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**ROLE OF IOM IN EMERGENCY AND  
POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS**

## ROLE OF IOM IN EMERGENCY AND POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Administration's report to the Eighty-third (Special) Session of the Council (MC/INF/249) outlined the historical evolution of IOM's role in emergency and post-conflict situations, particularly since the early 1990s. In response to comments made by Member States during the discussion of the report (MC/C/SR/440), this document seeks to address the strategy which governs IOM's interventions; their comparative advantages; their coordination with other agencies; and their sustainability.

### STRATEGY

2. Emergencies, whether natural or man-made, cause a radical onset of social disequilibrium, which often displaces significant population. Emergencies require an immediate response to save lives or limit suffering. When emergencies are man-made, the initial and immediate need for assistance to displaced populations is often followed by a longer period of post-conflict, which in many respects is coterminous with the "gap" between relief and development which has been widely discussed in international organizations.

3. In emergency situations, IOM analyses this population displacement to determine which kinds of IOM assistance – based on its constitutional mandate to "concern itself with the organized transfer of refugees, displaced persons and other individuals in need of international migration services for whom arrangements may be made between the Organization and the States concerned ..." (Article 1, 1(b) of the IOM Constitution) – are urgently required, for example:

- assistance in evacuation from danger;
- temporary care and maintenance of displaced populations;
- assistance in resettlement or in returning home;
- short-term integration/reintegration assistance; and
- transitional initiatives to support communal infrastructure to stabilize communities actually or potentially affected by displacement.

4. Such assistance often has a medical component, or can take different programmatic forms, depending on the specific needs of the population to be assisted. For example, the return and reintegration of professional members of the diaspora to participate in the reconstruction of their country; the return and reintegration of demobilized soldiers; or the return and reintegration of IDPs and refugees. All these activities, though conceptually similar and sharing a common core of transportation assistance, require different kinds of programming in order to be implemented successfully.

5. IOM seeks to propose specific programme interventions when:
- an important unmet need for some or all of the services mentioned above exists and is identified by IOM, a United Nations agency or an observer or Member State;
  - that need is validated by local representatives of Member States, and/or a consolidated appeal of the United Nations system;
  - funding is confirmed, at least for the initial or pilot phase of the particular programme; and
  - the comparative advantage of IOM's intervention is clear.

## **COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES**

6. IOM's principal comparative advantage lies in combining the strength and recognition of an intergovernmental organization with unusual speed and flexibility of response. That advantage has been repeatedly recognized by the United Nations and by IOM Member States, from IOM's first significant emergency activities in the Gulf and northern Iraq (1990-1992) and Mozambique (1992-96), to recent United Nations' requests to assist IDPs in Afghanistan and the Sudan. Increasingly, IOM's emergency and post-conflict interventions are an integral part of the United Nations' Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), which ensures that the issue of comparative advantage has been thoroughly considered in the inter-agency context.

7. The core element of IOM's emergency and post-conflict interventions is migration management, often in the form of transportation assistance to people who need it. Providing efficient and safe transportation – by air, sea and land – has been at the heart of IOM's mandate since its foundation, and the Organization has developed a widely-recognized ability in this respect. Depending on the nature of the population to be assisted, pre-departure and post-arrival activities may be added to the transportation core in order to make the movements more humane, more durable, and more contributory to population stabilization. IOM has developed special expertise in the return and reintegration of IDPs and demobilized soldiers.

8. The ability to contact and survey displaced populations, either in their own countries or in diaspora, is an increasingly important comparative advantage for IOM. Such surveys are used, for example, to register populations for evacuation or return; to identify and match job skills and the interests of the diaspora with urgent needs for specialized expertise in the post-conflict reconstruction of their country; to identify the skills and desires of demobilized soldiers in order to train, return and reintegrate them more effectively into civilian life; to permit the participation of displaced populations, particularly diaspora, in elections; and to register IDPs and determine their wishes to return to specific locations.

## **COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES**

9. IOM's participation in the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) requires extensive coordination of emergency/post-conflict response with other United Nations agencies in New York, Geneva, and in the Field. IOM is committed to this mechanism and strongly supports its improvement. A central element of this coordination is the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) which, with increasing success, presents a unified response to emergency/post-conflict situations and which recognizes the activities that various agencies are best suited to undertake. As a general rule, IOM does not believe that effective fund-raising can be carried out outside the CAP process. Donor support for the CAP process is support for better coordination.

10. During programme implementation, IOM makes every effort to cooperate with other agencies which may be better placed and more experienced to implement specialized programmes such as vocational training, short-term reintegration assistance, temporary care and maintenance, and distribution of reintegration kits. Only as a last resort, and when no practical alternatives are available, will IOM undertake activities which, as a part of its larger programme, could otherwise be better left to other agencies.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

11. IOM, like virtually all other organizations responding to emergency/post-conflict situations, must often begin assistance when only partially funded. The demands for emergency assistance almost invariably come ahead of the mobilization of resources to fund them. In response, IOM makes a considered judgement as to whether received and prospective funding together justify launching programme activity. When little or no funding has been received, but looks likely, IOM can draw on a variety of mechanisms to bridge the short-term funding gap: internally, its own Emergency Preparedness Account provides for advances up to USD 90,000; the Rapid Response Transportation Fund permits the advance of funds against a request for transportation assistance from UNHCR; and a three-year emergency response/capacity-building agreement with the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom provides important assessment and initial response capacity.

12. Nevertheless, IOM will occasionally have to suspend operations, even important operations, because of lack of funds. The Organization has no ability to run a deficit and when the cash flow stops, and no pledges have been received, operations must cease. Often, operations are resumed when confidence in pledged income is restored, but occasionally the prospect for additional funding is grim enough to require the definitive halt of operations, with all the problems this causes to the other organizations with which IOM works. IOM makes every effort to avoid such disruptions through systematic donor outreach and careful financial planning, but the uncertainty of working in emergency environments means that sustainability of operations is impossible to ensure completely. The increasing reflection of experience and lessons learned in practical guidance such as the Emergency Operations Manual and the Post-Conflict Operations Manual, together with growing strength in donor relations, should make IOM's emergency and post-conflict programmes much more sustainable.