

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE**IASC PRINCIPALS AD HOC MEETING ON THE COVID-19 RESPONSE****SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS**
Virtual, 2 November 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 safe and clean water and sanitation in the COVID-19 response. He also took the opportunity to update the Principals on the ongoing coordinated response to the serious allegations of sexual abuse (SEA) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and highlighted the importance of monitoring the typhoon in the Philippines.

The ERC stated that, as a follow up to the October 9 Principal's meeting, a joint and coordinated response to the recent reports of serious allegations of SEA in the DRC was ongoing. He thanked the Principals for their individual and collective efforts to step up and support a coordinated response in support of victims and survivors. An inter-agency mission is underway in DRC to support the HC and HCT with support provided to the PSEA network in the country. Other parts of the UN system were also involved in the coordinated response, including the Office of Investigations and Oversight Services, as well as the UN Victims' Rights Advocate and Coordinator, Ms. Jane Connors and the UN Secretary General's Coordinator on PSEA, Ms. Jane Holl Lute. He added that the IASC Principals will have another opportunity to discuss the PSEA issue further at the dedicated IASC bi-annual session on 4 December.

The ERC updated members that close to USD \$ 3.3 billion had been raised for the pandemic response, representing 35% of the total funding requirements of the total \$10.3 billion GHRP request. He noted that there were incoming pledges and resources but the GHRP had entered a scale back phase due to the adjustment of the logistics support and in view of the revised appeals at the country-level. IASC members were encouraged to continue reporting to FTS both in terms of funding received and disbursed to implementing partners and frontline NGOs. Likewise, the ERC noted that OCHA was in the final stages of a GHRP lessons learned exercise as agreed by the IASC Principals on 27 July. Dedicated discussions would take place at the EDG and OPAG with a possibility for a Principals-level discussion upon interest.

The ERC noted that the 2021 Global Humanitarian Overview would be launched on 1 December and multiple virtual launch events would take place throughout the day across various time zones. He invited Principals to join him and noted that the events would involve as many Principals as possible. The ERC noted that the 2021 GHO would prioritize

and emphasize issues discussed with the Principals, including issues affecting women and girls, among others.

Health Update

Dr. Ibrahima Soce-Fall, WHO Assistant Director-General for Emergency Response, updated Principals on developments in the COVID-19 pandemic. WHO reported a spike in COVID-19 cases, noting that in the last week alone 3 million cases were recorded, representing the highest number of cases ever recorded worldwide. This was a sharp increase from the last update to the Principals, in which cases were stabilizing at 2 million a week. More than 46 million cases and 1.1 million deaths were recorded as of 2 November, with a majority of new cases reported from Europe in the past weeks. Asia and Western Pacific regions also had significant number of cases. Similarly, more than 14 million cases and 128,000 deaths had been reported in GHRP countries demonstrating the vulnerability of these contexts.

WHO also noted that COVID-19 had taken a toll on the health care services, with significant disruption in immunization, routine vaccination, sexual and reproductive health services. WHO urged members to provide integrated assistance in GHRP countries to ensure people in need received a package of assistance including mental health and psychosocial support. Finally, WHO noted the need to discuss and develop a concrete collective IASC proposal to GAVI on the humanitarian buffer stock for vaccines, including how the COVID-19 vaccination will be acquired and distributed in humanitarian settings.

Update on Logistics

Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director of WFP, informed members of the status of WFP's logistics operations in support of COVID-19 response. WFP noted that it has so far moved 85,000 cubic meters of cargo to 170 countries. 70,000 cubic meters of this cargo was under the GHRP free-to-user service with WHO and UNICEF being the two primary actors in addition to 44 other organizations, of which 64% were NGOs.

WFP noted that that with the improvement in the market capacities for cargo movement, there will be a reduction in free to use cargo services. It hopes to deliver all the cargo in the pipeline by the end of November, but it will maintain the logistical structures given the volatility of the situation. WFP is currently in discussions with partners on working efficiently together, including on whether these structures should be converted to support vaccine transportation and distribution.

In terms of the air services provided, WFP transported more than 25,000 passengers from 390 organizations, to 70 destinations since May. Around 44 per cent of these passengers were UN staff, 43 per cent NGO staff and around 13 per cent diplomats. WFP will maintain this service given remaining travel restrictions and it will be ready to reinstate it if needed. WFP observed that as much of the commercial flights had resumed, its operations in humanitarian contexts would be adjusted depending on developments on the ground.

Safe and Clean Water and Sanitation in the COVID-19 Response

UNICEF provided an overview of the grave situation concerning access to safe and clean water and sanitation during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that the situation had worsened pre-COVID, with stretched demand for WASH services. However, WASH remains severely underfunded, with less than 50% funding globally, with serious funding gaps in Sahel countries; Chad and Mali. There was a need to provide better real time data and predictive analyses to bring visibility and attention to WASH issues. The WASH cluster and partners including donors and academic institutions have worked on an Integrated Phase Classification system for WASH issues, the “WASH Severity Classification (WSC)”. This system would quantify the severity of WASH needs and standardize the measurement of people in need of WASH assistance including on acute and chronic needs. It would help with real time decision-making across humanitarian operations and highlight operations that require visibility and support. To date, the tool has been piloted in Afghanistan and Burkina Faso and will be rolled out in 20 other HRP countries. UNICEF was seeking the endorsement of the IASC Principals to socialize and utilize the tool in the development of 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans.

Discussion and Updates

In the ensuing discussion, IASC members expressed their broad support to UNICEF’s WSC proposal while noting the need to learn lessons from the Integrated Phase Classification tool on food security. SCHR, IOM, and UNHCR expressed their support to the approach proposed given the direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 on WASH and UNHCR in particular highlighted its joint work with UNICEF in a number of sectors beyond WASH in various countries to better coordinate and be more impactful in mobilizing resources. While echoing other members on the utility of the tool, IFRC and FAO called for lessons learned on how the IPC on food security had informed decision-making in humanitarian operations and how the WSC tool could benefit from these lessons. UNFPA noted that inclusion of sexual and reproductive health related indicators in the WASH classification would generate additional benefits for partners and allow for multi-sectoral analysis of humanitarian needs.

On PSEA, members welcomed the progress made and expressed their support to the ongoing coordinated response. WHO expressed appreciation for the collective efforts by the IASC, noting that the on-going support mission is crucial to ensuring support and mechanisms on the ground, while awaiting the start of investigations. WHO also noted that it was in the process of establishing an Independent Commission on the DRC SEA/SH issue. UNCHR highlighted that the 4 December Principals meeting on PSEA would be an opportunity for IASC members to discuss these issues critically and encouraged all Principals to spare time for the preparatory work led by UNHCR consultants.

On the GHRP and funding levels, members echoed the need to continue advocacy with donors on increasing funding while noting that political developments posed

uncertainties. SCHR noted that funding levels remained low for the GHRP and called IASC Principals to continue advocating with donors on ensuring they maintain their COVID-19 related funding flexibility measures into next year's regular programming. On the GHO SCHR and UNFPA expressed appreciation for the continued focus on the gender and protection elements, including the gendered impact of food security and meaningful engagement and participation of stakeholders outside the HCT or factor in specific specifically national and local NGOs and the focus on sex and disaggregated data. They also offered to amplify messages and communications on the launch of the 2021 GHO. Finally, InterAction informed that it had mapped potential implications of the outcomes of US election on funding to humanitarian action while CRS noted that local partners do not feel they are receiving enough support in the COVID-19 response.

On the COVID-19 vaccination, members welcomed the opportunity to develop a concrete proposal to GAVI. CRS noted that it would utilize its procurement and logistics infrastructure to transport COVID-19 vaccine and was in touch with the United States Center for Disease Control to get COVID-19 vaccines to affected populations in humanitarian settings.

UNHCR informed that the Rohingya conference raised around \$600 million which should improve the response in the Cox's Bazaar. UNHCR reported that due to electoral insecurity in Cote D'Ivoire, for the first time in years, refugees from Ivory Coast had arrived in Ghana and Liberia, in hundreds last week and reaching thousands over the weekend.

InterAction and ICVA highlighted the continued bureaucratic and administrative impediments negatively impacting on NGO operations and staff mobility. Concern Worldwide noted that visa restrictions in DPRK continue with two of its staff remaining there as there was no clarity whether they would be allowed to return if they left. As a result, there was a need to collectively work on visa restrictions and involve donors in the required advocacy. ICVA also highlighted that OPAG would soon finalize and endorse the IASC Duty of Care Minimum Standards.

ICRC provided an update on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh noting that the conflict had intensified as demonstrated by military casualties and the combination of civilian casualties and COVID-19, resulting in a short-lived third humanitarian ceasefire. ICRC recently met foreign ministers of both Armenia and Azerbaijan to seek greater respect to IHL including access to prisoners of war, facilitating access to dead bodies in order to retrieve them in a respectful manner, and ensuring safety and security of ICRC staff given the intensifying clashes. UNHCR noted that it was contacted by the co-chairs of the Minsk Group on the Nagorno-Karabagh dispute and called for closer coordination between ICRC, UNHCR and other NGOs present in the area. IFRC echoed UNHCR and ICRC's messages on Nagorno-Karabakh and informed that it had lost a volunteer recently due to shelling.

OHCHR, echoing concerns on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as in Belarus and Yemen, highlighted the convergence between conflict and the spread of COVID-19. They noted that continued protests across several contexts as well as electoral processes had

resulted in restrictions on human rights as well as access to basic services while increasing the likelihood of COVID-19's spread.

IFRC noted that it was monitoring and preparing for the typhoon in Philippines and cyclones in Central America. IFRC Secretary-General's mission to Sudan showed that socio-economic issues risked reversing the recent gains in the political scene and more funding was required to support humanitarian assistance. As a result, IFRC would advocate for additional funding to Sudan at capital levels and through bilateral engagements. Similarly, more needed to be done on pandemic response as populations were growing exhausted of the COVID-19 restrictions with food insecurity and inflation leading to significant socio-economic burden.

FAO provided an update on its upcoming FAO/WFP hotspots analysis with 21 countries experiencing significant food insecurity levels. Four countries at high risk of famine were Nigeria, Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Yemen. The locust surge in East Africa and in the Gulf region continued to be a significant concern, particularly in Ethiopia and Yemen where FAO would be sending its teams to support on the locust response.

The World Bank updated on its recently concluded annual IMF-World Bank meetings, which covered poverty, inequality, debt relief and extension of debt service suspension given that the estimates show millions of people would be pushed into poverty bringing the total number of people in poverty to up to 150 million by end 2021. The World Bank-IMF were asked to monitor countries with significant levels of poverty and unsustainable debt levels and come up with an action plan. G20's suspension of debt benefitted approximately 44 countries but there was a need for more action. In terms of recovery and resilience, the World Bank has committed 40 per cent of the \$160 billion with around \$12 billion already set aside for vaccine deployment.

Follow-up actions:

1. Pursue discussions on the humanitarian buffer stock of COVID-19 vaccinations, including with GAVI **[WHO with OCHA and IASC partners]**
2. Support the GHO 2021 finalization and launch processes, including the participation of IASC Principals, where possible, in the planned virtual launches which will be used to highlight the need for continued flexible funding measures **[OCHA and Principals]**
3. Taking advantage of the updated food security hotspot analysis, prioritize advocacy efforts to prevent famine **[IASC Principals]**
4. Endorsement of the concept around the WASH severity classification and encourage its further development based on the proposed timeline **[UNICEF and relevant IASC Structures]**
5. Participate in the preparatory one-on-one sessions on PSEA facilitated by UNHCR ahead of the IASC Principals meeting on 4 December. **[Principals]**
6. Continue monitoring of visa issues and propose what more can be done by whom **[NGO consortia with the support of the IASC Secretariat]**

List of participants:

1. Mr. Mark Lowcock, Chair and Emergency Relief Coordinator
2. Dr. Ibrahima Soce-Fall, Assistant Director-General for Emergency Response, WHO
3. Mr. Robert Mardini, Director-General, 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. Ms. Pascale Meige, Director of Disaster and Crisis, IFRC
9. Mr. António Vitorino, Director-General, IOM
10. Mr. Omar Abdi, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF
11. Mr. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner, UNHCR
12. Mr. Laurent Thomas, Deputy Executive Director, FAO
13. Mr. Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide
14. Ms. Abby Maxman, Chair of SCHR (President and CEO, Oxfam America)
15. Ms. Maria Immonen, Vice Chair of SCHR, (Director of the Lutheran World Federation)
16. Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, WFP
17. Mr. Gareth Price, Executive Secretary, SCHR
18. Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner, OHCHR
19. Ms. Asako Okai, Assistant Administrator, UNDP
22. Ms. Shoko Arakaki, Director, Humanitarian Office, UNFPA
20. Ms. Christine Knudsen, Director, External Relations, UN-Habitat
21. Mr. Toomas Palu, Adviser, World Bank
22. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head of IASC secretariat