

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

**SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS
IASC PRINCIPALS BI-ANNUAL MEETING**

Geneva, Switzerland

16 May 2022

Introduction

Mr. Martin Griffiths, Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Chair of the IASC, convened the IASC Principals bi-annual meeting for 2022 to discuss critical operational issues and agree on a way forward to address protection, access, and resourcing issues. The meeting was also an opportunity to reflect on opportunities for strengthened humanitarian diplomacy to address challenges in humanitarian action; agree on the way forward to strengthen the system's efforts to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment; and also consider the secondary impacts of the Ukraine crisis on humanitarian operations across the globe.

Country Contexts

IASC Principals discussed in a closed setting the humanitarian situation in a number of countries, including Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, Myanmar, the Sahel Region, and Ukraine.

Humanitarian Diplomacy

The ERC opened the discussion by thanking Mr. Peter Maurer, outgoing President of ICRC, for the collaboration over the years and the critical work done by ICRC under his leadership to address humanitarian needs on the ground. He also underscored the importance of capitalizing on the comparative advantage through the respective roles and mandates of ICRC and the UN to achieve common goals and the desired impact. The ERC then invited Mr. Maurer's reflections and advice.

Mr. Maurer spoke about how humanitarian diplomacy can be operationalized to increase humanitarian access and enable principled humanitarian action – noting that humanitarian diplomacy is about building on complementarities. He made references to three instances where humanitarian diplomacy worked: in Yemen with the engagement between ICRC and the SRSG for the liberation of detainees in the context of the Stockholm process; the critical advocacy carried out by the ERC for a broader approach in Afghanistan, including negotiating operating principals with the Taliban and working with various interlocutors towards addressing the potential breakdown of systems

through humanitarian work; and joined-up efforts – including by building trust with parties - to gain access and evacuate vulnerable communities in Ukraine.

Drawing on these examples, Mr. Maurer noted that there are opportunities to harmonize positions around policy issues – there are opportunities to exchange lessons, build skills (ex: with the CCHN co-led by ICRC, WFP and UNHCR), and share best practices. However, this is more challenging to do around humanitarian diplomacy – here, it is more important to determine who has the trust of parties. This must be done bilaterally or through limited alliances to achieve the desired impact. Trust building with parties is fundamental for diplomacy to work and it requires high degrees of confidentiality and trust.

Discussion

Reflecting upon Mr. Maurer’s comments, Principals exchanged on opportunities to better leverage the respective comparative advantages of different IASC members, including through better appreciation, understanding of respective mandates, and governing structures. They also spoke to the importance of localization and the obligation to protect local actors. There were also calls to broaden the definition of humanitarian diplomacy to address the erosion of humanitarian space and principles as well as the importance of balancing public versus private advocacy.

There was recognition that the IASC is an important space to discuss the dilemmas without having to be operational. Equally, there was acknowledgement that more can be done to consider digital transformations and do more to harmonize readings and scanning (including of IHL and IHRL violations). The importance of health transcending conflict and the historical legacy of this in securing humanitarian space was also raised. There was broad agreement that it was important to capitalize on the diversity within the IASC and the larger system to deliver results.

The ERC concluded by underscoring the need for effective humanitarian diplomacy rooted in the principles of solidarity, complementarity.

Follow-up Actions

1. Reinforce the IASC’s capacity to support collective advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy around specific issues and contexts - for a trial period of 6-12 months. **[OCHA]**
2. Map issues that require stepped up advocacy during the next months, including what needs to be done by whom. **[IASC secretariat in collaboration with IASC members].**

Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH)

Mr. Andrew Morley, Chair of Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and President/CEO of World Vision International, in his capacity as the 2022 IASC Champion for PSEAH, highlighted the importance of PSEAH given the power imbalances in the communities humanitarians are called on to serve and protect as well as pledge to do no harm.

Mr. Morley briefed members on his three priorities as IASC Champion. First, is a focus on a victims-centered approach – which will entail prioritizing people through the issuance of an ‘end-to-end guidance’ on implementing a victim or survivor-centered approach. Second, is a focus on country contexts - where the fifteen highest risk countries will have a dedicated and sustained inter-agency PSEA coordinator capacity. Third, is a focus on changing culture and mindset so that PSEA is not an afterthought, not something we do as an add on, but is a priority we are boldly tackling head on. Where there are perpetrators, we ensure that they are prevented from employment in other organizations. The Misconduct Disclosure Scheme has already prevented 144 recruitments.

Ms. Jane Connors, the UN Victims’ Rights Advocate (UNVRA), noted that field victims’ rights advocates have been appointed in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Haiti. She also indicated that she supported the development of a rights-based common definition of victim/survivor centered approach (VCA) and announced that core principles have been endorsed by the High-Level Committee on Management. Additionally, a Statement on the Rights of Victims of SEA was being finalized. However, she reported that challenges remain in the obligation to report SEA on a need-to-know basis to the appropriate UN agency. This required balancing the rights of the victim/survivor to confidentiality, and the interest of the organization to protecting others from harm. She highlighted other barriers to reporting, including inaccessible pathways, stigma and reprisals, high turnover of personnel and poor capacity, or weak confidentiality safeguards. She underscored the need to recognize the drivers of SEA and harassment as well as a joined-up approach to manage reports. One good practice is to include victims’ rights advocates in investigations to ensure that victims are treated with dignity. Services for victims are still lacking, which should be provided through existing GBV services. These are chronically underfunded and may not exist in remote and challenging environments.

Discussion

IASC members voiced support for the multi-year IASC vision and strategy and agreed with the Championship priorities. Prevention through tailoring messages using understandable constructs and local languages was emphasized, and the UNHCR/ICVA PSEA Communication Outreach and Communication Fund was highlighted to provide resources for this purpose.

Preventive and proactive action in Ukraine was already underway, where dedicated capacity has been deployed even though no allegations have been reported yet. However, there are still concerns as in the scale-up reference checking is not being prioritized. In addition, PSEA capacity is being recruited away from local and national organizations, where it is most needed. It is important to look at the capacity for the entire system.

Several IASC members highlighted the need for sustainable funding, especially for dedicated inter-agency PSEA coordination capacity. UNFPA noted that, as a continuation of their Championship initiative, they would be issuing another roster call to expand the pool of candidates. However, deployments will need funding, and a mechanism should be identified to mobilize funding from interested donors and support the administration of the those deployed. There is a need to ensure clear.

The challenges in shifting organizational culture were highlighted by several members. One way to achieve a change in culture was to invest in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and to ensure there is gender parity in front-line response. The length of time to complete investigations can be an additional detriment to building a culture that encourages reporting.

The session concluded with the endorsement of the 2022-2026 IASC Strategy for PSEAH.

Follow-up Actions

3. Move forward with the implementation of the 2022-2026 IASC Vision and Strategy for PSEAH and welcomed the IASC Championship priorities. **[IASC Members]**
4. Advise on how the capacitating and resourcing PSEAH, including making available sustainable PSEAH capacity in the field, can be addressed. **[IASC PSEAH Champion]**.

Secondary Impacts of the Ukraine Crisis

The IASC Principals discussed the consequences of the crisis in Ukraine and the ways in which these were being manifested across the globe, including in fragile and humanitarian contexts. With the evolving situation, it was critical to continue to monitor the situation and assess the implications on the level and scale of humanitarian needs to inform the system's response. Similarly, an analysis of the wider political ramifications of the crisis on humanitarian action as well as the direct or indirect negative impact of sanctions on humanitarian action (including disruptions in the supply of grain, fuel, energy, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, amongst others) was critical, as it was evident that the crisis could translate globally to increased vulnerabilities, cost of assistance, potential instability, to name a few. There were strong calls to step-up

advocacy and resource mobilization to reinforce the importance of equality in the provision of assistance across humanitarian contexts.

Follow-up Actions

1. Consider practical ways to mitigate the emerging global consequences of the Ukraine crisis, including opportunities for joint advocacy. **[IASC Deputies Group]**
2. IASC Principals to remain engaged to assess the broader political implications of the crisis on multilateralism and humanitarian action. **[IASC Members]**

AOB and Closing

The ERC concluded by reminding members that following IASC agreement in 2021 to commission a review of the implementation of the IASC Centrality of Protection Policy, an independent review team from the Humanitarian Policy Group at ODI had finalized their report which would be shared shortly. A Principals discussion on the report would be scheduled for 24 June 2022.

The ERC closed the meeting by thanking Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons who would be concluding her tenure in October 2022. The ERC noted the good collaboration over the years and her tremendous contribution to the work of the IASC.

List of participants:

1. Mr. Martin Griffiths, Chair and **Emergency Relief Coordinator**
2. Mr. Sean Callahan, President and Chief Executive Officer, **Catholic Relief Services**
3. Mr. Laurent Thomas Deputy Director-General, **FAO**
4. Mr. Peter Maurer, President, **ICRC**
5. Mr. Robert Mandini, Director General, **ICRC**
6. Ms. Jane Backhurst, Chair of ICVA Board (Senior Adviser, Humanitarian Policy and Advocacy, **Christian Aid**)
7. Mr. Ignacio Packer, Executive Director, **ICVA**
8. Mr. Sam Worthington, **InterAction**
9. Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General, **IFRC**
10. Mr. Jeff Labovitz, Director, Department of Operations and Emergencies, **IOM**
11. Ms. Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner, **OHCHR**
12. Mr. Andrew Morley, Chair of **SCHR** (President and Chief Executive Officer, World Vision International)
13. Ms. Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Vice Chair of SCHR (Secretary General of **CARE International**)
14. Mr. Gareth Price Jones, Executive Secretary, **SCHR**
15. Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, **UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons**
16. Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, **UNDP**
17. Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, **UNFPA**
18. Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, **UN-HABITAT**
19. Mr. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner for the Refugees, **UNHCR**
20. Mr. Omar Abdi, Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, **UNICEF**
21. Ms. Jane Connors, **UN Victims' Rights Advocate**
22. Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, **WFP**
23. Dr. Mike Ryan, Executive Director, Health Emergencies Programme, **WHO**
24. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head, **IASC secretariat**