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**Executive Board  
Annual Session**

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## **REPORTS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

Agenda item 7

# E

### **PART IV**

**Follow-up to Economic and Social Council  
resolution 1995/56: Strengthening of the  
coordination of emergency humanitarian  
assistance of the United Nations**

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

1. This document is submitted to the Executive Board for review and comments.
2. Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.
3. The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.
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# WFP response to ECOSOC resolution 1995/56

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## SECTION I: ROLE AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995 of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) called for a review of the capacity of the United Nations system's operational agencies to effectively provide emergency humanitarian assistance.
2. The resolution was briefly reported to the Fortieth Session of the CFA. Its objective is to arrive, through a dialogue in governing body deliberations, at proposals that would ultimately improve the coordination and effectiveness of the United Nations relief system. A summary of these deliberations would eventually serve as inputs to a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General for review by Member States at the 1997 substantive session of ECOSOC.
3. This process is an opportunity to review the role of WFP in emergencies, particularly:
  - a) constraints related to mandate and resource issues;
  - b) overlaps, gaps and imbalances in the current system; and
  - c) options and recommendations for improvements to the capacity, practice and policy of WFP to meet future humanitarian assistance needs.
4. The full text of the resolution, along with a list of indicative issues, is provided in Annex I. Annex II contains a summary of key points and suggestions made in this paper.<sup>1</sup> WFP will address the ECOSOC resolution in two stages, as follows:

Section I: Paper presented at the current session of the Executive Board on WFP's role and operational responsibilities, including areas where WFP could take on a larger future role. This covers issues 1, 2, 4 and 6 identified by the ECOSOC resolution.

Section II: Paper to be presented to the Third Regular Session (21-24 October 1996) of the Executive Board on WFP's capacity to fulfil its mandate. This will cover issues

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<sup>1</sup> This report follows a format agreed to by participating agencies of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), with a slight modification.



Section II: Paper to be presented to the Third Regular Session (21–24 October 1996) of the Executive Board on WFP's capacity to fulfil its mandate. This will cover issues 3, 5, and 7 to 10 of the resolution. Cost and capacity implications of WFP possibly assuming a somewhat larger role will be examined in the second paper on the basis of discussions at the forthcoming session.

## **II. ROLE AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (Issue No. 2)**

5. The vision of the World Food Programme is a world in which every person has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life. Therefore, the policies governing the use of WFP food aid are directed towards the goal of eradicating hunger and poverty. WFP's mission is to: a) save lives in emergency situations; b) improve the nutrition and quality of life of the most vulnerable people at critical times in their lives; and c) help build assets and promote the self-reliance of poor people and communities.
6. WFP has sought to focus on interventions where food has a comparative advantage as a relief and development resource: when food supplies are essential for survival, where they are inadequate or unreliable, where people's purchasing power is limited and food supplies do not reach the market - all factors common to natural disasters or those resulting from conflict. Food is also the unique resource to have a nutritional impact, and one that is more likely to reach the poor, women and children.
7. In recent years, WFP food aid interventions have undergone a marked change in character. The dramatic rise in the number and complexity of relief situations has prompted a shift in the balance of WFP's work from development towards relief, and new development projects are often associated with the recovery phase of emergency operations. As a result, WFP has become one of the main actors in the global humanitarian relief response.
8. The specific role of WFP in emergencies is to:
  - a) support disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation activities;
  - b) meet emergency food needs and related transport and logistic support (assess nature and extent of food aid requirements, mobilize resources, and purchase and transport food);
  - c) disseminate information on global food aid requirements and flows;
  - d) provide transport and logistic expertise and assistance, and assess and improve such capacity where necessary, for rapid and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid;
  - e) on behalf of bilateral donors, arrange for the purchase and transport of food and related non-food items, and the monitoring of their distribution;



- f) coordinate all sources of relief food assistance;
  - g) distribute food, through the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or direct, and monitor and report on food distributions to the internally displaced;
  - h) promote the transition from relief to development;
  - i) advocate contributions, public awareness, and appropriate food aid policy.
9. Realizing that in emergency situations women are often marginalized, WFP has made the following commitments: full involvement of women in planning and managing relief assistance; provision of emergency assistance which meets the special needs of women; and distribution of relief food direct to households, especially women.
10. WFP's comparative advantages are as follows:
- a) Food aid is an essential element in a response strategy that aims to save lives. It is self-targeting in that it is particularly attractive to those really in need.
  - b) WFP has a dual mandate in providing both long-term development assistance and immediate life-saving emergency relief. This enables the Programme to:
    - i) reduce people's vulnerability to disaster through development activities and disaster mitigation; and ii) encourage the transition from relief to development by phasing assistance naturally into rehabilitation programmes.
  - c) WFP can respond rapidly having: i) stand-by capacity with donors and NGOs; ii) pre-positioned resources in the form of in-country stocks and en route shipments of WFP development project resources; and iii) rapid response teams.
  - d) The Programme has a highly specialized and cost-effective transport and logistic capability which includes: i) a developed ocean transport capacity with its own internationally recognized contractual arrangements, expertise in bulk grain transport, and network of shipping agents, brokers, surveyors and superintendents; ii) extensive landside and airlift/airdrop operations; iii) expertise in enhancing and rehabilitating transport and logistic infrastructure; and iv) experience in opening up transport corridors in conflict situations.
  - e) Its wide mandate allows interventions in natural disasters and in man-made emergencies, in favour of populations in countries of origin and those of asylum. WFP can also operate without a request from a government, which enables it to provide aid in internal conflict situations.
  - f) WFP has been universally acknowledged as coordinator of food aid pledges, deliveries, and related logistics from all sources, a key element in the cost-effectiveness of the emergency relief response.



- g) The Programme has developed specialized food procurement expertise, allowing cost-effective local, regional and international purchases.
11. The speed of WFP's emergency response is based to a large extent on the existence of its development programme. As development activities are curtailed, not only will food-insecure populations become more vulnerable and less able to cope with emergencies, but WFP's own pre-positioning capability will be reduced. Moreover, post-emergency rehabilitation will become more difficult.

## Transport and logistics

12. WFP's impressive transport and logistic capacity is fully recognized, and many governments and relief organizations within and outside the United Nations system call upon the Programme to provide expertise and assistance in this area.
13. WFP's current logistic role is to: a) ensure the most cost-effective and timely delivery of food supplies for its relief and development activities world-wide; b) transport food and non-food items and passengers for United Nations, bilateral and NGO operations, as per formal arrangements; c) implement special projects to build local transport and logistic capacity; and d) implement logistic preparedness activities.
14. To address major bottle-necks, WFP periodically undertakes special logistic interventions, including related telecommunications; provides logistic advisory services; or intervenes to improve transport and logistic infrastructure. These efforts support local capacity-building and long-term development by facilitating movement of goods and people.
15. As part of an overall effort to improve its emergency response, WFP has undertaken logistic preparedness activities, such as logistic capacity assessments and contingency planning, stand-by arrangements and service packages.
16. WFP has acted as logistic coordinator for the relief effort on behalf of other agencies in such places as Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique and the Sudan. This has included purchasing equipment on behalf of other operational agencies, such as power generators for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Both the 1990 Nordic Study and the 1994 Tripartite Evaluation of the World Food Programme have recommended a more formal role for WFP in relief logistics work. The 1994 Tripartite Evaluation advised that:

"...action be taken by the central coordinating mechanisms of the United Nations system, together with the Programme's own governing bodies, to formalize a system-wide logistics mandate for WFP in emergency situations .... The main points of such a mandate might include the provision of transport services, on a cost-recovery basis, to other United Nations agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs, including both food and non-food items provided for relief purposes...ensuring, when necessary, that the logistics infrastructure of the stricken area is functioning well enough for the relief operation to be conducted efficiently...(and) coordinating the logistic aspects of emergency operations, within the framework of the



broader coordination mandate of the United Nations." Main Report, pp. 101-102

17. WFP's transport and logistic capacities suggest a possible broader future role in emergency situations in:
  - a) formally taking on a system-wide responsibility for matters relating to logistics and transport for both food and non-food items, including assistance to countries in developing their own transport arrangements;
  - b) providing field logistics and transport services for both food and non-food items that are resourced and distributed on site by other operational agencies;
  - c) expanding partnerships in transport and logistic infrastructure support projects in the relief stage of emergencies with the major development actors, such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
  - d) expanding inter-agency activities in logistic contingency planning.

## Non-food inputs

18. Food assistance is only one aspect of relief interventions. An array of non-food inputs, such as essential social and sanitation services (i.e., water, health care and education), shelter, and income-generating support, are integral parts of an effective relief response. Furthermore, in the post-emergency period, non-food inputs tend to increase in relative importance.
19. Food alone is not enough to meet the nutritional needs of beneficiaries. In refugee and displaced person situations particularly, food becomes an important exchange mechanism, in many cases the main item of exchange. As often the only resource available, food will be used to meet other essential needs. This can have various negative effects: the nutritional status of beneficiaries may be affected, and large food aid sales may destabilize the local economy and undermine efforts to promote food security. Sale of food rations is also an inefficient way to meet the non-food needs of beneficiaries. Beneficiaries get only a fraction of what it costs the international community to deliver food to them.
20. Relief foods typically provided require processing and cooking. Not addressing these needs has led to environmental damage (land degradation, water contamination and deforestation), undermining the long-term food security of displaced people and host communities alike.
21. It would be desirable to identify predictable and reliable partners for the supply of non-food inputs related to provision of fuel and safe water for drinking, health care, sanitation, etc. WFP could resource and deliver all items in the food chain directly related to food processing (jerrycans, fuel, fuel-efficient stoves, cooking utensils) in order to ensure the integrity of the nutritional pipeline.
22. Whereas WFP identifies global food aid requirements on behalf of the international relief community, no specific agency is responsible for identifying overall non-food



requirements in emergency situations. A better coordinated system than currently in force, whereby each agency individually calls for items in their purview, could define non-food item requirements, and thus facilitate planning and resourcing and eliminate duplication of effort.

### **Role in preparedness and response**

23. In 1995 WFP formalized a conceptual framework to articulate the Programme's role in emergencies and to set forth a preparedness and response strategy which integrates its existing capacities and activities, with the following components:
  - a) advance knowledge of, and planning for, potential emergencies, including vulnerability analysis and mapping, collaboration with early warning systems, assessments of logistic capacity and intervention options, and scenario-based contingency planning;
  - b) inputs for immediate response, including WFP rapid response teams to set up food aid programmes in the first phase of the emergency, strategic stocks of food and equipment, stand-by arrangements (including negotiations on access to military and civilian defense assets), and service packages;
  - c) sound emergency management, such as guidelines, procedures, information systems, reporting, telecommunications and emergency training for the development of human resources.
24. The WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) project produces: a) analyses of the vulnerability of target populations to food insecurity and their capacities for coping with disaster; b) maps of countries/regions containing such profiles; and c) maps of WFP logistic facilities and ongoing food deliveries. The VAM information is used by WFP and shared with other relief partners for better targeting in disaster situations, to improve both long-term strategic and contingency planning, help with development project identification and design, and guide decisions on operational and programming concerns. WFP coordinates its early warning and VAM activities with the FAO Global Information Early Warning System (GIEWS), the USAID-financed Famine Early Warning System, and Save the Children Fund—United Kingdom's Risk Map project.
25. The donor evaluation of emergency assistance to Rwanda concluded that support for preparedness (contingency planning, capacity assessments) and investments in mitigating logistic bottle-necks has not been adequate; neither have the resources made available for rehabilitation. Overall, although early warning information is now generally timely and accurate, finding the political will to mobilize resources at the onset of an emergency has been an issue, and delayed response has led to loss of life and, ultimately, additional costs.





## WFP's role in the transition to rehabilitation and development

26. At the earliest possible moment, WFP explores opportunities for developmental uses of relief food assistance, particularly in the context of protracted emergencies, to rebuild livelihoods and assets and reduce dependency on ongoing assistance. Examples include:
- a) employment generation through food for work;
  - b) seed protection programmes for agricultural activities in conjunction with resettlement or drought-recovery programmes. Relief food is provided prior to the harvest to prevent seeds from being consumed in times of scarcity and crops from being harvested prematurely;
  - c) meeting nutritional needs for a restricted period to encourage resettlement, repatriation or reintegration of refugees and the internally displaced and the demobilization of soldiers until they can produce their own food or earn an income;
  - d) food for work for post-conflict rehabilitation of war-damaged infrastructure (health clinics, schools and roads) and productive assets (land clearing/improvement, fish-ponds, etc.);
  - e) food for work for rural infrastructure (roads to facilitate movements of people and goods; water resources such as wells and ponds; dikes for irrigation and flood control; and soil conservation/reforestation projects) and agricultural development to facilitate reintegration and create assets to mitigate future disasters;
  - f) temporary provision of food aid in lieu of salary to teachers, health workers, etc. to encourage the resumption of essential social services in the post-war rehabilitation phase;
  - g) phasing-over from general food distribution: i) to targeted vulnerable group feeding to create social safety nets; and ii) to regular WFP development projects;
  - h) creating social markets through food stamps and ration shops to protect the poor from shocks during revival of the commercial market system;
  - i) local purchase of food and use of local traders for food monetization, purchase, storage and transport to encourage the post-conflict recovery of local agricultural and commercial sectors.
27. In the post-emergency recovery phase, the timely availability of seeds and tools is crucial to the resumption of food production and reduced dependence on food aid. FAO should identify post-emergency seed requirements and seed and tool technical specifications. Agencies have been assigned the task of resourcing and delivering seeds and tools. WFP could procure and deliver these items to where they are needed.



28. Food security is a basic precondition for the establishment of peace and economic recovery. Food aid plays a key role in releasing people's energy for reconstruction activities, but food aid alone cannot generate a pace of development that would be self-sustaining. Closer links should be pursued with traditional development agencies such as the World Bank and UNDP regarding support for the repair and reconstruction of infrastructure, even during the emergency phase of an operation, and subsequently during recovery and rehabilitation.

### **Strengthening local capacity and coping mechanisms (Issue No. 1)**

29. A major determinant of the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian assistance is the extent to which it strengthens (or erodes) local capacity and mechanisms to cope with future crises. Local authorities and communities are ultimately responsible for guiding and propelling rehabilitation and development efforts, and their empowerment is essential.
30. In planning and executing relief and rehabilitation activities, WFP seeks to engage local NGOs and local expertise and involve the beneficiary community in targeting the most needy, as well as building up capacity for developmental activities after the acute phase of the emergency has passed. Such support to local governments and NGOs involves technical assistance, training, provision of equipment, design of projects to improve infrastructure, and systems for food transport, storage and handling. WFP also helps build local capacity in early warning (trained staff, data sets, systems and equipment) through its VAM activities.
31. **Coping mechanisms.** WFP's vulnerability assessments provide a better understanding of coping mechanisms; and help design interventions to strengthen them, facilitate poor people's access to food and preserve key assets, such as livestock and seeds.
32. **Community participation.** WFP seeks to improve community involvement in the following aspects of its relief operations: a) identification of needs; b) awareness-raising of food entitlement among beneficiaries for maximum accountability and equity of distribution; c) cooperation in registration and assessment of household-level needs; d) design of operations; e) identifying selection criteria and vulnerable groups; f) monitoring food aid distributions; and g) programme evaluation. WFP's interface with the community has taken a variety of forms, such as meetings with elders or local leadership, local NGO implementing partners, and representatives of grass-roots associations and women's groups, direct contact with the food aid recipients, or committees made up of representatives from all of these groups.
33. Assessing progress in capacity-building, coping mechanisms and community participation is more difficult than counting tons of food delivered. These aspects, however, do not get the same donor support. WFP is formally committed to making fundamental changes in policy, practice and institutional structure to address gender, community participation, and other qualitative issues, but is restricted by capacity.



34. Local coping capacity and food security of refugees and the displaced often depend on the generosity of the host population with respect to providing resources (land and often seeds and tools, fuel, water and employment). The impact on the environment, assets and livelihoods of the local host population of the massive concentrations of displaced populations has not received adequate attention or financial support. The priority for available resources must, of course, be directed to saving lives at risk. Yet failure to deal with these issues can lead to tension between refugee/displaced and host populations as a result of competition for resources. Thought should be given to extending social services provided through the relief operation also to local populations, where appropriate.

### **III. CAPACITY TO RESPOND - to be covered in Section II.**

### **IV. RESOURCES - to be covered in Section II.**

### **V. COORDINATION (Issue No. 6)**

35. WFP plays an important role as coordinator of relief food assistance, mainly through its assessment function, collection and dissemination of information on global food aid requirements, and local management of delivery and storage data. Despite efforts to strengthen exchange of information on respective operations at the field level, some duplication still exists which leads to delays and less cost-effective operations due to food aid being channelled through a multitude of agencies without advising the Programme.
36. In the planning and implementation of relief interventions, WFP relies on a wide range of partners to integrate food aid resources within a global and comprehensive approach to meet emergency needs. Cooperation takes the form of division of labour based on respective comparative advantages and synchronization of planning and resourcing functions. Good cooperation with other actors on the relief scene, however, is in no way a substitute for a coordination machinery which ensures that different inputs are provided in a coherent and timely fashion.
37. Ideally, coordination needs to concentrate on strategic planning, the sharing of information, consolidation of appeals, assistance with resource mobilization, developing unified policies on issues of mutual concern, and joint training. In situations of conflict, coordination arrangements need to cover relief, peace-keeping and political sides of operations.
38. However, coordination must be properly managed to maximize its cost-benefits, effectiveness and impact. From the agencies' point of view, it requires a commitment of substantial staff time and resources for reports, meetings, and inter-agency assessments and appeals. Ways to reduce the burden, both centrally and on agencies, should be explored, such as greater use of existing technology to hold meetings through teleconferencing and rationalizing reporting requirements.
39. The multiplication of coordination mechanisms and layers of decision-making at the country and central level has occasionally caused confusion. Apart from



humanitarian coordinators appointed by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), the Secretary-General, UNHCR and other agencies have all on occasions nominated special envoys.

## **Exchange of information and telecommunications**

40. To effectively fulfil its role of coordinating delivery of emergency food assistance, WFP relies upon other United Nations agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs, in addition to its own network, to provide accurate and up-to-date information. To facilitate the exchange of information, common information systems and compatible telecommunications networks are needed. New and exciting trends in inter-agency telecommunications cooperation are afoot. WFP has participated in the efforts of the Inter-agency Telecommunications Coordinating Committee, convened by the Electronic Services Division of the United Nations Secretariat, to address a variety of issues for standardizing and interconnecting United Nations telecommunications systems. The initial step is under way of determining the types of equipment/systems that agencies are using by developing data bases of HF/VHF radio equipment and capabilities and INMARSAT satellite use. Progress is being made on establishing a United Nations "Thin-Route" satellite network for inter-agency sharing of telecommunications resources. Options to use the services of the INTELSAT DAMA multiple-access satellite network currently under field testing are being pursued to minimize cost and maximize reliability of voice and data transmission.
41. DHA's efforts to establish an electronic network to share emergency information of operational use instantaneously among relief agencies through the ReliefWeb project will greatly facilitate coordination of assessment, planning, response and resource mobilization through electronically published appeals. WFP has been fully involved in its development and has seconded staff to DHA to assist in the establishment of this important project. All international relief organizations should develop a site on the Internet's World-Wide Web as the mechanism for sharing information through ReliefWeb. A restricted channel of communication for international relief practitioners to communicate confidentially on sensitive operational matters would be useful, and could also be developed under this mechanism.
42. Administrative mechanisms and a management culture to support inter-agency telecommunications and exchange of information initiatives are needed. Supplementary protocols must be developed to agree on the type of information to be exchanged, how frequently and at what level (i.e., field, regional office and/or headquarters), perhaps by the Inter-agency Telecommunications Coordinating Committee, in cooperation with DHA.



## Working with DHA

43. DHA was specifically set up to improve relief coordination in the United Nations system. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), its Working Group and various task forces have served as organs for decisions on important interventions and as channels for developing policy guidelines on issues of concern to relief operations and on coordination arrangements. DHA coordinates preparation of consolidated appeals and some inter-agency assessment missions, with a view to promoting an integrated and comprehensive response by the United Nations agencies (and often NGOs) to complex emergency situations. DHA also plays an important role in collecting and disseminating information through a variety of mechanisms, including committee and task force meetings, publications and the ReliefWeb. DHA's involvement in collecting and disseminating information permits identification of gaps in the coverage of humanitarian requirements that fall between the mandates of the various actors. However, filling these gaps currently depends on the will of donors and the capacity of United Nations agencies.
44. Introduction of the consolidated appeals process (CAP) has promoted a coordinated approach within the United Nations system to programming and resourcing emergency operations. It has also given the donor community a global overview of relief requirements, enabling prioritization among sectors of assistance and different agencies. The CAP has also helped the international community to lend attention to requirements for the post-emergency transition from relief to rehabilitation and long-term development. DHA is in the process of finalizing a financial and procedural performance evaluation of the effectiveness of the process in mobilizing funds. This is expected to determine how the CAP and present guidelines for preparing appeals could be further improved and enhanced.
45. The degree to which DHA has succeeded in carrying out its role of ensuring a coherent implementation of relief activities at the field level through the designation of humanitarian coordinators has varied. It is often difficult to make a separation between operational responsibilities and a purely coordinating function, and sometimes the operational agencies have an advantage in providing both a coordinating and operational lead in tackling relief operations.
46. As an example, DHA's role as overall United Nations coordinator for Military and Civil Defense Assets (MCDA) through the MCD Unit (MCDU) could be valuable. This includes coordinating all United Nations relief agencies' requests to donors for obtaining these assets for use in relief responses. The MCDU has developed a standard set of "service modules" with common terminology and formats to facilitate access to these assets. WFP defers to the MCDU for most of the Programme's interactions with donor militaries.
47. Another example regards DHA's role in resource mobilization. The appropriate role for the Department in this area should be support and the sharing of information on overall requirements within a DHA-coordinated planning and prioritizing process, but mobilization on behalf of agencies could lead to confusion.
48. There is also need for a formula to set priorities in the CAP to focus the emergency response on critical requirements. The process is sometimes lengthy, and,



given the long lead time required to mobilize food aid, has occasionally resulted in WFP (and UNHCR) issuing advance appeals to ensure that food aid arrives in good time. This has sometimes ended in discrepancies between information contained in WFP advance appeals and that in DHA-consolidated appeals. Review of the CAP, taking these problems into account, is therefore necessary.

## **Working with partners: development of MOUs (Issue No.4)**

49. Recognizing that food aid plays a key role in sustaining the lives of refugees, and normally constitutes two thirds of overall relief inputs, WFP and UNHCR have cultivated a close and complementary relationship over the years in refugee and returnee feeding operations. The framework for this relationship is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Joint Working Arrangements for Refugee, Returnee and Internally Displaced Feeding Operations, widely regarded as a particularly successful example of United Nations inter-agency coordination. Coordination in emergencies is also done through joint food aid needs assessment missions with United Nations agencies, NGOs and governments, task force meetings at the headquarters level, and field level reviews and consultations.
50. The MOU with UNHCR clarifies the division of all programming and operational responsibilities. WFP is responsible for resourcing and delivering basic food commodities (including fortified blended foods) and internal transport, storage and handling costs up to the hand-over point to UNHCR's appointed distribution partners.<sup>1</sup> UNHCR is responsible for: a) providing complementary food commodities; b) final distribution of all food commodities to the beneficiaries and monitoring of such distribution; c) nutritional surveillance; d) food management (transport and storage) beyond the hand-over point; and e) all food and related transport and logistic costs for case-loads below 5,000. Responsibility for the assessment of needs, including determining the numbers of refugees requiring assistance, is shared jointly.
51. One remaining source of occasional misunderstanding is the split responsibility for the delivery of food, with WFP supplying the food up to an agreed hand-over point, and UNHCR arranging for its final distribution to beneficiaries through other partners, mainly NGOs. The inherent problems which result from splitting such a critical function between two agencies have been highlighted, most recently in the donor evaluation of emergency assistance to Rwanda. This sharing of responsibilities has caused difficulties in the exchange of information, accountability, reporting, and management of the food pipeline, with occasional incidents of gaps remaining unfilled or close to being so. Moreover, this arrangement implies that delivery and distribution costs are divided between agencies and NGOs.
52. WFP and UNICEF collaborate at the field level in the implementation of some supplementary feeding programmes for emergency operations and in joint management of the Operation Lifeline Sudan. Most joint initiatives are, however, ad hoc. To provide a basis for division of responsibilities and take advantage of the

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<sup>1</sup> In some cases, distribution is under WFP authority.



strengths of both organizations, negotiations are in progress to draft a new MOU. Both UNICEF and WFP provide the bulk of their assistance to vulnerable groups and the roles of the two organizations are, or should be, complementary. Discussions so far indicate that UNICEF is endeavouring to define its role in emergencies, and, once this is completed, concrete proposals on collaboration can be concluded.

53. Collaboration with FAO is long-standing, and set forth in the Programme's Basic Texts. The Director-General of FAO approves jointly with the Executive Director all emergencies where the food cost exceeds three million dollars. In emergencies, FAO's GIEWS has been invaluable in providing data on impending droughts. WFP conducts joint assessment missions with FAO to countries whose food supply has been affected by natural disasters, particularly droughts. These assessments have served to define the extent of the emergency and were crucial to the success of the response to operations such as the Southern Africa drought in 1992. In-country WFP VAM units are increasingly being called upon to assist the FAO/WFP assessment missions through the collection and analysis of data prior to the arrival of the mission. At the same time, FAO assists in the preparation of data sets in the context of VAM and food security activities.
54. Collaboration between WFP and NGOs is extensive in the area of emergency relief operations, where NGOs often assist as implementing partners for distribution and monitoring of WFP relief commodities and are also increasingly involved in joint assessment of needs. The first WFP-NGO consultation on key issues and the first MOU with an NGO partner (Catholic Relief Services) on respective division of responsibilities were concluded in 1995. Further MOUs are planned for 1996. While cooperation with NGOs is excellent, there are occasional problems regarding the philosophy of aid, especially the high expectations NGOs place on WFP's ability to resource food and the variety and level of food rations to be provided.
55. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a mandate to assist in conflict situations from a universally accepted position of strict neutrality. WFP has a special relationship with ICRC and its in-country associates, and is near to finalizing an exchange of letters to enhance WFP and ICRC cooperation in emergency situations related to assessing relief food requirements, ensuring complementarity of programmes, the exchange of information and consultation, and conditions for the procurement and exchange of commodities.
56. Given the interrelated causes and consequences of complex emergencies, humanitarian action cannot be fully effective unless it is part of a comprehensive strategy for peace, security and human rights. In certain situations, assistance of the military is required to protect humanitarian convoys and aid workers, and create the conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance. WFP has participated in simulation exercises with military forces for the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance, and has established links with DHA's project on humanitarian early warning, the Department of Peace-keeping Operations' (DPKO) Operations Centre, and NATO movement planners in Bosnia to share convoy and shipping data. WFP has also begun a process of negotiating stand-by arrangements for immediate access to reserve MCDA in personnel and equipment.



57. One of the most serious outcomes of the increase in conflict-related emergencies is the proliferation of land-mines, which continue to hamper WFP's relief and rehabilitation operations, often long after the conflict is over. Because of its operational role in food delivery and field presence, WFP has occasionally become involved in ad hoc mine clearance and awareness activities, including providing equipment, logistical support, and food aid in lieu of wages for local deminers. In its demining work, WFP subcontracts or coordinates with demining specialists such as United Nations-peace-keeping or national armed forces units, and contracted demining teams. Several other agencies, particularly DHA, have also undertaken demining activities, and agreement on initiative in this area would be helpful.
58. International humanitarian personnel are increasingly targets of war themselves in today's complex emergencies. Most of the injuries or fatalities of WFP staff on the job since 1990 have resulted from security-related incidents. How to improve security-related planning, training and dissemination of information remains a serious issue for consideration in the United Nations system.

### **WFP role in serving the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs)**

59. In emergencies in the country of origin, WFP is responsible for food assistance to IDPs through the government or NGOs. This assistance can take the form of free relief food distributions, rehabilitation, recovery or development programmes. In addition, WFP provides food in repatriation programmes for returning refugees in cooperation with UNHCR. UNHCR and WFP have clear roles in providing assistance to refugees in country-of-asylum situations. UNHCR has increased its role in assisting IDPs, who may potentially become refugees. WFP can address the food needs, wherever they are assessed, whether for IDPs, refugees or repatriating returnees. UNICEF, FAO and WHO have been involved in rehabilitation programmes for the internally displaced in the areas of seeds and tools, water, health and special feeding programmes on an ad hoc basis.
60. The access of IDPs to material assistance and protection is often less secure than refugees for the following reasons:
- a) At present, there is a lack of clear institutional responsibility for ensuring the international protection and material needs of IDPs. As in refugee situations, the response to internal displacement is complex. Aspects of prevention and resolution of conflict, protection, and relief/material assistance must be addressed, and durable solutions facilitated through rehabilitation and resettlement. Assistance for the internally displaced is currently addressed on an ad hoc basis.
  - b) National sovereignty constrains efforts to protect the physical safety and human rights of IDPs, along with access for delivery of assistance to them. Internally displaced populations remain under the control of national authorities, and their sufferings are often denied or not recognized by their own governments.
  - c) Not having crossed an international frontier, the internally displaced are more likely to remain vulnerable to the cause of their displacement, usually civil





conflict, and their situation is thus characterized by greater instability and insecurity than that of the refugee who has gained asylum.

- d) The international community's approach to sovereignty and the rights of humanitarian intervention may eventually need to be reviewed to provide satisfactory access to IDPs.
61. The current approach of responding to an emergency situation of internal displacement is based on what needs to be done rather than a formal interpretation of mandates. The framework of intervention is flexible and tailored to individual circumstances. WFP is satisfactorily arranging for final distribution and monitoring of food aid for IDPs through arrangements with NGO implementing partners. In some cases, food may be the most predominant need (WFP), or shelter and protection (UNHCR) may be more crucial.
62. Although the current system functions, it could be improved by designating an operational lead agency for each situation to:
- a) organize assessment of needs, such as providing protection; food; education; sanitation, water and health care; seeds, tools and agricultural extension, etc., on behalf of the relief community;
  - b) coordinate all technical support and services to IDPs;
  - c) negotiate with the government and local authorities.
63. The lead agency should have:
- a) a predictable and reliable emergency role and response;
  - b) the necessary operational field presence;
  - c) capacity to operate without the request of the government and in areas where the government may not be recognized;
  - d) a rapid stand-by emergency response capacity;
  - e) capacity to engage in rehabilitation programmes.
64. Given ICRC's mandate to assist in conflict situations, it has an important role to play in the protection of IDPs, but its constitution would not allow longer-term assistance programmes.
65. The Emergency Relief Coordinator could develop: a) parameters on the collaborative arrangements and division of labour among United Nations agencies for addressing the requirements of IDPs; and b) procedures to determine the operational lead agency.



## Inter-departmental cooperation

66. Although the creation of DHA has helped in inter-agency coordination of the relief effort, a forum for inter-agency coordination that includes political and military questions on preparedness, planning and response for emergencies is still missing. The coordinating arrangements recently established by DHA with Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs could be expanded to cover regular consultations with operational agencies, the United Nations Security Adviser, and the Security Council.

## VI. EVALUATION AND TRAINING - to be covered in Section II.

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### CONCLUDING REMARKS

67. In general, there has been marked progress in the international response to emergencies during the years following the sub-Saharan drought in 1984/85 - which was a watershed and a lesson for governments, agencies, NGOs and donors alike. Since that time, the international community has taken giant steps to respond, by supporting operational agencies and NGOs in line with recommendations drawn from that experience; by internal budgetary arrangements and forward planning; by giving attention to early warning systems and preparedness measures; and by exploring the possibility of using available military assets for relief interventions.
68. Coordination arrangements have been slower to evolve, but the creation of DHA to reform the United Nations Coordinator for Disaster Relief (UNDRO) was a big step in the right direction. The complexity of emergency situations in the past few years, and particularly the security and political aspects, have made it difficult to determine how far the new arrangements have solved the old problems of a truly coordinated response. No doubt, future emergencies will be different and may require still different solutions. On the whole, however, the "system" has not failed in the recent major crises and the Rwanda (donor) evaluation is a testimony to an emergency response mechanism that is able to contain the potentially disastrous effects of disasters, be they man-made or natural. WFP has adapted in this context to the new realities (as described in this paper) but accepts that further improvements still need to be made to protect the world from the risks of hunger, malnutrition and starvation resulting from these calamities.



**ANNEX I**

1995/56. Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

The Economic and Social Council,

Reaffirming the guiding principles for providing humanitarian assistance as outlined in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991,

Recalling other relevant General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolutions 47/168 of 22 December 1992, 48/57 of 14 December 1993 and 49/139 A of 20 December 1994, and the relevant agreed conclusions of the coordination segment of the substantive session of 1993 of the Economic and Social Council, 146/

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General, 147/

Noting the differences and the limitations in the capacity of agencies, organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system to address effectively and in a comprehensive and coordinated manner the need for preparedness and humanitarian response, as well as prevention, rehabilitation, recovery and development, in accordance with their mandates,

Recognizing the need to review and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance,

1. Requests the Secretary-General, in close cooperation with relevant organizations of the United Nations system, to submit, at a date to be determined by the Council at its substantive session of 1996, a comprehensive and analytical report, including options, proposals and recommendations for a review and strengthening of all aspects of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance;

2. Decides, in order to facilitate that process:

(a) To encourage Governments to ensure coherence in the direction given to the governing bodies of relevant agencies, organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system, with the aim of improving the coordination and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance in the United Nations system;

(b) To urge the governing bodies of relevant organizations of the United Nations system to review, during the period from 1995 to 1997, issues concerning the role and operational responsibilities, as well as the operative and financial capacities, of their

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146/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/48/3/Rev.1), chap. III, sect., A.

147/ A/50/203-E/1995/79 and Add.1.



respective organizations to respond, within their mandates, in the context of broad and comprehensive humanitarian programmes, bearing in mind section VII of the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the indicative list of issues contained in the annex to the present resolution;

(c) To request the Secretary-General and relevant agencies, organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system to include in their reports to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1996 a section on the progress achieved in the review of those issues and on the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/182;

3. Calls upon the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, in this context, to convene regular, informal and open information meetings with Member States, observer States and relevant intergovernmental and other organizations on the review of the above-mentioned issues so as to ensure they are coherently addressed and appropriately reflected in the report of the Secretary-General.

57th plenary meeting  
28 July 1995

### Annex

#### INDICATIVE LIST OF ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE GOVERNING BODIES OF THE APPROPRIATE AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMMES AND FUNDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Specific measures to strengthen local capacity and coping mechanisms.

Role and operational responsibilities of each specific organization in humanitarian situations, in regard to prevention, preparedness, humanitarian response, rehabilitation, recovery and development, as applicable.

Impact of the allocation of resources on the relationship between life-saving needs, prevention, preparedness and recovery.

Development of operative memoranda of understanding between different organizations to ensure interlinkages between, and coherence of, the operational activities of relevant actors.

Operational and financial capacity of each organization to act in a timely and effective manner in relation to its role and mandate.

Practical implications for each agency of participating fully in the coordinated programming of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and in related consolidated appeals.

Development of strategies for comprehensive staff development, including inter-agency training modules.

Reporting, both operational and financial, and evaluation of programmes undertaken.



Administrative and other procedures which provide flexibility and facilitate rapid response.

Levels of delegation of authority to the field level.

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Gaps and inconsistencies identified by the IASC task force

1. Coordination of humanitarian activities
2. Human rights monitoring and activities
3. Resource mobilisation (financial matters)
4. Human resources development, staff training and staff security
5. Evaluation and Accountability
6. Relief to development continuum and sustainability
7. Internally Displaced Persons



**ANNEX II**
**ECOSOC RESOLUTION 1995/56 - ISSUES 1, 2, 4 AND 6  
SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS AND SUGGESTIONS**
**WFP strengths**

- a) food saves lives and is directly accessible to victims of disasters;
- b) dual mandate in development and relief;
- c) rapid emergency response through stand-by arrangements, pre-positioned resources and rapid response teams;
- d) development resources serve as pre-positioned stocks for immediate response;
- e) highly specialized and cost-effective transport and logistic capability;
- f) wide mandate to provide aid in internal conflict situations;
- g) coordination of global food aid and logistics;
- h) specialized food procurement expertise.

**Areas of possible action outside WFP's current framework**

Transport and logistics	Serving other agencies' non-food transport needs Expanded role in building up or rehabilitating in-country transport and logistic infrastructure
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Non-food inputs	Providing all equipment for food preparation, including fuel Contingency planning as an input to selection of camp sites Procurement and delivery of seeds and tools Control of the entire food pipeline to the distribution level
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**Other agency actions**

FAO	Identification and technical specification of seeds, tools, and other agricultural inputs Participation in rehabilitation planning
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UNDP and World Bank	Assistance to repair of infrastructure during emergencies Closer involvement with post-emergency rehabilitation
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UNHCR	Review responsibility for food distribution Examine areas for cooperation with WFP in transport and logistics
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DHA	Clarify role in resource mobilization Review field coordination and lead agency roles Exercise priorities and expedite issuing consolidated appeals Develop restricted communications channel under ReliefWeb Develop teleconferencing facilities to reduce the number of meetings Review coordination layers Initiate action on the IDP issue Review issues of assessment of non-food needs
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**Other****Communications**

All agencies to:  
Develop Internet Web sites to participate in ReliefWeb  
Standardize telecommunications  
Develop telecommunications protocol

**Donor support**

Political will to react to early warnings  
For preparedness and mitigation  
For agency improvements in emergency interventions in the areas of community participation, targeting and stand-by arrangements  
For projects which mitigate impact on host populations

**General**

Agree on lead-agency principle for meeting IDP needs  
Develop agreements for inter-agency cooperation  
Promote further action on control/banning of land-mines and safety of United Nations and related personnel  
Develop consultative process between relief agencies and Security Council

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