I. Background

1. In December 2012, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Valerie Amos, visited Myanmar to review the humanitarian situation and the collective international response. Following her mission, the ERC tasked OCHA’s Programme Support Branch (PSB) with organizing a Director/Deputy Director level IASC support mission. The objective of the mission was to assist the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in identifying ways to strengthen the operation in these areas, ensuring application of related aspects of the Transformative Agenda contained in the 'Cluster Coordination Reference Module' and the 'Humanitarian Programme Cycle' protocols, both of which were disseminated by the IASC Principals on 1 January 2013. The ERC stipulated that the team should follow the methodology employed during the IASC mission to Chad (October 2012).

2. The IASC mission team was in Myanmar from 17 to 24 February 2013 followed by a debriefing for Regional Directors in Bangkok on 26 February 2013. The mission team comprised senior managers from Headquarters (WHO, UNHCR, UNDP, IOM, InterAction, OCHA) and regional offices (WFP, UNICEF). An additional NGO representative unfortunately had to back out a few days prior to departure and there was insufficient time to identify a replacement. The mission members concentrated on the following elements of the Transformative Agenda: i) coordination, ii) needs assessment and analysis and iii) strategic planning and monitoring. On the request of the HC/HCT the mission team included ‘effectiveness of communication and advocacy’ as a forth focus area during the discussions.

II. Methodology

3. Preparations for the mission included a series of telephone conferences between the HC, the OCHA Head of Office (HoO) and OCHA PSB. The HCT Core Group conducted a ‘mini-retreat’ prior to arrival of the mission in order to identify key operational challenges and important questions/issues for the mission team to consider. The HC and several HCT members felt that this mini-retreat, undertaken with external facilitation, was a good opportunity to reflect on the overall humanitarian operation. Following this mini-retreat, the members of the HCT participated in an online ‘self-assessment’ responding to questions regarding application of elements of the Cluster Coordination Reference Module and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle in Myanmar. Upon request of the HCT, the self-assessment was made available online to allow individual HCT members to participate in the survey. This approach allowed for a wider range of participation. The survey itself was critiqued for
asking too many general questions; providing insufficient background to answer the questions; and for not allowing more nuanced answers. The HCT feedback will be taken into account during the revision of the tool. The outcome of the mini-retreat (Annex 2) formed the basis of the discussions once the mission team arrived in Yangon.

4. The in-country work of the mission team (see schedule in the annex 3) began with a meeting of the HCT Core Group, followed by group work on the four focus areas of the mission. This helped to frame the various individual and group meetings. The mission team split into three groups, continuing discussions in Nay Pyi Taw, Rakhine State and Yangon. In addition to the HC and HCT Core Group members, the team met with cluster coordinators, international and national NGO personnel, donor representatives, government officials, as well as humanitarian personnel, state government officials and affected people in Rakhine State (Annex 4). Selected representatives from HCT Core Group organisations then reviewed these initial findings and developed recommendations, prior to a four-hour HCT meeting involving representatives of 18 organisations. During this meeting the recommendations were agreed and prioritized, taking into account most of the comments made by the HCT. The outcome of this meeting is captured in a matrix (Annex 1). The prioritized recommendations form the basis for the development of a more detailed action plan by the HC/HCT subsequent to the mission.

III. Myanmar Context

5. Myanmar is a complex and demanding environment, posing political, diplomatic, development and humanitarian challenges. Since 2010 the country has been in the midst of a promising yet fragile political transition, cautiously opening up and becoming more accessible after years of isolation and military rule. At the same time, the country faces multiple humanitarian challenges: regular floods and cyclones; earthquakes; inter-communal violence and conflict that displaced people in Rakhine State and in the southeast; and active conflict in Kachin in the north. Existing analysis indicates that it is likely that a large-scale emergency (Level 3) will occur in Myanmar, highlighting the need to ensure that adequate preparedness and response capacities are in place. Despite existing humanitarian needs in the country increased attention was only paid to the humanitarian response following the recent outbreak of violence and large-scale displacement in Rakhine state. But the capacity of humanitarian workers to respond to these challenges and prepare for new ones remains limited, as the humanitarian situation in Myanmar is overshadowed by the priority given to Syria and the Sahel.

6. Myanmar is one of the ethnically most diverse countries in southeast Asia. While the government is negotiating agreements with several armed groups with the aim of settling years of conflict, the situation remains volatile and the lack of access for humanitarian organisations to some areas remains a concern. The humanitarian space remains limited and constrained.

7. Myanmar ranked first on OCHA’s list of most at-risk Asia-Pacific countries in 2011. Despite being a resource-rich country with a strong agricultural base, Myanmar ranks 149th of 187 countries on the Humanitarian Development Index. Years of conflict and unresolved ethnic
differences have contributed to the displacement of around 450,000 people\(^1\) and an influx of refugees in neighboring countries. While some organisations were already providing assistance during the period military rule, more organisations established presence in Myanmar in 2008 at the onset of Cyclone Nargis to support the humanitarian response in the affected areas of the Ayeyarwaddy Delta. When access is permitted, humanitarian actors are providing assistance in most of the areas in the country, especially in Rakhine and Kachin, focusing on food, shelter, health, basic social services and livelihoods. While the government has an increasing desire to ‘coordinate’ the provision of humanitarian assistance, its capacity to do so remains limited.

**IV. Mission findings and overview of recommendations**

8. Acknowledging the multitude of humanitarian challenges in the country, the mission team and humanitarian partners were particularly concerned about the potential aggravation of the humanitarian situation of the displaced people in Rakhine state, due both to the real possibility of renewed ethnic violence and the impact of the upcoming monsoon season which will last from May to November. The mission team agrees with the HC, HCT Core Group members, and donors that the international humanitarian community is inadequately prepared to deal with new crises and/or the deterioration of existing ones, partially due to limited available human and material resources. In addition to preparedness, the UN and its partners should also put a much more robust focus on disaster risk management programming. In addition, partners need to be prepared to respond to needs in Kachin, should there be a breakthrough in the current negotiations for access.

9. The HC/HCT requested the mission team to develop practical and detailed recommendations. In cases where the mission team together with the HC/HCT agreed on a set of process-related recommendations, these need to lead to improved delivery of assistance. The HC/HCT and the mission team agreed recommendations in four key areas:

- Develop an overarching strategic framework to serve as a ‘chapeau’ for humanitarian programme and project planning in Myanmar. In line with the TA Protocol on the humanitarian programme cycle, the framework should include key principles for humanitarian response, the range of humanitarian situations (e.g. natural disaster, conflict), broad humanitarian and cross-sector strategic objectives, context-specific priorities, a range of strategic approaches as well as high level output indicators

- Streamline coordination mechanisms and use existing mechanisms more strategically;

- Monitor the performance of clusters/sectors and of coordination mechanisms;

- Agree on a set of key messages around humanitarian assistance, access and civil-military relations

\(^1\) OCHA: Myanmar Internal Displacement Snapshot, 11 February 2013
Needs Assessment and Analysis

10. While there is some good *multi-sector rapid assessment* practice in Myanmar, coordination and harmonisation of assessments is inadequate. Clusters/sector working groups and inter-cluster coordination mechanisms need to play a much stronger role in both coordination/harmonisation of assessments and in analysis of humanitarian needs. Humanitarian stakeholders highlighted that the **analysis and prioritisation of humanitarian needs** as a basis for response have been inadequate and insufficiently transparent. In addition, the majority insist that there needs to be a much stronger link between needs analysis and situational/conflict analysis, in order to avoid exacerbating existing inter-communal tensions, particularly in Rakhine State.

11. The **MIRA methodology** was adapted for use in Myanmar and has been employed for rapid assessment in both natural disaster and conflict situations since 2010. Specifically, the MIRA was used to assess needs following the Tachileik earthquake, localised flooding and conflict/violence-related displacement in both Kachin and Rakhine. To a certain extent, MIRA outputs have informed sectoral assessments and humanitarian response planning. Humanitarian actors nonetheless acknowledged that the MIRA is not well adapted to rapid assessment in conflict environments, and are in favor of a lessons learned exercise on its use in Rakhine and Kachin.

12. There is considerable support among humanitarian actors for the development of an agreed **set of emergency indicators and humanitarian response triggers** to help better define humanitarian action in Myanmar. Some work on this has already been done, since January 2013, for the Rakhine crisis. These would need to reflect the different types of crises that are occurring in Myanmar, from armed conflict to communal violence to natural disasters, and, to the extent possible, should be developed in consultation with the government. The collection of data related to specific indicators would need to be coordinated and managed through existing cluster and inter-cluster coordination mechanisms, with clear task divisions regarding who is collecting what. The HCT Core Group recognized the difficulty in reconciling global standard indicators with local indicators adapted to the Myanmar context.

13. The HCT Core Group was supportive of the notion that needs assessment should be better coordinated and planned within the humanitarian community, using **inter-cluster/sector coordination mechanisms**, and conducted in collaboration with the government, whenever possible. Government capacities to participate in and/or lead assessments are, nonetheless, limited. The imminent passage of a Disaster Management law and the subsequent revision of related Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) are seen as an opportunity to work with the government on adopting MIRA as a national methodology and laying the foundation for joint training. Such training should also be extended to local NGOs. It was also felt that efforts should be made to link assessment and analysis efforts in Myanmar to those with cross-border implications in the region (e.g. Thailand, Bangladesh, China).

14. Although HCT Core Group organisations have strengthened **analytical capacities** in Myanmar over the past months, the analysis of humanitarian needs, both within and across sectors, remains weak. The Rakhine and Kachin response plans contain limited analysis of needs. Additional emphasis should be placed on the recruitment of staff with analytical skills in Yangon and at field locations. It has been strongly suggested that a pooling of analytical
capacities could help to further strengthen humanitarian analysis, both of needs and the context in which they exist. A stronger evidence base and better analysis of humanitarian needs were seen as critical to ensuring more balanced support for multi-sector humanitarian preparedness and response. Some felt it would be useful to establish an in-country roster of experts/trainers who can be easily deployed to conduct rapid assessments.

**Strategic Planning and Monitoring**

15. As the political, socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in Myanmar continues to evolve, it is likely that in the next two years, the HCT will have to respond to challenges on several fronts: (a) protracted crises in Kachin and Rakhine; (b) the potential return of IDPs and refugees to their place of origin in southeastern Myanmar; and (c) medium to large scale natural disaster events.

16. To date, the HCT has response plans for Kachin and Rakhine and is in the initial stages of thinking through its role in the southeast. An inter-agency contingency plan has been developed to help better prepare for and respond to natural disasters, including the associated triggers for launching a response. To complement this inter-agency effort, local NGOs, too, have their own contingency plan that is in line with the Government's Standing Orders and protocols for responding to natural and human-made disasters. And finally, several initiatives are underway, in collaboration with the Government, on the development front, relating to peace-building, livelihoods, agriculture, education and health systems.

17. While these initiatives are important, they are fragmented between humanitarian and development partners as well as within the humanitarian system; they operate independently from each other, e.g. the current response in Rakhine is primarily humanitarian, but would benefit from investments and actions from a recovery perspective. The lessons from Cyclones Nargis and Giri have been incorporated into the inter-agency contingency plan, but not necessarily operationalized, leaving the document largely conceptual. This fragmentation has led to a lack of a common understanding on some key strategic principles and approaches and caused the overall humanitarian response to be more 'reactive' than strategic. A strategic approach would enable humanitarian operations to introduce or build on existing development or recovery programming. Similarly, humanitarian operations could further build on 'do no harm' and conflict sensitive approaches and be informed by regular conflict analysis as mentioned above. The UNCT is currently undertaking a country wide and Rakhine specific conflict analysis. Similar exercises have been completed for Rakhine by some NGOs (e.g. Danish Refugee Council, 2013) and donors (e.g. DFID, end 2012).

18. Compounding --- and in some ways reinforcing --- the problem of fragmentation, monitoring of current humanitarian responses (e.g., Rakhine and Kachin) is not sufficiently developed across all sectors or linked to the broader response plans. This leads to a limited understanding of how well the HCT is performing against a set of humanitarian objectives and how best to link with recovery and development programming. These three 'phases' need to take place concurrently. Existing capacities for sector-specific monitoring are weak at the field level and are further complicated by the fact that no standard set of indicators or data collection processes are in place. In addition, and given the complex and sensitive conflict dynamics at the local level, "keeping the pulse" of the situation in terms of local tensions (which could be eased or on the contrary aggravated by outside aid interventions) is
important. This requires dedicated expert capacity and strengthening of the information management system.

19. Donors expressed frustration with the lack of a coherent humanitarian strategy in Myanmar, and what they see as insufficient reporting and analysis on needs, response and gaps. They are aware that humanitarian organisations have highlighted funding gaps, but are reluctant to commit additional funds without a clearer understanding of the overall countrywide strategy and prioritization.

20. One of the most important recommendations of the mission team is that the HC and HCT engage in a substantive discussion to develop a common strategic framework for the whole country which would include key principles for humanitarian response, the range of humanitarian situations (e.g. natural disaster, conflict), broad humanitarian and cross-sector strategic objectives, context-specific priorities, a range of strategic approaches as well as high level output indicators. This framework would serve as a ‘Chapeau’ from which response plans could be developed. The mission team has committed to sharing best practices and providing support to the country team in developing such a strategic framework.

**Coordination**

21. The IASC team reviewed different aspects of coordination during the mission, including current coordination structures and processes; coordination of international agencies with local NGOs; coordination with government agencies; inter-cluster/sectoral coordination; monitoring of cluster/sectoral performance; and accountability. Coordination was reviewed at both central (Yangon) and field (Rakhine State) levels.

22. Overall, there was variable performance with respect to coordination. The mechanisms that worked most effectively had developed somewhat informally, such as in the WASH sector in Rakhine. Existing formal coordination mechanisms need to be expanded and work more effectively. In Yangon, there is no regularly scheduled meeting of the HCT Core Group with sufficient advance notice of agenda items and/or solicitation of items from members. Also, feedback from members indicates that discussions are not sufficiently strategic and are too UN-centric. Some clusters/sectors are also not meeting regularly at either central or field levels. Few of the cluster/sectoral working groups have formal TORs, and where they exist they are not widely shared, resulting in lack of clarity on their roles. Several UN and NGO partners also acknowledged a lack of clear understanding of cluster functions and most were unfamiliar with the new Cluster Reference Modules, despite the fact that materials were shared on several occasions and training on the cluster system took place within the framework of the comprehensive package for preparedness implementation. During the trip to Sittwe, the IASC team participated in the weekly inter-agency meeting. While there was good attendance and a number of important strategic and operational issues were raised, it was unclear what specific action points had been agreed upon. Finally, there seems to be a weak link between cluster/sector meetings and discussions at the inter-cluster/sector level.

23. The IASC team’s recommendations to strengthen overall coordination are based on several basic principles and good practices. The drafting of clear TORs for each cluster/sector working group would provide a solid basis for more efficient and effective coordination. The HCT Core Group should return to meeting regularly (monthly on a fixed day of the month)
based on an agenda circulated in advance with discussions that focus primarily on strategic issues. All clusters should also have regularly scheduled meetings with clear agendas, action points, and minutes that are distributed efficiently. HCT Core Team and cluster meetings should proceed even if the chairperson is not available – in these instances, the meetings should be managed by his/her designee. Several field staff identified training for agency and government personnel on cluster functions and Cluster Reference Modules as a high priority.

24. The level of communication and **coordination between the RC and OCHA** offices is currently limited, making it difficult to inform humanitarian action with a developmental perspective and vice versa. Several models of closer collaboration and even integration of RC and OCHA offices exist in other countries. These should be shared with the UNCT and HCT, so that steps towards improved coordination can be explored. At the field level, greater focus on building links between humanitarian response and recovery and livelihood activities would contribute to the development of a more holistic approach to community needs in a polarized political context.

25. There are a large number of **local NGOs** (LNGOs), with highly varying capacities. Those involved in humanitarian response focus largely on natural disasters, with a smaller number engaged in areas impacted by conflict and communal violence. Some LNGOs felt disconnected from the international humanitarian agencies, including the HCT and some cluster/sectoral working groups. Ongoing efforts to engage and coordinate with LNGOs are clearly needed. Active outreach to encourage their participation in the clusters/sectors is necessary. Having an international NGO representative participate in LNGO coordination mechanisms is also worth considering, in addition to the participation of the INGO Forum in the Local NGO bi-weekly meeting, perhaps through a local staff member to avoid language problems. The HCT should also consider inviting an LNGO representative to join the HCT Core Group, or at least participate in meetings on a periodic basis.

26. **Coordination with the government** is variable. Government ministries are nominally in the lead for all five cluster/sectoral working groups in Rakhine, although in practice international agencies are taking the lead in coordinating most activities (except in health, where the Department of Health leads). Generally, however, government officials at all levels lack skills and experience in coordination, resulting in substantial inefficiencies. Joint training and orientation for humanitarian partners and government officials on clusters, cluster management and the principles of effective coordination are required. Despite these issues, one of the positive observations of the mission was that the three State Ministers of Development Planning, and Social Affairs in Rakhine State indicated a good level of satisfaction with the coordination by, and performance of, international humanitarian agencies during a meeting in Sittwe.

27. **Inter-cluster/sectoral coordination** occurs primarily at a macro level (e.g. general inter-sectoral meetings in Yangon and Sittwe), but not sufficiently on a technical or operational level. Some clusters/sectors come together in the field periodically to coordinate operations, e.g. WASH and shelter. However, there should be more consistent information sharing and periodic meetings between related clusters/sectors to address objectives that can only be achieved collaboratively, e.g. food aid-food security/livelihoods and health-WASH.
Cluster/sector meetings and INGO/LNGO fora discussions should feed inter-cluster/sector setup which in turn should feed the HCT-CG discussions.

28. The early recovery dimension of the response should be enhanced to ensure that humanitarian action lays the ground for future recovery and also a more seamless response between humanitarian and development actors. Early recovery should be mainstreamed throughout the response and adequate capacity should be available in the HC office to do so. Similarly the coordination capacity of the Livelihoods/Early recovery sector at both Rakhine and Kachin level should also be enhanced to ensure a more robust and coordinated engagement and response by relevant actors in terms of livelihoods, economic recovery and reintegration programmes that generate employment and sustainable income earning opportunities for crisis affected communities, while supporting confidence-building measures, local reconciliation and inter-communal dialogue once the opportunity arises.

29. Monitoring of cluster/sector performance has not yet commenced in Myanmar. The recently developed Cluster Performance Monitoring Tool provides an effective mechanism to track performance over time. The IASC team recommends that all clusters/sectors apply the tool every six months, commencing in March, and that the results be fed back to all partners to strengthen coordination. While some clusters/sectors appear to be performing reasonably well under many constraints, others are lagging in their performance. Even when considering those areas that have made good progress, large gaps in service delivery persist in most clusters/sectors and there are limitations in implementation capacities among many agencies, including in the area of information management. The HCT and the IASC should advocate with the relevant lead agencies and partners for adequate resources to be mobilized to ensure strengthened cluster/sector performance, as well as with all agencies to strengthen implementation capacities generally.

Joint Advocacy and Communication

30. In the lead-up to the mission, the HC/HCT asked the mission team to include 'joint advocacy and communication' as a focus area in their discussions.

31. Currently, the international humanitarian community has no overall communication and advocacy strategy for Myanmar. However, the Rakhine Communication Strategy, including key messages, was developed and is in the process of approval. The key messages of this strategy are used by the HC, but are not fully owned by the whole HCT. In the absence of a common strategic humanitarian framework for Myanmar, development of an overall communication and advocacy strategy will remain challenging and it will continue to be difficult 'to tell the right story' about the humanitarian situation/response in Myanmar. In the absence of a joint and overall communication strategy and of commonly agreed key messages owned by the HCT, humanitarian actors at different levels run the risk of delivering inconsistent and sometimes conflicting messages to affected people, government entities and other key stakeholders. Key messages were developed to address misperceptions of the humanitarian community in some parts of the country, which had resulted e.g. in communities refusing access for the conduct of needs assessments, but full ownership of the key messages by the HCT was lacking. The HCT should discuss, agree upon and disseminate key messages for humanitarian actors to dismantle some of these misperceptions. Given the
32. Humanitarian actors – especially international staff – in Myanmar require government authorization to travel/provide assistance to those in need throughout the country. However, there is no transparent procedure for negotiating access and for the conditions for these negotiations, which should be approached as an HCT collective effort in which all parties engaged send the same message to a variety of actors to obtain full, unimpeded and unconditional access to all people in need. While organisations should leverage their comparative advantages and relationships with their line ministries and government counterparts, these discussions need to be based on agreed messages, common principles, a transparent process and streamlined. In the current less streamlined process, agencies are seeking access through a wide variety of interlocutors with an equally wide range of government actors, leading to a lack of clarity among both humanitarian partners and government entities. An example was given about access in Kachin, where ongoing access by local NGOs and their networks was disrupted due to the attempt to negotiate with the government about access for a convoy which included international staff. Using convoys as a way to gain access negatively impacted on those who already had access. In addition, a point was raised that access meant more than passage of convoys; it included presence and being able to provide assistance through local partners on the ground. The HCT should establish clear roles and responsibilities regarding access negotiations and build on its recognition that sharing of information needs to be improved.

33. There is widespread feeling among donors that they are not being leveraged in support of humanitarian assistance in Myanmar, including on critical issues such as access, e.g. a donor visit to Rakhine state in September 2012 was not followed up by joint discussions between the donors and the HCT. Donors are interacting with state and non-state actors and affected people in relation to the programmes that they fund, and have taken to coordinating these efforts amongst themselves, e.g. in Kachin. Many are eager to support common advocacy and messaging, and are encouraging the HC and the HCT to work with them in this regard. Implementation of some of the recommendations in this report will help address this problem, but the HC/HCT should also consider formalizing ad-hoc or even regular donor representation in HCT Core Group meetings and to generally seek closer engagement with the donor community.

34. In light of the reoccurrence of natural disasters and the likelihood of the reliance of the government on the military to provide support to those affected, engagement between humanitarian workers and the military in new and evolving situations in Myanmar is becoming more likely. While the members of the HCT appear to understand the different roles and responsibilities and discussions about working with the military in specific situations take place in the HCT (e.g. use of the military for food distribution), there is no agreed policy and a history of not conforming to HCT decisions in this regard in the past. It is imperative that humanitarian workers and the government have a common understanding of the nature of the coordination between humanitarians and the military and of the use of military assets for relief operations which would not infringe on humanitarian principles. A fragmented approach could result in sacrificing humanitarian principles. The HC/HCT needs to establish a common, transparent understanding of the framework for any negotiations

shortage of communications and public information staff in the country, the pooling of resources is essential until these urgent staffing gaps can be filled.
related to civil-military matters and ensure that any deviations from this framework are openly discussed and agreed upon. Trainings should be conducted for humanitarian actors and the government on civil-military coordination and the principles of engagement.

**Priority Recommendations**

35. Overall, the HC/HCT and the mission team during the meeting on the last day identified a set of priority recommendations around strategic planning and improved coordination mechanisms through a more effective and efficient management of coordination fora, e.g. the HCT Core Group. The key priorities for the group were:

- Undertake Rakhine/ Kachin Lessons Learned exercise and adjust the inter-agency rapid assessment form and process accordingly (1);
- Agree MIRA methodology and SOP with Government (2);
- Clarify triggers for sector specific assessments (5);
- HQ to provide technical support (11);
- Identify and address operational constraints linked to political issues at national level (17);
- Establish training and orientation process on basics of cluster functioning for government and humanitarian staff (18);
- Conduct monthly meetings of HCT core group, at minimum (21). Standardize approach to cluster/sectoral meetings: agendas, minutes, action points (20);
- Conduct joint training and orientation for government and humanitarian staff on effective coordination mechanisms: 3Ws, gap filling, meeting management, rationalizing structures, etc. (25);
- Use HCT-agreed set of emergency indicators and thresholds to trigger response in Myanmar (link to assessment and analysis) (13);
- Apply cluster performance monitoring tool across all clusters and sectors on 6-monthly basis (29);
- Advocate with relevant lead agencies regarding strengthened leadership and cluster/sector management (30);
- Discuss and agree upon key messages for use with government, donors and communities linked to overall strategic framework (31)

36. With regard to the potential deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the country due to the upcoming rainy season, the mission team strongly encourages Regional and Emergency Directors of humanitarian organisations to review their preparedness and response readiness (including stockpiles) in coordination with the HC/HCT. In country capacities over the coming two months should be strengthened as appropriate to be able to respond quickly. Furthermore, organisations should identify ways to support longer-term preparedness under government leadership.

V. **Follow-up to the Myanmar mission**

37. The HC and HCT have committed to review and incorporate the recommendations into a time bound action plan, with clearly assigned responsibilities, including at the Regional and

2 The numbers correspond to the numbers in the retreat outcome document.
HQ levels. The mission team in turn has committed to provide support in this process through different channels. The results of the IASC Myanmar mission will be communicated widely among IASC partners, including the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the regional IASC-network in Bangkok. Interested donors have been briefed about the outcome of the mission on the last day of the mission in Myanmar.

38. Further missions to Myanmar by the OCHA Director of Coordination and Response Division (CRD) (tentatively planned for March 2013), the joint field visit of Executive Board members of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UNICEF/UN Women and WFP (8-19 March 2013); and the meeting of ASEAN in Myanmar towards the end of 2013 provide further opportunities for the HC/HCT to demonstrate progress against some of the IASC mission’s observations and to request further support for the implementation of the action plan.

VI. 'Roll out’ of the Transformative Agenda in Myanmar and lessons learned for future IASC missions

39. The mission was instrumental in helping to strengthen understanding of the TA objectives in Myanmar and contributed to field level implementation of its various components. Despite initial skepticism of the HC/HCT vis-à-vis the mission during the preparation phase and limited engagement in the working groups on the first day of the mission, the mission team recognized that in the course of the week, partners became significantly more engaged and participated actively and constructively during the retreat on the last day of the mission.

40. For future missions it is imperative that HC and HCT are part of the mission planning from the start, constructively engaging in clarifying mission objectives and an appropriate mission approach. Overall, the mission team proposes a minimum of six weeks for an effective mission preparation, beginning with an early VTC between the mission team leader, the respective HC and OCHA Head of Office during which the dates and focus areas are proposed, for further revision and agreement by the HCT. The HCT self-assessment five weeks prior to the mission in the form of a mini-retreat has proven to be very useful and the outcome document was a point of reference for the HCT and the mission team. During this retreat, the HC/HCT should also agree on up to three focal points for each focus area. These focal points will commit to work with the mission team while the mission is in country. While the online self-assessment requires further development, it could become an important tool to structure discussions and to provide further information for the HCT and the mission team ahead of the discussions during the mission. It should be conducted in the week prior to arrival of the mission. The mission itself should roughly follow the Myanmar mission schedule with more time dedicated to discussion in working groups. The HCT proposed that a limited number of IASC mission participants should be present in the country for a longer period of time, leading to a deeper understanding of the context. A summary of the proposed mission approach will be submitted to the TA Implementation Steering Group for consideration before the end of March 2013.

41. A common lesson learned from the IASC missions to South Sudan, Chad and Myanmar is that the success of the mission and the relevance and ownership of the joint recommendations largely depends on the level of engagement and commitment of the HC, the HCT members and the Focal Points during the mission period.
42. The participation of regional IASC colleagues in the mission was an important factor given their knowledge of the context and people and their ability to facilitate a more immediate follow-up of the mission’s recommendations as part of their regular contact with the country team.

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**Annexes:**

1. Retreat outcome action plan
2. HCT Core Group mini-retreat outcome
3. Final Mission Schedule
4. People and organisations consulted by the Mission Team