



# TALK BACK

The New Monthly Newsletter of the  
International Council of Voluntary Agencies

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## Opinion

### **NATO'S Involvement in Humanitarian Aid on the Balkans Could Lead to an Impossible Mixture**

Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop

This first issue of ICVA's new newsletter is released at a moment when the war in Kosovo and its grave humanitarian consequences are rapidly spiralling out of control. The NATO bombing, initiated to force Yugoslav President Milosevic to accept the peace plan of Rambouillet, has in fact led to a further escalation of the war, destabilising the entire Balkan region. The Yugoslav and Serb (para-) military forces have retaliated by directly targeting the Kosovar-Albanians and their villages, evicting them en masse from their homes and speeding up the ethnic cleansing. As a result, more than 350,000 refugees have already poured into the neighbouring countries, with many more on the way.

For the fifth time this decade, after Northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the African Great Lakes, there is an immediate need to mount a large-scale humanitarian operation for hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced. Again, our television screens are showing scenes of utter desperation -- this time in Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro.

While there is an urgent humanitarian job to do, the question must be asked who should do it? The latest reports indicate that NATO is getting rapidly involved in the aid effort. This involvement of the political-military alliance is fuelled by statements such as the one made by the EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid Emma Bonino, who called for the creation of

safe havens in the border areas. Others point to the logistics capacity and the speed and effectiveness of NATO to bring relief to the area; a job that only the military can do, they say.

While the refugees undoubtedly do not care who will come to their immediate rescue, there is a danger that the aid effort and the political-military response will now become inseparable. How can one organisation, which is a party to the conflict, at the same time ensure an impartial relief effort to all victims?

One of the articles in this newsletter points to the risk that aid agencies will, once again, be politically manipulated. Humanitarian organisations will have no space to operate independently. They will be forced to assist the refugees in confined areas, keeping them there, compensating for European governments' fear of receiving more refugees on their doorsteps.

Few aid agencies have yet spoken out against NATO involvement in the aid effort. The first agency to do so should be the lead-agency in the region, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Upon being questioned about his position on the issue, a high level UNHCR official stated that it would be up to governments to decide. He pointed out that the UN's maximum capacity to deal with the situation is adequate for a total of 350,000 refugees in the region. Why UNHCR put the ceiling for its capacity at this level is unknown. Neither does it indicate that the agency has any recommendations for the governments on the decisions they should take.

Does the Red Cross family have a position on NATO's involvement in the aid effort? After the evacuation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff, traditionally one of the last agencies to leave a 'hot spot', the Red Cross movement, i.e. the ICRC, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and National Societies, decided to operate jointly in the area, a rather unique decision. An official of the Albanian Red Cross society, however, stated in an interview that he saw the NATO ground troops as the only solution to bring an end to the human suffering. It remains

unknown if this position represents 'the party line'.

The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may be as divided on NATO's involvement -- as ever. Some will say that it is not for them to decide on political issues. Others may fear that speaking out against NATO may result in the risk of losing donor money from NATO member states. Yet, the future implications for the independence of the humanitarian response may be substantial: should NATO, next to its bombing, also deploy 'humanitarian soldiers'.

Clearly, the political manoeuvring of NATO and its members have sidelined UNHCR and the aid agencies. While there are many immediate concerns relating to NATO's humanitarian involvement, Kosovo may turn out to be a watershed a few years from now. It reveals, once again, that humanitarians need to reflect on these political issues. It is not ICVA's intention to propose simplistic solutions or a common position on complex dilemmas, but we do feel that ICVA can do more to open up the discussion and facilitate the exchange of views.

This new newsletter is being launched as podium for the ICVA family to exchange positions on this issue and others, and to encourage organisations to develop their thinking in the face of such dilemmas. Elsewhere in this newsletter, reference is made to other examples -- i.e. the purchase of Sudanese slaves, NGOs' positions on mercenaries etc. ICVA wants its members to be better informed. They are invited to react.

*Ed Schenkenberg is the Co-ordinator of ICVA (Geneva). The views expressed here are those of the author and do not reflect the position of ICVA, or its members. Members are invited to contribute editorials in the future. Unless otherwise indicated, these contributions do not represent ICVA or its member organisations. (ed.schenkenberg@icva.ch)*

## Issue of the Month

### **Fears of Political Manipulation as Aid Agencies Struggle with Kosovo Exodus** *Comparisons With Rwandan Camps Could Haunt UNHCR*

As UNHCR struggles to respond to the growing humanitarian needs in Kosovo, concerns are being raised that the agency is once again being sucked into an open-ended and deeply political crisis.

Meanwhile, the High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, has announced that a special session of the Humanitarian Issues Working Group on the former Yugoslavia will meet in Geneva on Tuesday, April 6, to review Kosovo. ICVA will participate and facilitate the NGO interventions.

After more than ten days of NATO bombing in former Yugoslavia, and ruthless ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians by Serb forces in Kosovo, the main task is to meet the emergency needs of the refugees who are pouring out of the Serbian province without papers or food.

The size and speed of the exodus is reminiscent of 1991, when 800,000 Iraqi Kurds fled into Turkey within days. When the NATO bombing of Serbia began on March 24, there were already 99,000 refugees in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, and Bosnia. Within two days UNHCR, which had prior contingency plans for 100,000 more refugees, was making contingency plans for a total of 350,000. In addition, some 260,000 are thought to be internally displaced within Kosovo itself. The number of refugees is certain to rise dramatically if the Serbian forces accelerate the 'cleansing' of the province.

Prior to the bombing, UNHCR had managed to identify shelter for only 4,000 refugees in Albania. According to the UN's World Food Programme, over 30,000 tonnes of food have been stocked in the region -- sufficient to feed the current refugee population for two weeks. But its distribution could be hampered by the closure of airports and the fact that many transport facilities are being used for refugees. As of March 30, there were only sufficient

stocks to provide 4-5 days worth of food in Albania. UNHCR was negotiating with the government to use Tirana airport for humanitarian supplies.

In spite of the need, funding appears precarious. As of March 26, only 8.6% of the consolidated 1999 UN appeal for the former Yugoslavia had been pledged. UNHCR has asked for \$168 million, but received just \$25.5 million.

While this demonstrates the operational challenge that lies ahead, there is growing concern that UNHCR is being pulled into the same kind of political morass that compromised its operations in the Great Lakes of Africa and Bosnia.

NATO has pounced on the humanitarian disaster as a justification for its bombing. NATO spokesmen have described the Serbian assault as the worst in Europe since World War II, and compared it the systematic emptying of Phnom Penh by the Khmer Rouge in 1975. But, of course, the NATO bombing has itself greatly exacerbated the humanitarian crisis by forcing the Serbians to speed up their campaign of murder and expulsion. Some feel that UNHCR should have distanced itself from NATO.

Looking ahead, UNHCR could even find itself depending on logistical support from NATO as well as emergency funding from NATO governments. While this might be the only way to save lives, it would further identify UNHCR with NATO's military objectives.

Perhaps the biggest question is that of protection once the refugee exodus stabilises. The High Commissioner has already hinted that the best approach might be some kind of 'safe haven' at the frontier -- presumably under NATO protection.

Many would find this deeply alarming. Keeping refugees in huge centres at the border could add to the destabilisation of the entire region, much as the Rwandan camps in Eastern Zaire destabilised Central Africa between 1994 and 1996.

The ingredients are certainly explosive enough. The Albanian refugees have been

forced out without any documents. Many of the men have been killed or detained, leaving their wives and children bitter and radicalised. Large camps will quickly become a hotbed for extremism and provide the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) with recruits. It is not inconceivable that NATO would exploit them to 'bleed' any continuing Serbian occupation of Kosovo.

UNHCR also needs to ponder the impact of the refugees on the neighbouring countries. Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro are among the poorest and most unstable countries in the region, and they will likely be further weakened by the refugee influx. The Slavic population in Macedonia is opposed to ethnic Albanians and afraid that too many entrants could tilt the country's ethnic mix. This probably explains why the critical border between Macedonia and Kosovo has been closed and opened several times since the bombing began.

Montenegro, which is the other partner with Serbia in what remains of Yugoslavia, is divided between supporters and opponents of Milosevic. But the NATO bombing of installations in Montenegro, and the influx of refugees, may well shift it back into the Milosevic camp.

Thus far, UN leaders have been generally mute in their response, and the aid community has been totally preoccupied by the humanitarian needs. This is of course understandable. But UNHCR's allies will soon want to hear how Mrs. Ogata sees the future. Is UNHCR in favour of continued bombing or a halt to bombing? Of a resumption of the Paris talks? Would it favour the deployment of ground troops if the situation inside Kosovo becomes even more precarious? Would it favour the resettlement of Albanians to third countries, a la the Vietnamese? Or will it insist on repatriation?

None of these questions are easy, and many will seem premature, but staying silent will feed fears that UNHCR plans to play a strictly 'humanitarian' role. In the cases of Bosnia and the Great Lakes, that meant being buffeted and manipulated. Many have assumed that UNHCR was not prepared to repeat that experience. (IAIN GUEST)

## In the News

### **Civil Society's Agenda for Peace to be Presented at Hague Conference**

*Over 5,000 Activists Expected at Centennial Gathering*

Thousands of peace activists will meet in The Hague between May 11 and May 15 to launch a 'bottom up' agenda for peace.

Known as The Hague Appeal for Peace, the conference will precede a series of intergovernmental meetings being held to commemorate the first Hague Peace Conference, which drew delegates from 26 governments 100 years ago.

The first Hague gathering, and the subsequent conference of 1907, made major advances in the development of international law. But war has become, if anything, more deadly as the century draws to a close. In the last ten years alone, there have been outbreaks of genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda. The current crisis in Kosovo shows the extraordinary threat facing civilians in conflict and the inability of governments to provide protection.

The Hague Appeal will launch an ambitious agenda for peace and justice for the 21st Century, which has been drafted in recent months at a series of regional meetings. About 60 NGOs make up the Appeal's organising committee.

While agreeing that governments have failed to prevent war, the draft agenda for the Hague Appeal insists that this is a feasible goal:

'Sceptics will say it cannot be done. The Hague Appeal challenges this assumption. This century has seen unimagined changes. Society now has the means to cure disease, reduce poverty, and eliminate starvation. The twentieth century has also seen the creation of a set of universal norms, which, if implemented, will go a long way toward making war unnecessary and impossible. And this century has seen the replacement of authoritarian forms of government by democratic governance, a phenomenon which enables civil society to play a far greater role than heretofore in the affairs of humanity.'

In addition to launching a new, alternative peace agenda, the Hague conference will provide a platform for several major civil society campaigns that are either well under way or on the point of take-off.

These include a drastic reduction in small arms; a progress report on the Nobel prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines; a global push to ratify the statute of the new international criminal court; global action to reduce military establishments; a convention to outlaw nuclear weapons; a world-wide coalition to promote humanitarian intervention; the prohibition of the use and recruitment of child soldiers under the age of 18; and a major push to make peace education a compulsory part of curricula.

The Hague Appeal hopes to draw on the energy and commitment of these campaigns, and in so doing give them a substantial boost. It also plans to offer peace activists and experts an opportunity to showcase their work and exchange views. Scores of workshops have been organised under four headings: disarmament and human security; prevention and resolution of violent conflict; international humanitarian and human rights law; and the root causes of peace and war.

For information on The Hague Appeal contact: WFM (New York, USA): tel: 212 687 2623; fax: 212 599 1332; e-mail: hap99@igc.apc.org; or IALANA (The Hague, The Netherlands): tel: 31 70 36 34 484; fax: 31 70 34 55 951; e-mail: ialana@antenna.nl, web site: www.haguepeace.org

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### **Ethiopian Government Rebukes Amnesty and ICVA over Eritrean Deportations \***

*Border Conflict Results in Mass Deportations and Human Rights Abuses*

The Ethiopian government has angrily rebuked NGOs for calling for a halt to deportations and mass displacement resulting from its border conflict with Eritrea.

The NGO concerns have been voiced in a recent report by Amnesty International. They were also put to the Ethiopians in the NGO

statement to the UNHCR Standing Committee on February 9.

The border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, two former friends, erupted in May 1998 after Eritrea entered the Badme region -- a 400 square kilometre triangle of land, which is claimed by both countries. It has been administered by Ethiopia.

The conflict now threatens security in the entire Horn of Africa. The Amnesty report, issued on January 29, 1999, states that it has also led to major violations. The Amnesty team saw the arrival of approximately 1,280 children, women, and men of Eritrean origin who had been deported by the Ethiopians, and concluded that deportation had 'developed into a systematic, country-wide operation'. Fifty-two thousand Eritreans were deported between May 1998 and the end of January 1999.

Amnesty representatives who visited Eritrea found no evidence supporting the Ethiopian allegation that 40,000 Ethiopians had been forcibly deported from Eritrea or ill-treated over the same period of time.

The Ethiopian Permanent Mission to the United Nations issued a report calling the Amnesty report inaccurate, and criticising Amnesty for its 'blatant disregard for the suffering of Ethiopians at the hands of Eritreans'. Amnesty stood by its findings. The Mission also telephoned ICVA claiming that the NGO statement to the Standing Committee was political and inaccurate.

In a panel discussion organised by the Ethiopian Mission on March 16, 1999, Prof. Brook Hailu from Addis Ababa University explained that the 52,000 to 53,000 Eritreans 'sent off' by Ethiopia were members of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) who had taken part in military training or who could have become subversive forces. In order to 'neutralise such a possibility', it was necessary for the Ethiopian government to deport them. Prof. Hailu also argued that the Eritreans had started the 'dirty game' of deportations in June 1998: Ethiopia simply began retaliating two weeks later.

Although the fighting between the two countries has escalated during the last month, Eritrea formally accepted a framework

agreement proposed by the Organisation of African Unity on February 27, 1999. Ethiopia, which had previously agreed to the Agreement, has since called for new terms.

Meanwhile, NGOs are wondering how to deliver aid in the middle of the fighting. The government of Eritrea wants money from international NGOs, but does not permit them to work in the country. Only one tenth of the humanitarian work in Ethiopia is carried out by NGOs. This gives NGOs very little leeway in what could turn out to be a potential humanitarian disaster.

*"Amnesty International Witnesses Cruelty of Mass Deportations"*

<http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/12500299.htm> (AI Index AFR 25/02/99); tel: 44 171 413 5566; fax: 44 171 413 5835; e-mail: [info@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:info@amnesty.org.uk)

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**Mitch Victims Could Be Hit by 'Severe' Hurricane Season in Three Months Unless Reconstruction Speeds Up, Says OCHA**  
*Serious Delay in Reconstruction Could Leave Mitch Victims Vulnerable*

With three months to go before the next hurricane season, the governments of Central America and their donors must accelerate the pace of reconstruction, according to senior officials from the UN's Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The UN has just completed a follow-up mission to assess the response to Mitch, which struck Central America and the Caribbean with devastating force at the end of October 1998. At a briefing in Geneva, Ross Mountain, Director of OCHA's Geneva office, said that as much as \$6 billion has been pledged for the rebuilding of the region but almost nothing has been actually put into reconstruction.

As a result, he warned, many victims of Mitch are still living in temporary housing and much of the infrastructure is badly damaged. This could render them vulnerable if the next hurricane season turns out to be severe, as some forecasters are predicting.

Hurricane Mitch was one of the most destructive storms ever recorded. Almost 10,000 are thought to have died in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Another 10,000 people are still missing. The development of Honduras -- one of the poorest countries in the Americas -- has been put back by years.

Looking back on the international response, Mountain and his colleagues said that \$613,390 in emergency aid contributions had been reported to OCHA. Mexico and Cuba (which sent 2,000 medical personnel) were among the Latin American nations that responded.

This extraordinary outpouring of international support has provoked an uneven response in the devastated area. The UN team had high praise for communities and civil society, 'without whose support the death toll would have been much higher'.

Governments, on the other hand, were much less effective. Part of this may have been due to the fact that three out of the four national disaster management offices were run by the military and lacked officials trained in disaster management. In addition, said the UN team, there are no national laws defining the various steps to be taken in an emergency. Governments were also hampered by the lack of institutional knowledge in the civil service (which changes at elections).

With this in mind, the UN Development Programme is proposing a package of technical training and legal reforms to strengthen the capacity of governments nationally, and encourage more regional co-operation. Although the countries are contiguous, there was almost no sharing of information. The one exception was Nicaragua's disaster management authority INETER, which began to broadcast warnings on October 29 and was sending out quality bulletins every six hours by the time the disaster struck.

But the best way to prevent future disasters is to rebuild quickly and effectively, and UN officials are deeply concerned that this is not happening. Donors have formed a consultative group that is due to meet in Stockholm at the

end of May to plan the long-term reconstruction of the region. The European Union has talked of over \$250 million; the United States has promised almost \$1 billion. But donors are waiting to see how the affected governments plan to spend the money and are seeking reassurance that such large sums can be properly used. Many NGOs sympathise with this, given that misguided development strategies and opposition to land reform left communities much more vulnerable to Mitch. The problem is that holding out for conditions could delay the reconstruction and leave the victims of Mitch highly vulnerable when the next rains come in June.

*Several of ICVA's members have been helping in the aftermath of Mitch. The Washington-based coalition InterAction has set up a Mitch working group. Contact Jim Bishop: tel: 202 667 8227; fax: 202 483 7624; e-mail: [jbishop@interaction.org](mailto:jbishop@interaction.org); web site: [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org)*

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**Mercenaries Unacceptable Under Any Circumstances, Says Special Rapporteur**  
*Brutality of Rebels in Sierra Leone Cannot Justify Deployment of Mercenaries*

The recruitment, financing, and use of mercenaries provided by private companies is 'unacceptable under any circumstances', even when they are trying to restore deposed governments or protect civilians, according to Enrique Bernales Ballesteros, a senior human rights investigator for the United Nations.

In a new report to the UN Human Rights Commission, Ballesteros claims that paramilitary forces in Sierra Leone, who have been trained by an international firm of mercenaries, have been responsible for 'appalling acts of cruelty on rebels and civilians'. Seventy rebels were reportedly killed and mutilated during fighting in November last year.

Mercenaries cannot substitute for 'maintaining a collective regional security system and genuinely professional national armed forces and security forces loyal to the democratic legal order', says Ballesteros.

The issue of mercenaries has again come to the forefront of the human rights debate, as a result of the vicious fighting in Sierra Leone. Threatened by a rebellion, the government of Valentin Strasser contracted Executive Outcomes, a South African security firm, which was able to force the rebels to participate in a November 1996 peace agreement.

Strasser's successor, the constitutional President Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, was then overthrown in a coup d'etat on May 25, 1997. While in exile in Guinea, Kabbah signed a contract with Sandline International, a company registered in the Bahamas with offices in London to provide military support and assistance. Several companies with economic interests in Sierra Leone also reportedly provided financial backing for the contract. Sandline sent arms, helicopters and military equipment, which helped to restore President Kabbah in May 1998. In addition to fighting the rebels, Sandline is now helping to train a new national army and organise the population into civil defence forces.

Sierra Leone shows how the use of mercenaries has evolved following the end of the Cold War. Traditionally associated with some of the bloodiest episodes in Africa's transition to independence, mercenaries fomented the civil wars in Nigeria and the Seychelles. As a result, when the UN Human Rights Commission first took up the issue, it was treated as a violation of the right to self-determination.

Since the end of the Cold War, the deployment of mercenaries has become a lucrative business for internationally-registered companies. Moreover, they have found a ready supply of recruits in the form of veterans from the once formidable armies of South Africa and Russia and even Serbia.

But what has given mercenaries their biggest boost of all is the growing instability of countries like Sierra Leone, the brutality of rebel forces, and the inability of the international community to protect elected governments and vulnerable civilians. In a submission to the Commission, the NGO International Alert argues that the use of mercenaries has increased in the 1990s due to

the 'security gap left by the international community's continued reluctance to intervene in a growing number of internal conflicts'.

Given this, some argue that mercenaries like Sandline can fill the gap and even help to defend a country's right to self-determination in the face of a threat from rebels. Not so, says Ballesteros. In his report, Ballesteros points out that Executive Outcomes had not, in fact, prevented the 1997 coup in Sierra Leone.

As for Sandline, Ballesteros said that its mercenaries have 'trained' a large paramilitary force which itself has committed large-scale atrocities against captured rebels and civilians with the acquiescence of the government. The force is said to comprise 20,000 men and is led by Hinga Norman, a chief of the Mende tribe who was educated in the UK. During the week of November 30, 70 rebels were killed in battle at Gberay, a rebel base 100 km north of the capital Freetown. 'Many of the bodies were mutilated and incinerated', says the report.

In its efforts to aid the deposed government, Sandline also violated the UN arms embargo imposed on Sierra Leone in 1997. Helicopters and military equipment were allegedly transported via Bulgaria, Nigeria, and Liberia.

Instead of widening the door to the deployment of mercenaries, Ballesteros called upon the international community to promote the development of effective global and regional security mechanisms that would make their use unnecessary. He pointed out that even though an international convention on mercenaries had been adopted in 1989, it has not yet received enough ratifications (22) to enter into force. This, he said, suggests a lack of political will. The Special Rapporteur has suggested holding an international conference at which states, experts, and even the enterprises employing mercenaries could discuss possible solutions.

*Ballesteros' report can be obtained from the United Nations. Its reference number is E/CN.4/1999/11, January 13, 1999.*

## **Agencies Apprehensive of Growing UN Coordination As UN Prepares To Resume Aid in Eastern Congo**

Several humanitarian aid agencies are concerned that a UN decision to resume humanitarian aid to the troubled Eastern Congo could open the way to their control by the UN and even affect their funding.

The concern has arisen following a decision by the United Nations to reopen an office in Goma, with UNICEF serving as lead agency.

Goma has been a major focus for humanitarian concerns since it was overwhelmed by the arrival of Rwandan Hutu in the summer of 1994. But the UN has found it hard to maintain a consistent presence as power has changed hands three times since.

After maintaining a token presence in Goma for two years, the UN has managed to win agreement for a resumption of aid from the Congolese government and the rebels. But at the same time, because of the risk to security, the UN is also insisting on a common approach to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. This takes the form of Principles of Engagement, which have been drafted under the auspices of OCHA at meetings in Nairobi and Brussels.

Efforts are under way to apply similar principles for the re-entry of the UN and NGOs into Afghanistan. Indeed, the (UN) Inter-Agency Standing Committee is working on a standard set of Principles that would replace country-specific principles which are developed each time re-entry is to take place.

The reaction from NGOs has been mixed. There is little disagreement over the content of the Principles themselves, which come from international humanitarian law and are followed by most NGOs in the normal course of their work. The Principles also draw on the Red Cross' Code of Conduct, which many NGOs have signed.

The controversy arises when it comes to the UN's co-ordination role. Is the UN proposing to co-ordinate with NGOs or to co-ordinate NGOs? This could matter, because the last three years have show that the UN is usually



more cautious and inflexible than NGOs. For example, at one point the UN made it a precondition of resuming aid to Goma that looted property be recovered: NGOs went in, spotted a stolen vehicle and demanded that it be returned -- which it was.

Katrien Coppins at Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)-Holland agrees that co-ordination can avoid duplication of effort, but feels the UN should not necessarily be doing it, and certainly not representing all humanitarian agencies in negotiations with governments. This is because the UN combines a political and humanitarian role.

A further concern of several NGOs is that such Principles of Engagement could lead to conditionality. Certain donors may make funding contingent on acceptance of the Principles, further hampering NGO independence. Several donors are already insisting that the NGOs sign on to the 1994 Red Cross Code of Conduct, which aims to lay out common principles for the Red Cross and NGOs, before they are eligible for funding.

Representatives in OCHA said that donors should not link funding to co-ordination. But with the new UN Principles taking shape, the Red Cross Code already in place, and the Sphere Project of Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Assistance gaining adherents, NGOs may find it increasingly hard to ensure funding and still retain their independence. (MANISHA THOMAS)

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### **UN Representative Calls for NGO Help in Applying New Standards on Internally Displaced**

Francis Deng, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on internally displaced persons, is asking non-governmental agencies how they are applying the Guiding Principles on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in their fieldwork.

Deng plans to meet with NGOs in Geneva during the current session of the UN Human Rights Commission to review his latest report to the Commission. This year, he plans to focus on implementation of the Principles,

which he elaborated with help from NGOs and presented to the Commission last year.

In preparation for the meeting, ICVA and (ICVA member) the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)/Global IDP Survey are inviting NGOs to submit examples of any programs that might have used the Principles or could serve as good field practice.

Efforts to improve the protection of IDPs have been hampered by the lack of an international institution responsible for IDPs. It now remains to be seen whether the Principles can be used by NGOs to partially fill the institutional vacuum.

With the Principles now being widely disseminated, the challenge is to 'operationalise' them. Several individual NGOs have already taken up the challenge, but it will require a more concerted involvement by the wider NGO community for them to fulfil their potential. By sharing the examples of good field practice as well as use of the Principles in action, the NRC and ICVA hope to encourage some cross-pollination and show that what has worked in one place may work elsewhere.

The UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC's) working group on IDPs is also collecting examples of field practices among humanitarian agencies. UNICEF is collecting information on IDP assistance and protection, which it hopes to release in the form of a field manual later this year.

But both these initiatives concern UN practice. The challenge is now for NGOs -- particularly southern and eastern European NGOs -- to come up with their own information. This will be disseminated through ICVA's network and incorporated into the IASC Field Practices Manual. It could also help set the NGO agenda for protection of IDPs in the years ahead. (MARK VINCENT)

*Contact Mark Vincent at the Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Survey, Geneva, Switzerland: tel: 41 22 788 8085; e-mail: nrc-no@online.no; or ICVA.*

## **UNHCR Attempt to Reach out to NGOs Ends in Confusion**

An important initiative by UNHCR and NGOs to review the state of refugee protection and develop collaboration has started on a note of confusion and uncertainty.

A first meeting of the initiative, known as 'Reach Out,' took place in New York (March 11 and March 12) with senior officials from UNHCR and 30 human rights and humanitarian NGOs. The meeting was addressed by the High Commissioner. ICVA attended as an observer.

UNHCR and NGOs agree on the need to improve refugee protection, which has eroded badly in the post-Cold War era. But both sides also feel the need to build bridges with one another.

Humanitarian NGOs have criticised UNHCR for promoting repatriation in risky circumstances, while human rights leaders like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have rebuked UNHCR for failing to defend protection standards and for shifting its emphasis from protection to assistance.

For its part, UNHCR feels that NGOs should be more sympathetic to the way it has been forced by governments into impossible conflicts where mass killings, ethnic cleansing, and attacks on civilians are common place. In such a situation, says UNHCR, it is extremely difficult to provide protection for refugees and displaced persons.

This fundamental disagreement has created some bad feelings on both sides. NGOs see no reason to soften their criticism of UNHCR. But UNHCR replies that governments -- not UNHCR -- are the problem. High Commissioner Ogata has made it clear that she particularly resents the criticisms of human rights NGOs.

The Reach Out initiative represents the second phase of a process of consultations that began with governments in 1997 and are now being extended to 'non-state actors', including NGOs, the corporate sector and UN partners. Further meetings are planned in Nairobi and Bangkok later this year. There are also plans to

hold a protection meeting with Eastern European NGOs at the time of the C.I.S.-conference in late June in Geneva.

The agenda for the New York meeting was divided into four items: collaboration on protection; advocacy and promotion of protection principles; specific protection situations; and protection in field operations.

The NGOs focused on the need to defend protection principles, monitor states' compliance of the 1951 Convention, and emphasise protection in the field. Some NGOs called for an independent mechanism supervising the Convention. Others, including field staff, complained at the shocking lack of protection resources in the field.

But NGOs argue that UNHCR will always remain both a partner and a target of such advocacy. As one NGO representative put it: 'The NGOs had come to the meeting because their aim is to achieve a better protection system and UNHCR is one of the principal actors in this system.'

UNHCR, however, seemed to feel that human rights and humanitarian NGOs need to co-operate more, particularly at the field level, if they are to help UNHCR carry out its protection mandate. But such co-operation has already been discussed in different fora, including three ICRC workshops and an MSF-Holland conference in February 1996. There is also considerable collaboration among NGOs at the field level. This seems news to UNHCR and even to some of the CEOs of NGOs at the New York meeting.

Towards the end of the meeting, UNHCR asked the NGOs to make a commitment to taking the consultation process further -- in fact, to organise the rest of the process. But this seemed to underscore differences over the goal. UNHCR clearly hopes to co-opt the NGOs into enhancing its own mandate, but NGOs are not prepared to provide UNHCR with a 'carte blanche'.

After organising the structure, format, and the agenda, UNHCR seemed to want to shift everything over to the NGOs, implying that it had its hands full with other more important internal matters. The NGOs came to the

meeting with practical suggestions, including the creation of working groups. But no decisions were taken on how to move this forward.

At the same time, the process must continue. The June meeting of the C.I.S. Conference offers an opportunity to bring Eastern European NGOs together. In view of the protection problems in the region, their input in this process is essential. Similarly, NGOs in Asia and Africa must be enabled to take part. ICVA, from its side, will keep its members informed, should an agreement be reached over the next steps in this process.  
(ED SCHENKENBERG VAN MIEROP)

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### **In Brief**

*This section is a summary of the latest developments in countries of interest to ICVA members, from a humanitarian perspective.*

#### **Afghanistan: Security Clearance Given For Limited UN Return**

The United Nations has decided to allow the return of a limited number of UN personnel to Afghanistan, following the recommendations of a UN technical mission.

The UN's Security Co-ordinator (UNSECOORD) has granted security clearance for up to 6 international staff in Kabul, and between 6 and 12 international staff in Herat, Jalalabad, and Khandahar on a 2-3 week rotational basis. However, they will not go back until security officers are deployed. These security officers will be drawn from all UN agencies, with each agency sharing in the cost.

The security clearance was granted on the understanding that the Afghan authorities will guarantee the safety of international and local UN staff and UN implementing partners, as agreed in a supplementary security protocol signed on October 24, 1998.

The UN withdrew its 40 personnel on August 22, 1998, after two Afghan staff from WFP and UNHCR were abducted and murdered in Jalalabad. On August 21, following the US

bombings, the UNOCHA and WFP offices in Jalalabad were attacked by a mob. One day later, UN Military Observer Lt. Colonel Carmine Calo was murdered in the streets of Kabul. UN programmes were managed locally by national staff working in Afghanistan under the supervision of international staff evacuated to Islamabad.

Following the signing of the October 24, 1998 security protocol, a UN technical mission, headed by a specialist in judicial processes and investigations, travelled to Kabul to assess the status of the investigations about the three murders. It concluded that the Taliban had made a satisfactory effort to resolve the cases. The UN then sent a security assessment mission into Kabul, Herat, Khandahar, and Jalalabad, which determined that the environment in the areas was conducive for the return of what would initially be a limited number of international staff.

If the security environment remains stable, more staff would then return. The UN would resume negotiations with the Taliban authorities on issues of education and health.

The proposed re-entry into Afghanistan is described in a 'next steps' paper, which warns against describing Afghanistan as 'humanitarian vs. development' and 'life-saving vs. capacity-building'. It argues that any analysis must take into account the collapse of state institutions (which has created an 'emergency of governance'); the human suffering caused by the continuing conflict; the 'development deficit'; and the policies of the presumptive authorities which have created a 'human rights crisis'.

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#### **Sierra Leone —The UN Claws Its Way Back**

Half of the total population of Sierra Leone is cut off from any assistance at a time where there are growing fears of food shortages and disease, according to a recent (March 10-13) UN assessment mission. Meanwhile, after being blocked by the recent fighting, the United Nations is to return to the West African country.

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sierra Leone is estimated at between 700,000 to 1 million, and the UN mission reports 'nutritional problems and measles' in Kenema, which has 70,000 IDPs.

International humanitarian staff were forced to leave the country in January 1998 as the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) battled the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and Revolutionary United Front (RUF) forces. Five thousand persons are thought to have died when the peacekeepers pushed the rebels out of Freetown.

In February, OCHA issued a Humanitarian Plan of Action for Sierra Leone -- a 60-day Plan for intervention in the western part of Freetown and the southern and eastern parts of the country. On February 27, the humanitarian community began to return to the capital.

On March 11, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) until June 13, 1999, and welcomed the Secretary General's decision to re-establish UNOMSIL's presence in Freetown. The number of military observers and human rights personnel will also be increased.

NGOs are now negotiating with the government and the RUF to gain access to inaccessible areas of the country in the northern and eastern provinces. Under the OCHA Plan of Action, a logistics base is to be established at Lungi International Airport, which will serve as a transit area for humanitarian goods. Only those agencies and organisations participating in the Humanitarian Co-ordination Structure and subscribing to the 'Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Agencies Operating in Sierra Leone' will be allowed access, under the control of the World Food Programme.

The Code of Conduct, which was revised in November 1998, lays out operational guidelines for the co-ordination of humanitarian agencies operating in Sierra Leone and the security of their personnel. A committee has been established to monitor implementation of the Code and intervene with the parties to the Conflict. The

Committee is comprised of representatives from national and international NGOs, concerned donors, relevant UN agencies, and the ICRC (which has observer status).

At the beginning of March, UNHCR announced that it would be moving 50,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea away from the border areas to prevent the use of camps as bases for rebels and in order to limit the danger of the conflict spreading. The European Union and United States have promised \$4 million for the operation.

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### **Angola: Dangerous Vacuum as the UN Departs**

A dangerous humanitarian vacuum has opened up in Angola following the February 26 decision by the Security Council to terminate the mandate of the UN Observer Mission (MONUA). The withdrawal of the mission will deprive Angola of a concentrated UN presence at a time of growing crisis in the African country. As many as 700,000 Angolans may have been displaced since January alone.

Aid agencies have been unable to work in the interior, as a result of insecurity and a growing threat from landmines. They have also found it increasingly difficult to reach provincial capitals, because of MONUA's inability to provide humanitarian workers with military escorts. Humanitarian workers are not present in any areas controlled by UNITA (Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola).

Given the humanitarian needs, there is wide agreement on the need for some kind of post-MONUA security arrangement. OCHA has recommended that the human rights operation (which was previously under MONUA) should be extended and possibly placed under the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

## Agency Report

### **UNHCR's Standing Committee Discusses Proposals for Change**

In a series of changes, UNHCR has proposed to unify its budget, standardise its reporting and integrate its evaluation function more directly into policy making.

These proposals were presented at the recent session of the UNHCR Standing Committee, last February. On the surface, they reflect the desire of UNHCR and (donor) states to streamline the agency's procedures and improve its effectiveness. At the same time, the discussions revealed conflicting interests between UNHCR and states. While donors are trying to keep control over their contributions - - for which UNHCR has to account -- UNHCR is trying to retain a degree of flexibility.

The discussion is taking place at a time when emergencies are growing violent, UNHCR is under pressure to withdraw more quickly from open-ended reintegration programmes, and states are increasingly reluctant to receive large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers and fund international agencies.

How the balance is struck between donors and UNHCR may also affect NGOs, which implement UNHCR programmes and whose ability to function is partially linked to UNHCR's income and capacity.

#### *Budget*

Unlike other members of the UN system, which can count on regular assessed contributions, UNHCR receives almost all of its income from voluntary donations. This is because it is virtually impossible to predict refugee movements in advance -- and hence how much money UNHCR will require.

UNHCR's budget was until recently divided in two parts: the general programmes which cover the costs of on-going protection and assistance activities; and the special programmes covering refugee emergencies and voluntary repatriation programmes.

Both accounts are funded from voluntary contributions, but they have traditionally been

presented separately to donors at the annual session of the UNHCR's Executive Committee. Based on the response, UNHCR adapts its needs (general programmes and special operations) and seeks funding at a pledging meeting in October. This system has, however, created problems for UNHCR, donors, and operational partners, as sufficient oversight was lacking and funding was often too fragmented.

The new proposed unified budget structure, as presented by UNHCR based on earlier consultations with states, means that UNHCR from now on will have only one budget document. It will cover both operations and support budgets, plus an operational reserve as a fall-back. This will come into effect for the year 2000. The idea is that the new budget document will make it easier for UNHCR to identify priority activities in light of resource limitations and give the office more flexibility in responding.

However, the advantage of a flexible unified budget could well be offset by the donors' insistence in earmarking their contributions. Worried about the funding projections for 1999 and the very low carry-over, UNHCR expressed particular concern over the detailed earmarking by donors, which over the last three years increased from 38% to over 60%, sometimes close to 80%.

Some donors said that they were willing to decrease tight earmarking to a certain extent but were not in a position to give up earmarking altogether, partly due to national reporting requirements. In response, UNHCR suggested to embark on 'menu' earmarking (instead of earmarking 'a la carte'), whereby UNHCR would prioritise activities based on its mandate to which donors could respond -- in other words, to allow a certain earmarking.

The unified budget structure was endorsed by the Standing Committee, but the question of earmarking was referred for further consultations. To what extent a unified budget will really enhance UNHCR's flexibility depends on the outcome of these consultations.

## *Reporting*

In an effort to reduce its workload and to streamline procedures and the production of documentation, UNHCR further proposed to standardise UNHCR reporting by issuing a single Global Report. This has also been done at the request of Excom. It will replace the many different ways and formats in which UNHCR currently reports to Excom members, including the customised donor reporting, which place a heavy burden on UNHCR.

The first Global Report is expected in June 1999 and will be discussed at the June Standing Committee. In format, it will consist of a narrative and financial section. As suggested by several delegations, it will have a strong focus on protection, impact, actions aimed at gender mainstreaming, the implementation of UNHCR's policies on women and children as well as the environment. It will also address possibilities for phasing-out operations and reflect on lessons learned. The report should mirror the already existing Global Appeal (the programme overview).

The reporting cycle will become: Global Appeal (November of year prior to start programmes); Global Report (June of year following programme implementation); Mid-Year Progress Report (August of the year of programme implementation).

While delegations generally agreed with the contents of the report, several donors emphasised the possibility for a further breakdown and improvement. Some requested that there be room for additional reporting requirements to comply with their national obligations. UNHCR agreed to further bilateral consultations, but asked for additional reporting requirements to be announced in time.

In the end, the Standing Committee adopted the draft decision on the standardisation of UNHCR reporting, with a 'reservation' by the European Commission, which considered the decision premature. To what extent the Global Report will really standardise UNHCR reporting and decrease UNHCR's workload would, however, still greatly depend on the additional reporting

requirements by states.

## *Evaluation*

Finally, UNHCR and states agreed that the agency's evaluation function must be enhanced as part of improving the effectiveness of the agency. With this in mind, the Standing Committee discussed the report of an external consultant.

One of the main recommendations is to establish a closer link between the central evaluation and policy analysis function, and this has been given effect in the recent restructuring of UNHCR's Headquarters, which took effect February 1, 1999. The evaluation function is now placed within a new unit called 'Evaluation and Policy Analysis', under the Department of Operations.

The consultant also recommended a more effective dissemination and feedback system and the development of a long-term strategy on evaluations. This will be integrated in the work of the new unit. With respect to the recommendation for adequate human and financial resources, UNHCR requested assistance from member states. UNHCR further announced that, as a first step, its Senior Management Committee had endorsed a provisional work programme according to which some operational activities and external affairs will be evaluated.

Although states were generally supportive of an enhancement of UNHCR's evaluation function, the discussion showed a reluctance by several donors to contribute extra financial support. States further emphasised the importance of translating evaluation assessments into practice, suggested joint evaluations with donors and private actors and some questioned the extent to which the proposals would entail self-evaluation. They stressed the need for transparency and their desire for an elaborated plan of action and time frame, as well as the continuation of informal consultations on the subject.

UNHCR agreed to further consultations on these issues and the subject will again be put before the Standing Committee in June. Needless to say, states tried to secure their influence on UNHCR's evaluation function.

The discussion of the above issues demonstrates how UNHCR is called to account by states from the initial budgeting and reporting through the evaluation. At the same time, it raises questions about the commitment of states to refugee assistance and protection. States are clearly concerned with improving UNHCR's accountability -- but to what extent is this aimed at improving UNHCR's effectiveness or at increasing their own control over UNHCR's operations? UNHCR would certainly argue that it needs more, not less, flexibility to become more effective in protecting and assisting refugees. (ANN MARIE KUIJPERS)

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### **Talk Back on Humanitarian Dilemmas**

*ICVA's extensive network of member organisations makes it ideally placed to debate some of the humanitarian dilemmas that confront the aid community. It is proposed to take advantage of this and use Talk Back and the forthcoming new ICVA website as fora for such a discussion.*

This first issue of Talk Back has raised some of the dilemmas that could benefit from such a discussion. For example, should it be permissible to hire private security firms (mercenaries) to defend constitutional presidents? Will greater UN co-ordination in emergencies – clearly desirable in itself -- reduce NGOs' flexibility?

Another dilemma: should slaves be purchased to save them from slavery? The Swiss-based Christian Solidarity International (CSI) has purchased about 5,000 Sudanese slaves in the past year, at a cost of between \$500 and \$1,000 per person. This brought an angry rebuke from UNICEF. 'The purchase of a human being is absolutely intolerable', said Marie Heuze, a UNICEF spokeswoman. Others feel that buying slaves simply provides a market for slave traders. In response, CSI pointed out that it had long asked UNICEF to condemn Sudan's slavery 'in the strongest terms as a crime against humanity.' A February 6 press release said: 'it would be 'absolutely intolerable' to leave thousands of children and others in bondage where they are subjected to a consistent pattern of physical

and psychological torture that includes death threats, beatings, rape, female genital mutilation, and forced conversion -- instead of liberating some slaves now.'

The ICVA Co-ordinator would like to propose a discussion around an issue of major concern to NGOs. This is the proposed Sphere minimum standards for the delivery of humanitarian aid and provision of emergency services by NGOs. These have been developed by several leading NGOs and are now being widely disseminated.

The aim is to avoid the kind of chaos and overlap that occurred in the refugee camps of Zaire between 1994 and 1996. But several questions have been raised about the Sphere standards: are they not set too high for some of the really difficult countries -- and if so, would this present humanitarian agencies with a choice between doing nothing or working with lower standards? Equally important, have NGOs from the South been sufficiently involved in the drafting process?

ICVA would like to obtain more members' input on some of these questions in time for the May 18-19 Sphere Management Committee meeting. The next issue of Talk Back will set out these questions in greater detail. Please contribute to this discussion.

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### **Members' Page**

#### **The International Catholic Migration Commission**

Humanitarian agencies 'react' to refugee crises. But what if humanitarian organisations could identify the events that lead to crises so they could see emergencies coming? ICVA member, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), is hoping that with this foresight it might then be possible to exert a constructive influence on such events.

The ICMC is embarking on an experiment to try and predict what the state of refugees and refugee resettlement will be 10 years from now by creating different scenarios. A group of 15 individuals from around the world

involved in refugee work have been brought together for the 6-month exercise. They met on March 25-26 in Morges, near Geneva, to develop the plan. Thereafter, the 15 will communicate primarily through e-mail.

The exercise is funded and sponsored by ICMC. The 15 individuals come from NGOs, the International Organisation of Migration, UNHCR, and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

The only expectation of the planning experiment is that the 15 participants use the methodology set out by Peter Schwartz in his book *The Art of the Long View*. The book, though written in the context of the business community, was seen as providing a simple formula for effective scenario planning that could be applied to the humanitarian field.

With so many urgent and immediate crises facing refugee organisations, one might ask, why look so far ahead? William Canny, Secretary-General of ICMC, said in an interview with Talk Back that the emphasis of humanitarian organisations is on the crisis-driven, 'reactive' approach to refugees. Longer-term planning, he said, could help agencies to make better use of their resources and improve protection.

One example could be refugee resettlement, which is suffering from declining interest and dwindling funds in countries that have traditionally provided a home for refugees. During the 1990s, the commitment of governments to resettlement has waned, as the Cold War has receded. The US, for example, sees less reason to take in African refugees than its former allies in Vietnam.

The ICMC is in a good position to know, as its member organisations have been working to assist refugees to resettle since its foundation. ICMC feels that peering into the 21st century might help to discern future shifts that could have a similar impact. Refugee movements during the 1990s have become less and less linked to Cold War conflicts, and more to internal war, ethnic tensions, and disputes over raw materials and natural resources.

But is it possible to really predict refugee movements so far in the future, given that they

tend to be an emergency response to war or human rights violations? Canny and the 15 individuals think it is. They intend to study the conditions under which refugees are created. With this understanding, organisations and individuals will hopefully be in a position where they will be able to better manage or influence the events that lead to refugees by putting more of an ethical and moral dimension to the world that produces them.

During their first meeting, the 15 individuals noted with pleasure the opportunity not to have to think reactively. They identified various critical elements to be examined before their next meeting in June.

The experiment is part of an internal evaluation by ICMC. An organisation with approximately 70 members and affiliates, ICMC has been involved primarily in resettlement since its formation in 1951, especially to the United States.

Founded to help Catholic organisations assist refugees of any creed, race, or nationality, ICMC has since expanded its work to the internally displaced. It has introduced programmes for economic revitalisation for refugees, including micro-credit enterprise. ICMC also helps returning refugees and increasingly tries to fill the 'gap' between humanitarian aid and development.

Another major gap that ICMC is trying to bridge is the one that exists between the rhetoric and practice of the displaced taking control over their own lives, even in the middle of a conflict.

*Other ICVA members who have individuals participating in the scenario planning include: Canadian Council for Refugees (e-mail: [ccr@web.apc.org](mailto:ccr@web.apc.org)) and InterAction (see above). The Project Facilitator for the scenario planning exercise is Sarah Stephens: tel: +41 22 919 10 20; e-mail: [sstephens@icmc.dpn.ch](mailto:sstephens@icmc.dpn.ch)*

*Next profile: ICVA's Central American partners prepare for the May 28 meeting of the Consultative group of donors, due to take place in Stockholm.*



## Calendar

*Each month Talk Back will provide ICVA members with information about upcoming events. These will be broken down into four categories. It is important to get your input on policy issues and upcoming events that could be of interest to the ICVA network.*

### For ICVA Members:

**April 30:** ICVA Executive Committee Meeting, Geneva

**September 28:** ICVA Executive Committee Meeting, Geneva

**October 2-3:** ICVA General Assembly Meeting, Geneva

### ICVA Input Required:

**April 6:** Humanitarian Issues Working Group (former Yugoslavia) UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland.

**April 22:** IASC Millennium Task Force (CARE's Graham Miller is ICVA's focal point on this task force).

**April 22-23:** IASC Working Group meeting, Rome, Italy. Topics include: In-depth on Sierra Leone; Natural Disasters; Humanitarian Principles; Y2K Impact on Humanitarian Agencies; the Republic of Korea; and Small Arms.

**May 18-19:** Sphere Management Committee Meeting, Washington, DC, USA

**May 31:** IASC Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland

**Late June:** UNHCR-OSCE C.I.S. Conference and C.I.S. NGOs Conference

**June 28-July 1:** UNHCR Standing Committee Meeting (Europe/America/Protection)

### ICVA Representation Required:

**April 22-23:** Overseas Development Institute Fifth Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance Meeting on Humanitarian Assistance, London, England. Contact: Theniath S Freudweiler: e-mail: [theniath@odi.org.uk](mailto:theniath@odi.org.uk)

## General Interest:

**March 22-April 30:** UN Human Rights Commission, Geneva, Switzerland

**April 26-28:** InterAction Forum '99: 'Leveraging our Impact Through Partnerships', Arlington, VA, USA; Contact: tel: 202 667-8227, ext. 124; e-mail: [forum@interaction.org](mailto:forum@interaction.org); [www.InterAction.org](http://www.InterAction.org)

**May 11-15:** The Hague Appeal for Peace, The Hague; Contact: WFM (New York, NY, USA): tel: 212 687 2623; fax: 212 599 1332; e-mail: [hap99@igc.apc.org](mailto:hap99@igc.apc.org); or IALANA (The Hague, The Netherlands): tel: 31 70 363 44 84; fax: 3170 34 55 951; e-mail: [ialana@antenna.nl](mailto:ialana@antenna.nl); web site: [www.hagueappeal.org](http://www.hagueappeal.org)

**May 14-16:** European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) Bi-Annual Meeting, Prague. Contact ECRE Brussels Office: fax: 32 3 514 59 22; e-mail: [officead@ecre.be](mailto:officead@ecre.be)

**May 25-20:** Symposium on 'Educational Needs of Afghan and Iraqi Refugees in Iran,' Tehran, Iran. Organised by the International Consortium for Refugees in Iran (ICRI) with the co-operation of BAFIA. Contact: ICRI c/o UNHCR: tel: 98 21 877 54 64; e-mail: [squire@unhcr.ch](mailto:squire@unhcr.ch)

**May 31-June 3:** FAO, Committee on World Food Security, Rome, Italy. Contact: tel: 39 065 70 51; fax: 39 065 70 531 52

**June 27-30:** Human Resources for Development: People and Performance, University of Manchester, England. Contact: Debra Whitehead, tel: 44 161 275 28 00; fax: 44 161 273 88 29; e-mail: [debra.whitehead@man.ac.uk](mailto:debra.whitehead@man.ac.uk)

**June:** ILO Conference, Committee on Child Labour, Geneva, Switzerland.

**July 2-3:** 'Saving Human Lives in the Midst of Conflict: From Humanitarian Action towards Humanising Governmental Action', Paris, France; Medecins du Monde in partnership with 'Foreign Affairs'. Conference Secretariat: tel: 33 1 44 92 13 29; fax: 33 1 44 92 13 62; e-mail: [christine.ihwe@medecinsdumonde.net](mailto:christine.ihwe@medecinsdumonde.net); web site: [www.warvictims.com](http://www.warvictims.com)

## **In The Next Issue**

- ◆ The Sphere Project
- ◆ UNHCR Standing Committee Debate on the Humanitarian Character of Refugee Camps
- ◆ Domestic Violence in Refugee Camps
- ◆ ICRC Protection Workshop

If you have contributions for the next issue, please e-mail them to **secretariat@icva.ch** or fax them to: 41 22 950 96 00 with the subject line 'ICVA TALK BACK' by April 20th.

## **How To Reach Us**

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