INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

Concise Terms of Reference and Action Procedures

February 2014

I.   MONITORING AND DECISION-MAKING

1.1   Monitoring Implementation

The IASC Secretariat will monitor implementation of decisions on a regular basis and will report annually to the IASC Working Group (IASC WG) on the previous year's activities. IASC organizations have the responsibility to implement decisions as agreed and to inform the Secretariat on a regular basis of progress highlighting any problems arising. The IASC WG will present an annual review to the IASC for its consideration.

1.2 Decision-making process

The IASC will endeavour to take all decisions by consensus. In instances where there is no consensus, but where there is a convergence of views among a majority of IASC organizations, the following will apply:

- on matters pertaining to the implementation of agreed coordination arrangements, the ERC will decide on the basis of the convergence of the majority;

- on other important matters, the ERC will refer to the Secretary-General for a decision; and

- all decisions will be taken in full respect of the mandates of individual IASC organizations.

II ACTION PROCEDURES

2.1 Frequency of Meetings

- The IASC Principals will meet as necessary, and regularly every 6 months.

- The IASC WG will meet in ad hoc meetings as necessary, and will meet once a year for an extended meeting to review the work of the Task Teams and the Reference Groups, to take stock of humanitarian policy issues, and to agree on an annual work plan.

- The Emergency Directors Group (EDG) will meet as necessary, and will meet once a year for an extended meeting to complete a review of global humanitarian operations and the performance of Humanitarian Coordinators.

- Extraordinary meetings of the IASC, IASC WG, or EDG may be called at the initiative of any organization and may take place in person or via video-conferencing or other available media as appropriate.

2.2 Priorities and Agenda

The overall priorities for the IASC over two years will be endorsed by the Principals based on preparation by the WG. Agendas for meetings of the Principals and WG will be developed following consultation with IASC organizations. Agendas for the EDG will be based on ongoing operational activities.

2.3 Background Papers

The responsibility for the preparation of background papers lies with all organizations. The Secretariat will advise on deadlines for consultation. Papers will be submitted to the Secretariat for circulation **not less than 10 working days prior to a meeting of the IASC and IASC WG** except in cases of extreme urgency. Papers will be expected to include a summary of the issues to be discussed and options and recommendations for the consideration of the IASC or IASC WG.

2.4 Action Points and Summary Records

All formal meetings of the IASC and the IASC WG will be minuted and Action Points and Summary Records will be produced by the Secretariat. A Summary Record and Action Points will be produced for each EDG meeting. The Action Points agreed at all IASC meetings will always indicate deadlines and responsibility for implementation and should be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.

III. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE, ITS WORKING GROUP, ITS EMERGENCY DIRECTORS GROUP AND THE IASC SECRETARIAT

3.1 Introduction

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was established in June 1992 in response to General Assembly Resolution 46/182 to serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination relating to humanitarian assistance in response to complex and major emergencies under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

3.2 Structure and Composition

The members of the IASC are the heads or their designated representatives of the UN operational agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, FAO, WHO, UN-HABITAT, OCHA). In addition, there is a standing invitation to IOM, ICRC[1], IFRC[1], OHCHR, UNFPA, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs and the World Bank. The NGO consortia ICVA, InterAction and SCHR are also invited on a permanent basis to attend. The IASC is chaired by the ERC.

The IASC may also invite, on an ad hoc basis, representatives of specialized organizations.

The IASC may review its membership each year.

The organizations will be represented at the Working Group level by Senior Management (Director of Policy or equivalent). The IASC WG is chaired by the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The organizations will be represented at the Emergency Directors Group by Senior Management (Director of Emergency Divisions or comparable entities). The EDG is chaired by the Director of OCHA's Coordination Response Division.

The IASC WG will, upon request of the IASC, or as required, establish Task Teams to assist in developing policy or operational guidelines for relief interventions, as well as their interface with rehabilitation and developmental processes. These Task Teams may be emergency-specific or focus on a particular policy issue. The Terms of Reference for each Task Team will be determined by the IASC WG and progress will be monitored by the IASC WG. The IASC WG will also establish and monitor Reference Groups, which are communities of practice which function to ensure implementation of IASC norms and policies.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will provide secretariat support to the IASC, its Working Group, its Emergency Directors Group and its designated Task Teams. The Secretariat will be responsible for providing technical support and servicing of meetings of the IASC, for monitoring the implementation of the decisions of the IASC and for supporting the Chairs of the IASC bodies in highlighting and fostering connectivity between the IASC, the Working Group, the Emergency Directors Group and the designated Task Teams.

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[1] As Standing Invitees, the ICRC and the IFRC keep their independence towards policy statements issued by the IASC and its subsidiary bodies.

3.3 Objectives and Principles

The **overall objective of the IASC** is to improve delivery of humanitarian assistance, including the protection of the rights of affected people. The primary objectives of the IASC in complex and major emergencies are as follows:

- to develop and agree on system-wide humanitarian policies;

- to allocate responsibilities amongst agencies in humanitarian programmes;

- to develop and agree on a common ethical framework for all humanitarian activities;

- to advocate common humanitarian principles to parties outside the IASC;

- to advocate for the full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law);

- to identify and address areas where gaps in mandates or lack of operational capacity exist; and

- to resolve disputes or disagreements about and amongst humanitarian agencies on system-wide humanitarian issues.

In so doing, **six key principles** will be observed:

1. **Respect for Mandates:** that decisions of the IASC will not compromise organizations with respect to their own mandates

2. **Ownership:** that all organizations have an equal ownership of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies

3. **Overall Objective:** that the ultimate objective is to support effective humanitarian action

4. **Relevance to field operations:** that members recognise the criticality of ensuring relevance to field operations and of input by field operations

5. **Subsidiarity:** that decisions will be taken at the most appropriate level as agreed by IASC Principals

6. **Impartiality of the Secretariat:** that the IASC will be serviced by a Secretariat that does not represent the interests of any one organization.

3.4 Specific Responsibilities of the IASC Principals, its Working Group, its Emergency Directors Group and the Secretariat

*The **IASC Principals** will have responsibility for:*

- making strategic and policy decisions which have system-wide implications;

- endorsing major operational decisions, particularly with respect to implementation of the Transformative Agenda (TA);

- arbitration where no consensus can be reached at the Working Group or Emergency Directors levels;

- advocating common humanitarian principles, collectively or individually, on behalf of the IASC;

- approving the general work programme of the IASC, the WG, and the EDG;

- bringing issues to the attention of the Secretary-General and the Security Council, through the ERC; and

- designating Humanitarian Coordinators and selecting coordination arrangements.

*The **Working Group** will have responsibility for:*

- developing policies and guidance in line with strategic decisions made by the IASC;

- making proposals to the IASC on strategic issues;

- establishing and overseeing the work of the Task Teams;

- establishing and monitoring the Reference Groups; and

- collaborating with the EDG in identifying and elaborating policy matters with direct bearing on humanitarian operations.

*The **Emergency Directors Group** will have responsibility for:*

- advising the IASC on operational issues of strategic concern;

- preparing options and recommendations for the IASC on operational issues;

- mobilizing agency and Global Cluster resources to address operational challenges and gaps, in support of Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs);

- considering future high-risk scenarios and determining appropriate early actions in support of HCs and HCTs;

- supporting the Principals in the activation and initial implementation of a system-wide Level 3 (L3) emergency response as defined in the TA Protocols;

- ensuring appropriate information sharing with IASC WG so as to address policy gaps and inform policy formulation; and

- monitoring and providing support, including through capacity building and guidance, to the implementation of the TA.

*The **IASC Secretariat** will have responsibility for:*

- proactively maintaining communication channels amongst organizations;

- collating and suggesting possible future agenda items on an ongoing basis;

- preparing an annual work plan for the WG based on decisions taken at their annual meetings;

- facilitating preparations for each meeting of the IASC Principals and the WG;

- facilitating regular and ad hoc meetings of the IASC Principals and the WG;

- disseminating minutes and records of meetings and decisions taken;

- monitoring the implementation of IASC and WG decisions; and

- supporting the Chairs of the IASC bodies in highlighting and fostering connectivity between the IASC Principals, the Working Group, the Emergency Directors Group and the Task Teams.