

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE**IASC PRINCIPALS AD HOC MEETING****SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS****Virtual, 29 March 2021****Introduction**

Mr. Mark Lowcock, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Chair of the IASC, convened an ad hoc IASC Principals meeting to provide an update on the work of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine, led by the ERC with representatives from FAO and WFP. The SG had announced the establishment of a High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine at the Security Council earlier this month.

The ERC noted that SG decided to establish this Task Force in a year where we see the concrete risk of major famine in several countries in 2021 if concerted action is not taken. The sole purpose of this Task Force is to prevent famine from occurring in the countries where we already see an extremely high risk – especially in the coming five to six months. The Task Force will focus its efforts on preventing famine in the countries at highest risk of famine in 2021 if no action is taken: Yemen, South Sudan, and Nigeria (North-East), and potentially Burkina Faso. The work of the Task Force will be time-bound and strictly focused on preventing famine where the risk already exists. The work will draw on the collective efforts of IASC members, around advocacy and resource mobilization, to avert the risk of famine in 2021. The work of the Task Force will build on existing structures and modalities – no new funding modalities or plans are envisaged. Efforts will focus on advocating for resources for famine prevention; advocating for improved access; and joining up efforts to share data and real time information. The sole measure of success of the Task Force's work was whether the world is able to prevent famines in 2021. It is expected that the Secretary-General may report back to the Security Council in May (date TBC).

Update on UN Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine

Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director General of FAO added that in addition to the countries facing imminent risk of famine, the Task Force would also monitor risks in a second tier of countries already facing food insecurity and where the potential for quick deterioration was present. Collective action by IASC members was therefore crucial, particularly around early warning, early action and prevention. FAO was fully committed to working with partners, including providing requisite support at country level through its 134 Country Offices.

Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director of WFP, noted that the Task Force was a temporary effort to an imminent crisis that should be prioritized. The Task Force would therefore provide much-needed advocacy to generate the required political will and accelerate resource mobilization to avert famine in 2021 in those countries already facing the highest risk of imminent famine [Yemen, South Sudan, and NE Nigeria]. In this regard, WFP stands ready to work closely together with local and national partners. WFP also stressed that the work of the Task Force should not replace current individual and agency efforts, including existing coordination and operational efforts, while also maintaining advocacy on addressing emergency food insecurity more broadly in a second tier of countries at risk of deteriorating food insecurity.

Discussion

IASC Principals welcomed the formation of the Task Force, particularly as the world was falling short on its commitments to prevent famines. The Principals agreed that the measure of success in 2021 is the aversion of famine which required, not only resourcing, but significant political will and collective effort and collaboration by the IASC. They stressed the need for political will by Member States, particularly in complying with international humanitarian law by averting the use of famine as a tool of war. Some members suggested the IASC speak more assertively in this regard.

Calls were made for integrated-multi-sectoral solutions (particularly on women and girls), better use of data, as well as efforts to mitigate the secondary impacts, including communal violence and negative coping mechanisms. In addition, consideration needs to be given to the various root causes of famine to inform advocacy efforts - including climate change and humanitarian access. The Task Force was called upon to support a better understanding of the complexities of each context. There is need for urgent advocacy on the continuing impact of COVID-19 - particularly the drop in remittances, lockdowns and other restrictions - on food insecurity.

With food insecurity worsened by access constraints, IASC Principals were also urged to continue advocating collectively for improved security conditions to ensure the sustenance of food production. Support to small scale farmers, particularly women, was critical to ensure their livelihoods which contributes to preventing famine.

IASC Principals called for a system-wide approach across humanitarian, development and peace spectrum, bringing together UN and NGO efforts and building on the critical role of local NGOs. In this regard, it was highlighted that NGO and civil society partners would send an open letter to Member States which would be released shortly.

IASC Principals also called for the better utilization of data, beyond the current Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), to better understand the drivers for famine and ensure the provision of early warnings to key decision-makers. While there were some advances to the IPC system such as the introduction of digital solutions, the Task Force was urged to consider the identification – within existing platforms - of indicators that function as red alert for high risk countries/regions. These efforts must be complimentary and build on existing mechanisms, such as the food security cluster. The

provision of real time data on food production, consumption, and supply was critical in this regard.

The Task Force was encouraged to prioritize the needs of women and girls who faced a double risk from famine, including the approximately 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women who were acutely malnourished. The work of the IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy, co-chaired by UNFPA and Save the Children, was suggested as a useful platform to bring together advocacy efforts, working closer with local and national civil society partners.

Follow-up Actions

1. Ensure a system-wide approach to preventing famine in the countries facing immediate risk of imminent famine in 2021 [currently Yemen, South Sudan, NE Nigeria, potentially Burkina Faso] [**High Level Task Force on Famine in collaboration with the IASC members**]
2. Develop advocacy messages and suggested actions covering the next six months with a focus on resource mobilization; improving humanitarian access; and ensuring better collaboration on data to preventing famine in the countries facing immediate risk of imminent famine in 2021 [**High Level Task Force on Famine in collaboration with the IASC members**]
3. Recognizing that the work of the Task Force is time-bound in nature, and no new plans or funding vehicles are to be established, consider how best to build on existing mechanisms and ensure complementarity, particularly with the engagement of the Global Food Security Cluster to advance the efforts of the HLTF on Famine. [**High Level Task Force on Famine in collaboration with the Global Food Security Cluster**].
4. Provide a progress update on the situation in Yemen, South Sudan, and NE Nigeria (and any other contexts that emerge as being at imminent risk of famine in 2021), and efforts to prevent famine, in late April. [**High Level Task Force on Famine in collaboration with IASC Deputies Forum**]
5. Keep IASC Principals informed of the work of the Task Force and apprised of any future briefings to the Security Council on the Task Force's work. [**USG/ERC with High Level Task Force on Famine**]

List of participants:

1. Mr. Mark Lowcock, Chair and Emergency Relief Coordinator
2. Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director General, FAO
3. Ms. Eva Svoboda Deputy Director of Law and Policy, ICRC
4. Mr. Ignacio Packer, Executive Director, ICVA
5. Ms. Meike Van Ginneken, Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department, IFAD
6. Mr. Julien Schopp, Vice President, InterAction,
7. Mr. Sean Callahan, President and CEO, Catholic Relief Services

8. Mr. Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide
9. Mr. Mohammedomer Mukhier, Regional Director for Africa, IFRC
10. Mr. António Vitorino, Director General, IOM
11. Mr. Sean Nolan, Deputy Director, Strategy, Policy and Review Department, IMF
12. Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF
13. Mr. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner, UNHCR
14. Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General, FAO
15. Mr. Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide
16. Ms. Abby Maxman, Chair of SCHR (President and CEO, Oxfam America)
17. Ms. Maria Immonen, Vice Chair of SCHR, (Director of the Lutheran World Federation)
18. Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, WFP
19. Mr. Gareth Price, Executive Secretary, SCHR
20. Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Assistant Secretary-General a.i, OCHA
21. Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner, OHCHR
22. Mr. Ib Peterson, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA
22. Ms. Amy Wood, Programme Officer, UN-Habitat
23. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head of IASC secretariat