

THE INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

AND

WORKING GROUP

**CONCISE
TERMS OF REFERENCE
&
ACTION PROCEDURES**

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Terms of Reference of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, its Working Group and the Administrative Secretariat

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.

Structure and Composition

The members of the IASC are the heads or their designated representatives of the UN operational agencies (UNDP¹, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, FAO, WHO). In addition, there is a standing invitation to IOM, ICRC², IFRC², UNHCHR and the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs. 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 members will also be represented at the Working Group level (IASC-WG) by Senior Management (Director of Emergency Division or comparable entities). The IASC-WG is chaired by the Director, DHA-Geneva.

The IASC-WG will, upon request of the IASC, or as required, establish Task Forces to assist in developing policy or operational guidelines for relief interventions as well as their interface with rehabilitation and developmental processes. These Task Forces may be emergency-specific or focus on a particular policy issue. The Terms of Reference for each Task Force will be determined by the IASC-WG and progress will be monitored by the IASC-WG.

Action Procedures

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs will provide secretariat support to the IASC, its Working Group and its designated Task Forces, particularly through an administrative Secretariat. This unit will be responsible for providing technical support and servicing of meetings of the IASC and its Working Group as well as monitoring the implementation of the decisions of the IASC.

Objectives and Principles

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 among 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;

¹ UNV is present at the IASC-WG meetings

² As Standing Invitees, the ICRC and the IFRC keep their independence towards policy statements issued by the IASC and its subsidiary bodies.

- to identify areas where gaps in mandates or lack of operational capacity exist;
- to resolve disputes or disagreement about and between humanitarian agencies on system-wide humanitarian issues.

In so doing, five key principles will be observed:

Respect for Mandates	that decisions of the IASC will not compromise members with respect to their own mandates
Ownership	that all members have an equal ownership of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies
Subsidiarity	that decisions will be taken at the lowest appropriate level
Overall Objective	that the ultimate objective of any decision should be that of improved delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected population
Impartiality of Secretariat	that the IASC will be serviced by the administrative Secretariat that does not represent the interests of any one member.

Specific Responsibilities of the IASC, its Working Group and the administrative Secretariat

The IASC will have responsibility for:

- making strategic policy decisions
- making major operational decisions
- arbitration where no consensus can be reached at the Working Group level
- advocating common humanitarian principles, collectively or individually, on behalf of the IASC
- approving the general work programme of the IASC and the WG
- bringing issues to the attention of the Secretary-General and the Security Council, through the ERC
- designating the Humanitarian Coordinators and selecting coordination arrangements.

The IASC Working Group will have responsibility for:

- formulating the agenda for the IASC meetings
- making non-strategic policy and operational decisions
- preparing options and recommendations for the IASC on strategic policy issues and major operational issues
- considering and reviewing decisions taken by ad hoc groups.

The Administrative Secretariat will have responsibility for:

- maintaining administrative communication channels between members

- collating possible future agenda items on an on-going basis
- preparing an annual workplan for the WG based on decisions taken at the annual meeting of the WG
- monitoring preparations for each meeting of the IASC or WG
- facilitating regular and ad hoc meetings of the IASC and WG
- disseminating minutes and records of meetings and decisions taken
- monitoring the implementation of IASC and WG decisions.

Frequency of Meetings:

- The IASC will meet every 6 months.
- The IASC-WG will meet every 2 months and will meet once a year for an extended meeting to agree on an annual workplan.
- Extraordinary meetings of the IASC and IASC-WG may be called at the initiative of any member and may take place via video-conferencing or other available media as appropriate.

The Agenda:

The annual agenda will be discussed and approved by the WG at its annual extended meeting. It will then be endorsed by the IASC. On this basis, a workplan for the year will be drafted. Progress on the Workplan will form the agenda for each meeting of the IASC and WG. An urgent agenda item may be suggested by any member for either a scheduled meeting or an extraordinary meeting in consultation with the relevant Chair. In that case, substantiating information should be provided by the requesting member.

Background Papers:

The responsibility for the preparation of background papers lies with all members and will be allocated by the Working Group at the extended annual meeting according to expertise. Papers will be submitted to the Secretariat for circulation not less than 10 working days prior to a meeting except in cases of extreme urgency. Papers will be expected to include a summary of the issues raised and options and recommendations for the consideration of the IASC or IASC-WG.

Action Points and Summary Records

All formal meetings of the IASC and IASC-WG will be minuted and Action Points and Summary Records will be produced by the administrative Secretariat. The Action Points agreed at the meeting will always indicate deadlines and responsibility for implementation.

Monitoring Implementation:

The administrative Secretariat will monitor implementation of decisions on a regular basis and will report annually to the IASC-WG on the previous year's activities. Members 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.

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

members, 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;
- all decision will be taken in full respect of the mandates of individual IASC members.