

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

DEPUTIES FORUM

SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS

22 November 2021

Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (DERC) a.i, and Chair of the IASC Deputies Forum, convened Deputies to discuss IASC structures for 2022-2023 as tasked by IASC Principals on 20 October. In this regard, Deputies were guided by feedback provided by Principals, that IASC structures needed to be nimbler and better streamlined to deliver on the agreed priorities of the IASC.

The Chair thanked members for their input and feedback during the bilateral consultations on the IASC structures, despite the tight consultation period. He noted the importance of being pragmatic and arriving at decisions on the that would support the IASC to deliver effectively on its mandate.

Session 1: Draft Term of Reference for the IASC Deputies Forum

The Chair began by announcing the IASC Principals' decision to formalize the IASC's Deputies Forum as a critical platform to drive forward key strategic issues and sought members' feedback on the draft term of reference to better define the scope and mandate of the Forum. Specifically, the draft term of reference proposed that the Forum would report to IASC Principals, drive forward progress on key strategic issues tasked by the IASC Principals, be instrumental in unblocking issues and operationalize decisions that demand an institutional commitment. Furthermore, the Deputies would focus on a number of critical strategic issues including but not limited to PSEA/SH; and racism and racial discrimination; review of the humanitarian response in the context of IDP settings; climate change; humanitarian financing; cash; and gender. They would also hold the oversight function over the general functioning of IASC structures and would work in close collaboration with the OPAG and the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) and other key platforms to ensure coherence and coordination of action. The Chair sought further feedback to finalize the Forum's draft term of reference.

Discussion

Members noted that it was important for the Forum to drive forward the Principals' key strategic objectives and inform the Principals' agenda. They agreed that the Deputies Forum would prioritize issues highlighted in the draft term of reference (namely PSEA/SH; racism and racial discrimination; review of the humanitarian response in the context of IDP settings; climate change; humanitarian financing; cash; and gender) while noting that additional issues would be added based on requests from the IASC Principals or if deemed necessary by the Deputies. They also underscored the need to maintain the strategic nature of the issues discussed and noted the need to complement efforts carried out by other IASC bodies. They also proposed renaming the Forum to "Deputies Group" to underscore the formal and decision-

making nature of this body. There was agreement that the EDG and OPAG would not report to the Deputies Forum but that, where needed, issues from both groups could be elevated to the Deputies Group for resolution or to drive necessary change through the system. In addition, members requested that due consideration should be given to the placement of the Forum in the IASC structural organigram relative to the EDG and OPAG.

Conclusions and Follow-up Actions:

1. Provide feedback on the draft Deputy Group's term of reference. **[IASC Deputies]**
2. Agree that PSEA/SH; racism and racial discrimination; review of the humanitarian response in the context of IDP settings; climate change; humanitarian financing; cash; and gender would be prioritized by the Deputies Group (additional issues would be added upon the request of the IASC Principals or as deemed necessary by the Deputies) **[IASC Deputies]**
3. Change the Forum's name to Deputies Group. **[IASC secretariat]**

Session 2: Proposed way forward with the IASC structures

Regarding the way forward with the IASC structures, the Chair stressed the need to arrive at agreement on the future of the IASC's subsidiary bodies as requested by the IASC Principals. He reminded members that the IASC was a Committee and not an organization, and as such it was mandated by the UN General Assembly to coordinate humanitarian action. To that end, subsidiary bodies are established informally, specifically to support the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Committee in fulfilling its mandate. The Chair stressed the importance of streamlining structures to facilitate timely decisions and actions in support of humanitarian response.

Regarding a number of the Entities Associated with the IASC, the Chair reminded members that transitioning these structures from formal structures associated with the IASC to standalone structures mandated to translate IASC-endorsed policy to practice did not signal that issues covered by them did not remain high on the agenda of the IASC. As such, he sought the Deputies feedback on the following proposal:

- Transitioning the five Results Groups to four Task Teams to deliver on a number of priority areas of work endorsed by the IASC, namely: humanitarian space; centrality of protection; AAP and localization; and humanitarian-development collaboration and its linkages to peace;
- Maintaining the association of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group (IAHE-SG) with the IASC to ensure that the system better learns and adapts based on findings and recommendations of independent evaluations carried out by the group (including as part of the IASC's Scale-Up protocols;
- Including the Reference Groups on Gender (GRG) and on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MPHSS) in the Global Cluster Coordination Group (GCCG) and manage their transition through the course of 2022;
- Continuing the functioning of the GCCG and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle Support Group (HPC-SG) under the chairmanship of OCHA without their formal association with

the IASC (as agreed at the OPAG, the GCCG should be co-Chaired on a rotating basis by a member of the GCCG while OCHA remains as permanent co-Chair).

Discussion

Members appreciated the consultations undertaken to-date to identify key issues, lessons, and recommendations. They agreed on the need for nimbler and streamlined structures. At the same time, they noted that agreed IASC priorities needed to be given the necessary support for the system to be able to take them forward.

Members expressed their support for the OPAG and EDG to continue their respective normative and operational roles, including seeking ways for closer collaboration between these structures. Furthermore, on the strategic priorities, while taking note of the issues proposed, they called for separating AAP and Localization as the rationale for their inclusion was not clear. Furthermore, members expressed the need to accord the appropriate level of importance to climate change, the need to continue to discuss humanitarian financing so as to mobilize and engage the full range of financing instruments, mechanisms and partners to ensure that growing humanitarian needs are met; and the need for a standalone priority for gender to reflect the continuing strategic importance in integrating gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action.

Regarding the Results Group, members noted their general support to transition them to the suggested Task Forces that would focus on delivering on a number of priority areas for the IASC, namely the BAI and COTER work under the preservation of humanitarian space; centrality of protection; AAP; localization; and humanitarian-development collaboration and its linkages to peace. While there was general support to transition from Results Groups to Task Forces, members sought further clarity on the role of Task Forces to which the IASC secretariat noted that they would be similar to those of the Results Groups and agreed to share the draft terms of reference. In addition, members underscored the need to manage a careful transition process between the Results Groups and the Task Forces to build on the important work carried out over the past few years to which the IASC secretariat indicated that a transition plan would be shared for feedback.

On the Entities Associated with the IASC, there was general agreement on the need to maintain the IAHE-SG as part of the IASC. Members called for stronger linkages of the IAHE-SG to ensure that the system better learns and adapts based on findings and recommendations of independent evaluations carried out by the IAHE-SG, including as part of the IASC's Scale-Up protocols. Several members expressed their appreciation for the important work of the GRG and MHPSS and raised concerns that their disassociation could be misperceived as a de-prioritization of issues. While noting the value of the GCCG and the HPCSG to continue to be associated with the IASC to support awareness-raising and progressing on key coordination related issues, members expressed that the timing of a potential disassociation would not be opportune considering planned review of the IASC and its response in IDP settings. Furthermore, a number of members underscored the importance of maintaining these structures as independent rather than OCHA bodies.

Members suggested that continuing association of these groups for a time-bound period (through 2022) would provide an opportunity to carefully examine pros and cons of the association with the IASC as well as opportunities for a number of these groups to be hosted in different platforms so that they can continue and/or step-up efforts to translate IASC-

endorsed policy to practice. The Chair highlighted that in considering the future of the structures, it was important to recognize that a number of forums (including the PSEA TAG as well as the Early Warning Early Action group charged with producing monthly EWEA reports to the EDG) exist without formal association and deliver critical work in support of the the IASC and the system. Furthermore, it was noted that clear expectations of the entities associated with the IASC need to be formulated to strengthen their role in translating IASC-endorsed policy to action.

Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Chief of the IASC secretariat, stressed the need for nimbler structures, noting the call from IASC Principals for fewer focused priorities and streamlined processes. She called on Deputies to respond to the Principals call to respond to the key issues before the IASC, recognizing that considerable progress has been made within the IASC by a number of structures, including those associated with the IASC. She noted the need for structures to focus on translating policies into practices, building on the considerable policies, guidelines and tools produced within the IASC. In this regard, it was important to focus on operationalization of policies, including focusing on critical areas requiring attention around protection, humanitarian space and access, HDPN, localization, AAP, PSEA, climate. She stressed that while the OPAG would take some of these issues forward, it was equally important for the Deputies to hold strategic discussions around some of the topics proposed for its consideration.

The Chair concluded by emphasizing the need to counter the perception where dis-association is understood as de-prioritization. He acknowledged a suggestion made to consider the endorsement of work/groups to continue to carryout work on behalf of the IASC without their continued formal association with the IASC structures. He also expressed the need for a focused approach in transitioning from current to the new structures, ensuring streamlining and a reduction of bureaucracy. In this regard, it was important for the Deputies Forum to act as a catalytic body to ensure nimbler and streamlined structures.

Conclusions and Follow-up Actions:

1. Maintain the OPAG and EDG to continue to drive forward the normative and operational work of the IASC.
2. Transition the five IASC Results Groups to five Task Forces through March 2022 to deliver on a number of priority areas of work endorsed by the IASC, namely: humanitarian space; centrality of protection; AAP; localization; and humanitarian-development collaboration and its linkages to peace. **[IASC secretariat]**
3. Agree that Task Forces will be timebound ending in December 2023 and for their role to be clarified by sharing a term of reference – including the formulation of a transition plan from the current Results Groups to the Task Forces. **[IASC secretariat]**
4. Establish gender equality and the empowerment of women as a standalone strategic priority for the IASC in 2022-2023 to ensure its centrality to humanitarian action, including by facilitating contributions from inter-agency groups to IASC decisions, and by translating policies into practice. **[IASC secretariat]**
5. Continue the association of the GRG, MPHSS, GCCG, HPCSG with the IASC through December 2022 - during which period a careful examination of the pros and cons of the association with the IASC will take place to determine next steps. **[OPAG]**

6. Continue the association of the IAHE SG with the IASC. **[IASC secretariat]**

List of Participants

1. Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator a.i
2. Mr. Laurent Thomas, Deputy Director-General, **FAO**
3. Mr. Julien Schopp, Vice President, Humanitarian Policy and Practice, **InterAction**
4. Ms. Jennifer Poidatz, Vice President, Humanitarian Response, **CRS - Inter-Action**
5. Ms. Shahin Ashraf, Vice-Chair of **ICVA** (Islamic Relief Worldwide)
6. Ms. Mirela Shuteriqi, Director of Policy, **ICVA**
7. Ms. Ugochi Daniels, Deputy Director General for Operations, **IOM**
8. Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner, **OHCHR**
9. Mr. Gareth Price Jones, Executive Secretary, **SCHR**
10. Mr. Justin Byworth, Global Lead – Disaster Management, **World Vision - SCHR**
11. Ms. Lydia Zigomo, Global Programs Director, **Oxfam International – SCHR**
12. Ms. Asako Okai, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Crisis Bureau, **UNDP**
13. Mr. Ib Peterson, Deputy Executive Director, **UNFPA**
14. Ms. Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner, **UNHCR**
15. Ms. Meritxell Relano, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Operations, Geneva, **UNICEF**
16. Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, **WFP**
17. Dr. Ibrahim Soce Fall, Assistant Secretary-General, Emergency Response, **WHO**
18. Ms. Maria Dimitriadou, Special Representative to the WTO and UN, Geneva, **World Bank**
19. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head, **IASC secretariat**