**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 and logistics and a discussion of the human rights of migrants and refugees.

As of 2 June, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) has raised US$1.17 billion, representing, almost 18 per cent of the total requirement of $6.71 billion. The ERC thanked the Principals for their continued support in recording the contributions in the Financial Tracking System (FTS). The ERC recommended that the next GHRP update be issued on 16 July, reflecting feedback received from the Principals at the last meeting. It was likely that the process could then be integrated into the regular cycle, but a further update in the fall was a possibility.

Further to a series of discussions with some of the Principals, the ERC noted that it was clear that funding remained a challenge for NGOs for a number of reasons, including as a result of procedural delays, a decline in private fundraising for civil society organizations and a frontloading of funds allocated to procurement and shared services. While it was expected that the proportion allocated to NGOs would now begin to grow, it was a challenge that still needed to be addressed. There would be an opportunity in the IASC’s upcoming meeting with the co-Chairs of the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) forum on 5 June to also raise these issues.

He underscored that the IASC would need to demonstrate credible metrics on how resources were being used and to generate information on the speed of disbursement to sustain donor confidence and continued funding. The idea of a developing a monthly progress report focusing on implementation of the GHRP, is being explored.

The ERC noted that country-based pooled funds were playing an important role in supporting NGOs, particularly national NGOs. He also informed the Principals that he planned to pilot the allocation of $25 million from the CERF, to be managed by IOM, for disbursement to a number of NGOs in six countries; it was planned that those funds would be disbursed by 4 July and would focus on health, including mental health and psychosocial support, and WASH. There would also be strong consideration for projects addressing gender equality issues and gender-based violence, as well as those supporting the needs of persons with disabilities. The possibility of extending the initiative, including with other UN agencies will be considered upon conclusion of the pilot.
Health Update

Dr. Ibrahima Socé Fall, WHO Assistant Director-General for Emergency Response, updated the Principals on developments in the COVID-19 outbreak. Globally, confirmed cases of COVID-19 exceeded 6 million and 380,000 deaths. Although rates of new infection were stabilizing in some areas, such as Europe and the Western Pacific Region, the overall number of new cases reported each day remained substantial. Brazil, the USA, the Russian Federation and India reported the most cases that week. Refugee camps, detention centers, and dormitories had emerged as key hot spots in many countries.

Dr. Fall also highlighted the number of confirmed cases among health workers and said it was important to continue prioritizing their protection. Rising infection rates persisted in many developing settings in Africa, Central and South America, the Middle East and South-East Asia. Yemen and Haiti were of particular concern. It was important to continue to scale up efforts in these contexts, training health care workers and rapid response teams, educating the communities, and expanding testing and treatment capacities, while also ensuring the continuity of other essential health services.

There have been new cases in countries that had begun to ease public health and social distancing measures and so it was critical to continue to update the risk assessment.

Dr. Fall also informed the Principals of the release of key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19 had been released, as well as updates to guidance, with partners such as UNICEF, on maintaining essential services.

Update on Logistics

Mr. Amir Abdulla, Officer-in-Charge and Deputy Executive Director of WFP, informed the Principals that the eight humanitarian hubs were now operating. As of the end of May, over 50 flights had delivered humanitarian cargo to 44 destinations. The first ocean transport was en route to deliver MSF cargo to Yemen. 68,000 metric cubes of cargo were in the pipeline for the next six weeks, equivalent to over 100 Boeing 747 payloads. In total, 121 countries had been served with the various mechanisms.

WFP had also facilitated 88 flights, transporting 1,000 humanitarian and health workers both in and out of 21 destinations in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Additional destinations were being added, including to Latin America, in the coming days. 246 organizations had registered to use the passenger service. However, commercial flights were still being suspended. Mr. Abdulla asked the ERC to encourage in-country leadership to continue to advocate to their government counterparts to assist with the relevant permissions and clearances, noting the welcomed support that had already received from many Humanitarian Coordinators.

Mr. Amir informed participants that the 24/7 medical evacuation cell had been activated and the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD), bilateral services and logistics clusters were still operating as normal.
**Human Rights of Migrants and Refugees**

OHCHR, IOM and UNHCR briefed participants on the increasing risks for migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the COVID-19 context. OHCHR introduced the discussion, noting that these groups were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. OHCHR underscored the importance of continuing to jointly advocate to governments to protect these populations, to suspend practices such as immigration detention and enforced returns and to promote good practices, such as regularization and extension of residence permits and non-discriminatory provision of essential services. A human rights indicators framework had been collaboratively developed, which included specific indicators and operational steps to monitor the situation of migrants, IDPs and refugees and OHCHR encouraged the Principals to support its adoption at the country level.

IOM welcomed the broad scope of the UN Secretary-General’s recently published *Policy Brief on COVID-19 and People on the Move*, which identified common features among migrant workers, undocumented migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs, as well as vulnerabilities specific to women, girls, persons with disabilities and the elderly. IOM highlighted two key points from the Brief: firstly, the World Bank had forecast a 20 per cent reduction in remittances, on which 800 million people were dependent, which would further aggravate the social economic crisis; secondly, the stigma and xenophobic reaction to migrants relating to COVID-19 was particularly damaging to society, and was paradoxical given their critical role in key sectors such as agriculture. IOM emphasized the importance of guarantying that “no one is left behind” by including these groups in the healthcare response and ensure considerations of that their situations in the social and economic analysis of the COVID-19 crisis.

UNHCR informed the Principals of a protection dashboard that would be available next week which would highlight the situation of these groups and the status of their Rights. UNHCR highlighted that 161 countries have partially or totally closed their borders to refugees; 89 had adjusted procedures for seeking asylum and 30 had completely halted the provision of asylum; and in 36 countries, refugees had more restricted access to health services, including, in many cases, to sexual and gender-based violence support. UNHCR encouraged the Principals to have greater synergy in advocating for the rights of people on the move. The ERC agreed that this would be an important area to pursue.

**Discussion:**

The SCHR, ICVA, and InterAction thanked WFP for the logistical support provided, including medical evacuation. They also welcomed the consistent efforts to identify and address the issues of funding to NGOs, the pilot CERF allocation and the upcoming meeting with the GHD. Together with NRC, they were undertaking surveys to obtain a
better understanding of the issues and how much funding was reaching NGOs. Concern Worldwide said that they would share the forthcoming results of a Bond survey, which indicated that 25 per cent of respondents had received funding from multilateral sources, albeit slowly, but that there was still a reliance on restricted funding. InterAction also updated the Principals on the $12 billion funding request to the U.S. government, supported by CRS and other organizations, and welcomed additional support in advocating for these funds and for increased access to supplies.

UNICEF confirmed that disbursements of funds to NGOs was greater than last year, and highlighted an increase in requests from NGOs for in-kind support, such as goggles and masks. Internally, UNICEF had set a target to disburse funds within 20 days. SCHR and CRS took note that the provision of in-kind support to NGOs, rather than in direct funding could be a reason for a mismatch in the funding data. CRS noted a narrative that supplies, such as testing kits and PPE, were destined primarily for the wealthier countries. UNFPA reported that new guidelines on financing NGOs had been issued internally and that local NGOs currently received 40 per cent of UNFPA disbursements.

IFRC updated the Principals that the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement had revised their appeal to CHF3.1 billion. Notably, IFRC had received significant contributions from the private sector. However, funding streams had begun to slow down and funding for non-COVID-19 activities was becoming increasingly difficult. UNHCR also highlighted that the contributions to the GHRP rose quickly in response to the first iteration but were now much slower. UN-Habitat was continuing outreach on resource mobilization and had repurposed around US$4 million of their ongoing work for COVID-19 humanitarian purposes, primarily in Somalia, Pakistan, as well as in DRC, Iran, Mali, Myanmar and Nigeria. With this programming and new pledges, UN-Habitat’s COVID-19 requirements were 20 per cent funded.

IFRC, UNFPA, OHCHR and ICVA agreed that it was critical to demonstrate results and account for the funds received and asserted that more collaboration was needed on data-sharing. WHO welcomed the plans for a monthly progress report and was working to ensure that their monitoring dashboard took into account both the GHRP and the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. WHO also welcomed the revised timeline for the last update to the GHRP as it was important to capture lessons learnt for scenario planning. Meanwhile, UNHCR expressed concern for the new timeline and advocated that the update be as light as possible.

IFRC and ICVA thanked the Principals for their continuous advocacy on behalf of local actors and for their contributions to the IASC interim guidance on Localization and the COVID-19 Response. There was concurrently a discussion in the OPAG on localization and how best to move the dialogue forward.

OHCHR was supporting humanitarian advocacy and had developed practical guidance notes relating to specific groups of vulnerable people. It was important to ensure governments understood the impacts of COVID-19 on different groups and OHCHR noted that there would also be a dedicated session at the Human Rights Council in the coming weeks.
UNFPA highlighted the importance of mental health and psychosocial support and gender-based violence (GBV). A new campaign was being launched under the leadership of the UN Deputy Secretary-General to address the pandemic of GBV and UNFPA looked forward to further collaboration with IASC members on this area.

UNDP called for closer alignment between the humanitarian response and the socio-economic impact assessment in order to gain a cohesive narrative and ensure better programming to protect vulnerable groups. UN-Habitat signaled that this link was especially important in urban areas.

UNICEF expressed a particular concern for the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, notably Brazil, Honduras and Haiti. OHCHR, UNFPA and Concern Worldwide agreed.

UNHCR updated the Principals that some €2.5 billion had been pledged for Venezuela at the event attended by UNHCR and IOM last week. €600 million, still to be confirmed, was for humanitarian needs.

IFRC highlighted the joint statement by the UN and International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, *Uniting for a people’s vaccine against COVID-19*. The ERC agreed that the statement was timely, particularly given the Global Vaccine Summit 2020 taking place that week. Along with WHO, UNICEF was increasing advocacy efforts on the importance of routine immunization campaigns for children, which had decreased by 40 to 60 per cent in some countries and welcomed the support of the Principals in echoing this message. OHCHR agreed, noting the potential impact that an increase in diseases, such as malaria, HIV/Aids and Tuberculosis, could have. Concern Worldwide welcomed UNICEF’s advocacy efforts and CRS proposed that NGO networks could be ramped up to support the distribution of testing kits and vaccines.

CRS highlighted the serious concern for food security in East Africa. FAO noted that while food insecurity continued to be a significant issue, particular for countries already in a humanitarian crisis, only six per cent of the required funding for food security had been met. The UN Secretary-General was due to launch a policy brief the following week on the impact of COVID-19 on food security, which would be an opportunity for an intensified advocacy campaign. If left unaddressed, this situation would only continue to worsen.

UNICEF, ICVA, IFRC and UN-Habitat welcomed the Policy Brief on Covid-19 and People on the Move. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons thanked the Principals, particularly OHCHR, IOM and UNHCR, for this agenda item and noted that their efforts had contributed greatly to the discussions of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and to advocacy with Member States. The points raised should be integrated into a revision of the Plan of Action of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which was coming to an end that year. The Special Rapporteur would welcome an opportunity to brief the Principals in more depth on these topics.
UN-Habitat emphasized that nearly 60 per cent of world refugees and 80 per cent of IDPs live in cities and are often faced with inadequate living conditions and lack of basic services. UN-Habitat was working closely with local and national authorities to develop an inclusive approach and were seeing positive outcomes. UN-Habitat was also working with UNICEF, UNDP, WHO and others to develop a UN Secretary-General policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 in cities, which was expected the following week.

IOM expressed concern for the number of confirmed cases in refugee camps and among stranded migrants in particular, who may not have access to essential services. This situation could rapidly become a humanitarian crisis. IOM alerted the Principals that numerous requests for repatriation had been received from Member States, which would be very complex to manage and could require significant resources.

UNHCR agreed that refugee camps required continued vigilance in the COVID-19 outbreak, but that the growth of confirmed cases had been surprisingly slow, which may be linked to a reluctance to come forward due to fear of isolation measures or discrimination. UNHCR expressed particular concern for refugees living in communities, Venezuela being a case in point.

Last week, IFRC issued guidelines on Reducing the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Internally Displaced People, which was fully aligned with the SG’s Policy Brief. IFRC highlighted the importance of investing in trust at the community level, along migratory routes and in countries of destination, particularly given increasing xenophobia, stigmatization and attacks. It was important to nurture the sense of compassion and solidarity. The Office of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons agreed, highlighting the risk to empowerment and participation of vulnerable groups posed by the pandemic.

Follow-up actions:

1. In light of continuing access issues, including for in-coming flights, follow up with RC and RC/HCs to step up their advocacy at country-level to address access concerns [Action: ERC and the IASC’s EDG]
2. Proceed with the planning for a final GHRP revision to be released on 16 July. [Action: OCHA in collaboration with IASC members]
3. Amplify the joint UN & Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement call for unified efforts to develop, test and scale-up production of a “people’s vaccine.” [Action: IASC members]
4. Address concerns raised by the Principals around the situation in a number of Latin America countries (including Brazil, Honduras, Haiti and Venezuela). [Action: EDG]
5. Circulate results of the survey on NGO funding in the field with the IASC Principals. [Action: ICVA, InterAction and Concern Worldwide via the IASC secretariat]
6. Continue stepped-up advocacy on donor flexibility, speed and un-earmarking, including at the IASC-GHD meeting tomorrow. [Action: IASC members]

7. In recognition of persistent challenges in sourcing and manufacturing health supplies (including PPE, etc.), provide an update to the IASC Principals at the upcoming meeting on the availability of in-country supplies, as well as prospects for the next six months in countries with COVID-19 operations. [Action: WFP and WHO as co-Chairs of the Supply Chain Task Force]

8. Following next week’s release of the SG’s Policy Brief on the Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security, determine collective actions to intensify fundraising efforts. [FAO and WFP]


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List of participants:

1. Mr. Mark Lowcock, Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA
2. Dr. Ibrahima Socé Fall, Assistant Director-General for Emergency Response, WHO
3. Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary-General IFRC
4. Ms. Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner, OHCHR
5. Mr. Sean Callahan, President and CEO, CRS
6. Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF
7. Mr. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner, UNHCR
8. Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons
9. Mr. Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide
10. Ms. Maria Immonen, Vice-Chair of SCHR (Director of the Lutheran World Federation)
11. Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-HABITAT
12. Mr. Ignacio Packer, Executive Director, ICVA
13. Mr. Sam Worthington, CEO, InterAction
14. Mr. António Vitorino, Director General, IOM
15. Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, WFP
16. Mr. Laurent Thomas, Deputy Director, FAO Geneva
17. Mr. Roger Yates, Chair, ICVA (Regional Director, Plan International)
18. Ms. Asako Okai, Assistant Administrator, UNDP
19. Ms. Shoko Arakaki, Director Humanitarian Office, UNFPA