logistics services to the humanitarian community including transporting thousands of humanitarian workers and huge volumes of cargo thus facilitating everyone's work.

Health Update

Dr. Jaouad Mahjour, WHO Assistant Director-General for Emergency Preparedness and International Health Regulations, updated the Principals on developments in the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO noted that the overall number of confirmed cases continued to rise with a slight change in the transmission trend. There is a general slowing in the transmission rate, with exception of countries that decided to open their economies. As of 4 September, more than 25 million cases of COVID-19 including 844,312 deaths have been recorded. On average, over 260,000 cases were reported daily over the last two weeks. Recorded deaths had plateaued around just over 5,000 new deaths recorded each day and WHO observed an overall reduction of people being hospitalized in intensive care, with some exceptions such as in Ethiopia, OPT, Iraq and Lebanon, all countries experiencing acute emergency situations. The situation in GHRP countries remained fragile with many of these countries suffering from weak health infrastructure and services on top of the pandemic. WHO also observed that more young people appeared to be getting sick with COVID-19, which in part explains the reductions in need for intensive care. This is particularly true in Europe and America.

WHO noted that, increasingly, people are showing signs of fatigue and countries are eager to reopen their economies and societies. However, this risks reversing the current trend in the reduction of transmissions. WHO echoed the ERC's concern on the disruption of basic health services such as immunization in countries facing humanitarian crisis. WHO noted its recent survey of 103 countries which found that three-quarters had reported partial or complete disruption of immunization services, while two-thirds reported a partial or complete disruption of non-communicable diseases and chronic diseases services, and over half reported disruptions of malaria treatment campaigns, and cancer

diagnosis and treatment. The overall situation appears worse in countries facing humanitarian crises and/or in low capacity settings.

Update on Logistics

Mr. Amir Abdulla, Assistant Executive Director of WFP, informed members of the status of WFP's logistics operations in support of COVID-19 response. As of date, WFP has handled more than 58,000 cubic meters of cargo, which have been shipped to 167 countries on behalf of 55 different partners. There is another 40,000 cubic meters of cargo in the pipeline. In terms of air services, WFP reported that it transported more than 21,500 passengers for 338 different organizations to date. 44 per cent of these passengers worked for NGOs and another 44 per cent for UN agencies with the remaining 11 per cent being split among donors, diplomats and other Member State officials. WFP added that the number of destinations it provided air services has reduced from 65 to , and 30 of these were stood down given resumption of commercial flights. WFP underlined that 98 per cent of all movement requests from 1 May to 19 August was fulfilled.

In terms of Medevac services, WFP had carried out over 40 medical evacuations. The field hospital in Accra, Ghana has been set up and handed over to WHO in a tri-partite agreement with the Government of Ghana, WHO and WFP. Negotiations were ongoing for a destination for Medevac evacuation in the Middle East and Asia. WFP expressed appreciation for the collaboration among UN agencies and NGOs in response to COVID-19, demonstrating the collective added value of the humanitarian system.

Protection of IDPs

Ms. Cecilia Jimenez -Damary, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), updated members on the impact of COVID-19 on the protection of IDPs. While members had previously discussed the impact of COVID-19 on people on the move, this was the first time the impact of COVID-19 on IDPs was discussed specifically.

The Special Rapporteur highlighted increased protection risks and challenges faced by IDPs as a consequence of COVID. Available evidence from the Global Protection Cluster indicates that attacks against civilians including IDPs have increased by 2.5 per cent since the pandemic began. Eighty per cent of Protection Clusters and UNHCR operations are reporting escalating conflict, stigmatization and increasing cases of violence, including attacks on civilians and humanitarians. Gender-based violence is rising exponentially. Twenty-four out of twenty-six protection clusters have reported increase in gender-based violence cases in their operations. Gender-based violence experts project that for every three months the lockdown is extended, an additional 15 million women and girls will experience gender-based violence while another 13 million child births could take place that otherwise would not have happened.

The enhanced situation of conflict and fragility as a result of COVID is triggering new displacements, and affecting access to basic services such as health. The Special

Rapporteur noted the increased impunity in the abuse of rights of the affected population. Reported cases of human rights violations include, restrictions on movement, xenophobia and stigmatization, and attacks on people perceived/accused of spreading COVID, and consequently pushing the ostracized groups to the margins. Likewise, from a human rights perspective, such developments are taking place with impunity and negligence of states.

Consequently, the Special Rapporteur called for risk mitigation measures as well as investments in long term and comprehensive protection measures which are critical to the prevention of harmful coping strategies which are forecast to escalate as COVID-19 heightens vulnerabilities and protection risks. The Rapporteur called on IASC members and the humanitarian community to continue to advocate with national authorities to ensure that containment measures are implemented in a non-discriminatory way to avoid deepening vulnerabilities.

The Special Rapporteur drew members' attention to the on IASC Centrality of Protection Policy adopted in 2016. She indicated that as the implementation of the GP20 Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018-2020 is coming to an end, a compilation of good practices from the field on the protection of and durable solutions for IDPs will be released soon. Further, the Special Rapporteur emphasized that the Centrality of Protection should be reviewed to encompass the protection of IDPs in COVID-19 contexts. She added that there is a need for enhanced advocacy for funding for protection activities. The Special Rapporteur noted that Protection sectors report worrying funding levels leading to challenges in achieving protection outcomes. She called for IDP protection as thematic focus for the GHO 2021, and for more regular Principals' discussions on IDP protection as relevant (GPC could support).

The ERC thanked the Special Rapporteur for her presentation and noted that the mandate of the High-Level Panel on IDPs had been extended given the challenges faced due to COVID-19.

Discussion and Updates

UNHCR expressed its support for the analysis presented by Special Rapporteur and echoed the proposal to make protection of IDPs the main thematic focus for the 2021 GHO. UNCHR stressed that it would continue to invest resources in national and global protection clusters and support enhanced advocacy with donors to address underfunding of protection activities. UNHCR also noted the need to strengthen partnership and engagement with local actors to facilitate a more effective response to the needs of IDPs. UNHCR called for vigilance against stigmatization and discrimination against IDPs. UNHCR noted growing concern of the situation of IDPs in Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In response to the Washington Post article, on the situation of displaced people, UNHCR indicated that, there was no exponential rise in COVID-19 cases in refugee and IDP camps... However, there is a devastating impact from the economic point of view. However, UNHCR observed that incidences of COVID-19 were

rising among refugees and IDPs in urban areas. It was also noted, refugees experienced similar levels of vulnerability and poverty as the High Commissioner recently observed in Lebanon. UNHCR informed members that the High Commissioner will travel to Jordan and Syria in two weeks and asked whether the ERC would like any messages conveyed during the mission.

UNICEF shared an update on the COVAX facility noting that 76 high-income countries and 92 low- and lower-income countries have signed up to date. UNICEF reported that they are working on the procurement of vaccinations and encouraged country preparedness measures to distribute vaccines safely. UNICEF called for the development of standards and guidance to support on the COVID-19 vaccine introduction and use, and the need for continued vaccinations for children under one and under five years which has reduced significantly due to COVID-19, and finally the need to ensure communities feel comfortable about visiting primary health care centers for vaccinations. UNICEF joined other members in expressing appreciation of WFP's free-to-user logistics operations during the COVID-19 response. Finally, echoing calls by the Special Rapporteur and UNHCR, UNICEF called for enhanced resource mobilization for the protection of IDPs and refugees, s, particularly girls and women.

InterAction also called for enhanced funding, highlighting their current fundraising efforts with the US Congress, InterAction noted that access and visa issues remained a major challenge for their members, especially in light of the COVID situation. In this regard, it is consolidating a paper for the attention of ERC sharing experiences of NGOs in key locations like Myanmar, Afghanistan, Cameroon and DRC . InterAction expressed appreciation of IASC Results Group 1's work on centrality of protection and other priorities.

SCHR reported that there had been an improvement to funding flows to international NGOs while flows to local NGOs still appeared to be low potentially due to a gap in reporting. Nevertheless, this level was indicative of general funding gaps which calls for continued IASC attention. SCHR observed that some confinement measures had led to discrimination against refugees in Greece. SCHR echoed support for OPAG and Results Groups' work and said that there was opportunity to undertake collective advocacy during the upcoming 75th General Assembly. Finally, SCHR expressed its appreciation for IOM's efforts on the disbursement of CERF funds to NGOs.

OHCHR noted that humanitarians should prepare for the long-term as the COVID-19 does not show any signs of abating. OHCHR expressed appreciation of the Special Rapporteur's work as COVID-19 heightened vulnerabilities of IDPs who are disproportionately affected. OHCHR noted that, the Special Rapporteur on Housing recently raised the alarm on forced evictions globally, with 11,000 people having been evicted in Brazil and Kenya alone . OHCHR noted that advocacy with Member States was needed to prevent forced evictions and consider the situation of IDPs and homeless persons. OHCHR echoed UNHCR's assessment of the situation in Lebanon and added that it continued to monitor violations of freedom of movement, discriminatory attacks, killing of indigenous people in the

Amazon, as well as violations of basic rights including access to health, food and other basic rights, across its operations.

IOM echoed support for the Special Rapporteur's recommendations and UNHCR's analysis on the protection of IDPs. Acknowledging that there was a growing trend of stigmatization against IDPs as well as disruption of services to victims of gender-based violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, IOM noted that capacities to respond to needs of people in need of services were limited due to COVID-19 restrictions. Meanwhile, IOM recognized a trend of physical attacks in IDP camps in Nigeria, Mozambique and Mali highlighting the need to put protection high on the agenda. IOM noted that it signed 26 CERF disbursement contracts with international and local NGOs in six countries. Funds had already been disbursed for 24 out of 26 contracts and the remaining two would be disbursed shortly. IOM updated members on its work to provide health care and testing facilities for UN and implementing partner staff. Testing was ongoing and ten MoUs had already been signed. IOM noted that there was a need to clarify what is non-clinical testing such as tests required for travel as well as access to testing kits to respond to increasing requests. IOM appealed to members who had influence on production of testing kits so that it could maintain testing services for humanitarian personnel.

CRS expressed appreciation of WFP's efforts on the logistics operations as well as ERC's efforts for advocacy on visa-related challenges. It echoed InterAction's and SCHR's points about resource mobilization efforts with major donors and stated that it was seeing positive developments with resources being released for food insecurity and agriculture, among others, by USAID. In terms of COVAX, CRS noted its efforts with faith-based Catholic organizations and the Vatican to make statements for the equitable distribution of vaccines and therapeutics. Likewise, given the decline in current levels of care, humanitarians should scale up their response. Finally, CRS stressed that insecurity in the Sahel required attention and humanitarian access could be a challenge.

ICVA echoed SCHR's statement around funding monitoring and reporting. ICVA was mapping visa restrictions and would bring relevant information to the ERC's attention. ICVA noted the work of Results Group 1, particularly on bureaucratic impediments, and called for collective action through the IASC. ICVA expressed support for the centrality of protection as well as for increased funding for protection programming noting that the Special Rapporteur's efforts had been well-received and appreciated by the NGO community. Finally, ICVA informed members that, as a follow up to IASC Principals' request, ICVA and WFP had created a taskforce on duty of care and would report back in due course.

UN-HABITAT expressed its support for the Special Rapporteur's analysis of IDPs' access to housing, essential services including water, sanitation and hygiene as well as settlement planning. UN-HABITAT reminded members that the right to housing is universal and applies to IDPs as well. UN-HABITAT informed members of Urban-October activities that were being planned across the world and invited members to participate. The World Habitat Day, October 5, will feature "Housing for All" as a theme and will

launch a right to housing campaign next month. At the end of October, UN-HABITAT is planning a World Cities Day which is relevant to the discussions in the IASC as they relate to communities and housing. Finally, UN-HABITAT expressed appreciation of funding disbursed which is facilitating mapping of debris and damage in Beirut, Lebanon.

ICRC stated it recently completed a mapping report of more than 600 Non state armed groups (NSAGs), 400 of which, it is in touch with. ICRC estimated that 66 million people, who are likely to have difficulties in accessing humanitarian services, live under the control of NSAGs. ICRC indicated that the report would be released shortly with potential discussions planned as part of the 75th General Assembly events in late September.

IFRC thanked WFP for its logistical operations and support. IFRC noted that 171 national societies reported received US\$ 1.5 billion, a coverage of 76 per cent., with \$705 million already spent. IFRC's own appeal is funded at 50 per cent to date. IFRC reported strong levels of earmarking and difficulties in accessing unearmarked funds. Regarding COVAX, IFRC noted that some countries had started trials on humans with Pakistan Red Crescent Society being invited to take part. IFRC asked if this theme can be tabled in an upcoming IASC Principals meeting with guidance being generated and agreed upon. IFRC noted its upcoming event on Climate Red Summit on 9-10 September and encouraged members to reduce their carbon imprint by using COVID-19 as an opportunity. The ERC recommended that IFRC discuss human trials and relevant guidance bilaterally with WHO.

UNDP expressed its support for the analysis and concerns around protection of IDPs, noting the collaborative work happening between humanitarian-development actors to respond to needs.

UNFPA expressed support to include protection and IDPs as thematic focus for the 2021 GHO. It noted the impact to quality of education, particularly for girls and women, as a result of COVID-19. UNFPA is collecting data and evidence on core areas such as security and education and its impact on women and girls, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. It would supply relevant information and analysis to the ERC for his Security Council briefing. UNFPA also noted increasing number of attacks against health workers by non-state armed groups which requires attention.

The World Bank informed of its focus on debt issues in the context of COVID-19, including increased indebtedness levels and lack of investment capacities to build back better. The G-20 decision was to delay debt payments and not cancel them with current discussions focusing on what more can be done beyond actions taken by government lenders. Members were informed that the World Bank closed its fiscal year in June with \$58 billion mobilized, which was similar levels to funds mobilized during the 2008 and 2009 economic crisis, with more than half of this mobilized in the last three months of the World Bank's fiscal year. Current priorities include building back better with references to building back greener gaining traction. The World Bank closed the IDA-18 cycle with IDA-19 starting in July with fragility, conflict and violence being one of the core priorities.

FAO stressed urgent action was needed to address rising food insecurity. To this end, it was preparing, in collaboration with WFP and OCHA, for Security Council and General Assembly briefings. The most recent Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analysis found that the food security situation had significantly deteriorated in seven out of 12 countries. These countries included Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan. In Haiti, four million people or 42 per cent of the population was currently experiencing high acute food insecurity and this was likely to increase to 46 per cent in coming months – as a result of COVID-19 combined with drought, tropical storms and economic shocks. In Burkina Faso, IPC recorded populations in severity five meaning these populations are in catastrophic situation. Finally, the IPC report for DRC showed that DRC had become the largest food insecurity crisis in the world.

Concern Worldwide noted the impacts of the broader economic downturn to its next year budget and echoed concerns by FAO on food insecurity, noting that it would conduct assessments in this regard in Burkina Faso. Concern Worldwide highlighted attacks against humanitarian staff which required a call to action to end impunity against such attacks. It sought the support of members in this regard.

Follow-up actions:

1. Provide support to the GHO/HPC 2021 process, especially around the Joint Analysis Framework, to facilitate a more credible analysis. **[IASC members]**
2. Give prominence to the Protection of IDPs issue during the launch of the 2021 GHO (as well as the Sahel Minister Conference in October), including for increased funding. OCHA to draw on information on incidents and trends from the Office of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs. **[ERC and IASC Members]**
3. Support the COVAX initiative through (i) advocacy and (ii) efforts to support country readiness for COVID vaccines and sustaining immunization services. **[IASC Secretariat to follow-up with UNICEF]**
4. Suggest concrete proposals on improving humanitarian access and addressing bureaucratic and administrative impediments faced by NGOs. **[EDG]**

List of participants:

1. Mr. Mark Lowcock, Chair and Emergency Relief Coordinator
2. Dr. Jaouad Mahjour, Assistant Director-General for Emergency Preparedness and International Health Regulations, WHO
3. Mr. Antoine Gerard, Deputy Director of Operations, ICRC
4. Mr. Ignacio Packer, Executive Director, ICVA
5. Mr. Sam Worthington, CEO, InterAction
6. Mr. Sean Callahan, President and CEO, Catholic Relief Services
7. Mr. Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide

8. Mr. Xavier Castellanos Under Secretary-General, IFRC
9. Mr. António Vitorino, Director-General, IOM
10. Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF
11. Mr. Filippo Grande, High Commissioner, UNHCR
12. Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs
13. Mr. Laurent Thomas, Deputy Executive Director, FAO
14. Mr. Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide
15. Ms. Abby Maxman, Chair of SCHR (President and CEO, Oxfam America)
16. Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, WFP
17. Mr. Gareth Price, Executive Secretary, SCHR
18. Ms. Michele Bachelet, High Commissioner, OHCHR
19. Mr. Robert Piper, Assistant Secretary-General, DCO
20. Ms. Asako Okai, Assistant Administrator, UNDP
21. Ms. Shoko Arakaki, Director, Humanitarian Office, UNFPA
22. Ms. Maimunah Mohammed Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat
23. Mr. Toomas Palu, Adviser, World Bank
24. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head of IASC secretariat