



18 December 2007

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share with you the revised *Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inter-Agency Contingency Planning*, which were endorsed by the IASC Working Group on 5 November 2007. These Guidelines were developed to help Country Teams in preparing to respond to potential emergencies with appropriate humanitarian assistance and protection. The Guidelines stress that inter-agency contingency planning is a broad-based and participatory process. Therefore, the planning team should include at the very minimum UN agencies, international organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and nongovernmental organizations.

Inter-agency contingency planning is a process of anticipating and solving problems in advance of a crisis. The Guidelines aim to help agencies and organizations develop an over-arching framework for collective action in preparing for and responding to potential emergencies, including natural hazards. They have been revised to reflect accumulated good practice and humanitarian reform to enhance response capacity, predictability, accountability and partnership. Specific attention has been given to the cluster approach which represents a raising of the standards for sectoral coordination. The members of the IASC have committed to using the cluster approach in all contingency planning for potential emergencies.

As national governments hold primary responsibility for meeting the assistance and protection needs of people affected by natural disasters and other emergencies, the Guidelines have been developed to enable Country Teams to enhance the quality of their support toward national systems and civil society. The Guidelines situate contingency planning within a broader framework of risk reduction and emergency preparedness, and they contain information on the design, implementation and management of the participatory planning process.

We are pleased to note the progress made in including preparedness and contingency planning in the work of Country Teams. The wide circulation and application of the guidelines will ensure this becomes standard practice and we encourage Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators to use the Guidelines when developing inter-agency contingency plans. A training package and on-line tool-kit will also be developed and disseminated by the IASC Working Group during the first quarter of 2008.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Holmes".

John Holmes

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and Emergency Relief Coordinator
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kemal Derviş".

Kemal Derviş

UNDP Administrator and Chair
United Nations Development Group