1. On 22 August 2014, the IASC Emergency Directors held a teleconference to review the IASC System-Wide Humanitarian Emergency Response (L3) classification of the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR), and to discuss regional coordination mechanisms in the context of the Iraq and Syria L3 emergencies. The Senior Humanitarian Coordination (SHC) for the CAR crisis, Claire Bourgeois, joined the call for the first agenda item.

Review of the L3 status for CAR

2. The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) first declared the crisis in CAR a L3 on 11 December 2013, following consultation with the IASC Principals. The L3 classification was extended for a further six months on 5 March 2014. The IASC Principals will meet on 5 September to discuss the classification of the crisis and determine whether the L3 should be stood down or extended.

3. The SHC and Emergency Directors discussed the scale, complexity, urgency, capacity to respond and reputational risk as follows:

   a. **Complexity:** The situation remains extremely complex, due to many interlinked factors. The Government is entirely occupied by the political crisis facing the country. The newly appointed Prime Minister is highly contested and there are rumours that he may be pushed to resign. Although a cessation of hostilities was agreed by parties to the conflict in Brazzaville in July, the anti-Balaka representative who attended the talks has since been suspended from the anti-Balaka and the ex-Seleka representative who attended the talks may also soon be suspended. There is increased fragmentation in the chains of command of both the ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka, leading to increased insecurity and displacement. Relations with neighbouring countries, including Chad and Cameroon, have deteriorated. Refugees continue to enter Cameroon, but it has tightened restrictions on the influx, citing concerns about heightened criminality. This has made cross-border humanitarian action more complicated. At the same time, there is a very worrying new trend of humanitarian organisations being threatened or attacked on the basis of perceived bias - i.e. assisting one party to the conflict – or directly prevented by armed groups from carrying out their work.

   b. **Scale:** Although the number of internally displaced people has decreased, the events of this week – with several thousand people newly displaced in Bangui as a result of new clashes - have highlighted the precariousness of the situation. Thousands of people remain displaced in harsh conditions and without access to basic services in the bush. Of the people who do manage to get out, many (particularly women and children) are suffering from severe malnutrition.

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1 Participating in the call were FAO [Dominique Burgeon], IMC [Chris Skopec], InterAction [Julien Schopp], IOM [Vincent Houver], IRC [Bob Kitchen], OHCHR [Anders Kompass], Oxfam [Gareth Price-Jones], UN-Habitat [David Evans], UNICEF [Yasmin Haque], WFP [David Kaatrud], WHO [Anne Ancia], UNHCR [Terry Morel], and UNFPA [Mabingue Ngom].
c. **Urgency:** Ongoing insecurity, including increasing criminality, means that thousands of people, particularly in remote areas, remain at risk of displacement. Sexual and gender based violence is committed with impunity.

d. **Capacity to respond:** There has been an increase in capacity of humanitarian organisations in CAR, including in the countryside where organisations are present in 36 different locations. However, capacity still needs to increase due to the multiplication of IDP sites. Given the political crisis, the Government’s capacity to provide basic services has not increased since the declaration of the L3 and these therefore continue to be provided by humanitarian actors. Public administration, security and law enforcement, the judicial system and the rule of law are still not fully functional and, in many instances, local authorities are contested, unable to resume duties or not serving the entire population. Few partners are working on resilience-building. Funding remains a key challenge for specific clusters and more must be done to hold donors to account and ensure that there is rapid funding provided following L3 declarations.

e. **Reputational Risk:** A high-level of scrutiny remains on the humanitarian response. While MINUSCA will formally deploy as of 15 September, it will have only around 65 per cent of its troop numbers in place. There is also further work needed by humanitarians to improve MINUSCA’s Protection of Civilians Strategy.

4. **The SHC noted that the majority (9 out of 14) of HCT members recommend an extension of the L3 based on the analysis of the crisis as outlined above.** The other five HCT members suggested that it could be downgraded given that: the level of urgency is not the same as when the L3 was declared; the EUFOR and Sangaris are in the country; MINUSCA will be established as of 15 of September; and the response from humanitarian actors has increased.

5. Eight out of 11 Emergency Directors expressing opinions agreed on the recommendation to extend the L3 for three to six months. Those in favour expressed concern that deactivation of the L3 would mean that CAR, a crisis that already struggles for international attention, would once again be ignored and suggested that the L3 extension would allow the IASC to:

a. **Political environment:**
   - monitor the evolution and impact of the political crisis;
   - effectively engage with MINUSCA while it consolidates its presence to ensure a strong humanitarian voice, smooth transition and strengthening of the MINUSCA PoC strategy;
   - assess the impact of the standing-up of MINUSCA;

b. **Leadership:**

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2 Three clusters (Early Recovery, Livelihoods and Community Resilience, Education, and Protection) and multi-sectoral assistance to refugees remain less than 10 per cent funded, and four more clusters are less than 40 per cent funded (Emergency Shelter, Emergency Telecommunications, Health, Nutrition and WASH).

3 Eight of the participants were in favour; two were not in favour (one of which registered their position in writing after the call); and one was undecided. Different proposals regarding the duration of the extension, included: to the end of the current SHC’s term in October; three months; to the end of 2014; and six months
- Continue the SHC position and empowered leadership model, with a focus on improving delivery, and to facilitate engagement with MINUSCA;

c. **Delivery:**
   - decentralise delivery and implement the Strategic Response Plan;
   - cope with any further increase in needs associated with the interrupted pastoralist migration season ("transhumance");
   - increase humanitarian capacity to the needed level, particularly outside Bangui – it was noted that the L3 for CAR had to date been implemented ‘in slow motion’;

d. **Funding:**
   - Raise critical funding for humanitarian action in CAR, while keeping the crisis in the spotlight; and

e. **Exit strategy:**
   - Develop an ‘L3 exit strategy’, outlining benchmarks to be achieved to ensure that the L3 impact is sustained beyond the deactivation.

6. **However, there were differences of opinion.** Noting that there are several other humanitarian crises which are severe but not classified as L3 (e.g. Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia), one Emergency Director emphasized the need to protect the L3 classification for the most severe crises and suggested a deactivation of the L3 but a continuation of the empowered leadership model and other specific measures. Another Emergency Director noted the challenges of responding to multiple L3s simultaneously. Two NGO consortia noted that their membership held different views on whether or not to extend but that ‘on the balance’ an extension was recommended.

7. **While recognizing that there may be pressure to deactivate the CAR L3 due to the pressure on the system of multiple L3s, the Emergency Directors highlighted the importance of focusing instead on what concrete impact the L3 is intended to have and whether it is needed.** They also noted the importance of working to ensure that decisions regarding the activation, extension and deactivation of L3s are taken on the basis of humanitarian needs and the gravity of the situation, rather than the number of ongoing L3 activations, with a coherent and consistent application of relevant criteria and continued work to make this process more robust. To assist in this, any L3 extension should identify several clear, realistic and measurable objectives to be achieved within the extension period.

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<th><strong>Action items</strong></th>
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<td>* Draft paper for discussion by IASC Principals, providing an analysis of the crisis and implementation of the L3 to date and reflecting the divergent views among Emergency Directors: <em>EDG to share draft by 24 August, for consultation with EDG members by 27 August.</em></td>
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4 One NGO consortia provided feedback in writing following the meeting.
Coordination structures in Iraq, Syria and the region

8. In follow-up to the IASC Principals discussion on 12 August 2014, the Emergency Directors began an initial brainstorming regarding the task given to them to ‘Undertake a quick review of coordination mechanisms in the region to ensure that coordination is kept as straightforward as possible.’ Several of the complicating and challenging elements associated with coordination in the region were highlighted, including: the interface between humanitarian and development actors, including international financial institutions; the interface between the Regional Refugee Response Plan and the country-specific plans developed in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq; lack of transparency regarding bilateral funding and support to the region; the relationship between cross-border humanitarian operations into Syria and the responses underway in the neighbouring countries from which they are staged; reporting to the Security Council under resolutions 2139 and 2165; and the role of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (RHC) in light of all of these different dimensions. It was also noted that this is all taking place within the context of the rapid advance of ISIL, which now controls key strategic locations in both Syria and Iraq, including at key border crossings for humanitarian operations.

9. The Emergency Directors were requested to highlight key issues to be addressed in order to streamline and simplify coordination. Those that took the floor noted the need for simple and robust coordination, with a determination of the way to move forward based on what is needed, rather than a standard formula. The need to address both the Iraq and Syria crises was noted. It was suggested by one Emergency Director that there be a senior regional role, looking not just at humanitarian coordination, but also at development and political issues. It was noted that there had been some positive improvements in coordination in southern Turkey with the arrival of the Deputy RHC (DRHC) and that it was hoped this would grow with time. The HLG in Gaziantep has agreed to commission a local evaluation of coordination in Southern Turkey, which NGOs support. The tendency for donors to micromanage any space created by differences within the IASC was highlighted, with a recent message sent to the DRHC noted as an example of this.

10. It was agreed that a paper would be drafted mapping out the coordination structures currently in place, which have been developed in an ad hoc manner, and providing options for a more streamlined approach going forward. It was noted that the HCTs from Damascus and Gaziantep will meet in Beirut on 3 September and that the Emergency Directors Group should try to link in to that discussion.

Action items

- **Draft paper to be prepared outlining current coordination structures and proposals on the way forward: EDG Secretariat to share draft by 29 August, for consultation with EDG members.**
- **EDG to possibly engage with joint HCT meeting (Syria and southern Turkey) to take place in Beirut on 3 September: EDG Secretariat to inform EDG members of next steps by 29 August.**

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11. A suggestion was made regarding a possible Emergency Directors Group mission to Iraq. It was suggested that Kevin Kennedy, who has been deployed temporarily to enhance leadership, be given time to assess the situation and provide a recommendation on the way forward, including what support from IASC HQ would be helpful.