



## **2014 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment**

### **Side-event on *Interoperability***

25 June 2014, 13.15 – 14.30

Conference Room 2 (CB), UN Secretariat, New York

#### **Background**

As humanitarian crises increase in scale and frequency, the international system is under ever growing strain. Meeting humanitarian needs requires globally supported responses that may transcend the remit of the international humanitarian system largely created through General Assembly resolution 46/182 in 1991. Humanitarian actors must be able to call on larger, more diverse pool of international resources. An effective and sustained response may therefore lie in closer collaboration, communication and interaction with a range of actors who may not necessarily be part of or seek to join the traditional international system.

Capitalizing on these diverse approaches to better meet humanitarian needs requires recognizing these actors and systems, and understanding and respecting their comparative advantages, motivations and limitations. Interoperability does not consist of “gathering everyone to one single tent”, but of understanding the various existing systems and capitalizing on their comparative advantages to ultimately more effectively meet needs of affected people.

The future outlook of humanitarian response will require investment in building relationships between these actors. It is thus imperative to create forums to discuss and identify common ground, build arrangements for interaction or possibly develop standards for cooperation towards the overall goal of ensuring that growing humanitarian needs are met more effectively.

This panel discussion is conceived in order to respond to these challenges by combining theory with practice, by sharing lessons learned, and giving details on the possible cooperation. Its overall aim will be to foster an exchange of ideas on the concept of interoperability and its potential for humanitarian action.

#### **Concept**

Interoperability has its roots in the information technology, with the original aim to make computer systems compatible through standardised protocols and common interfaces. Concepts of interoperability have also been applied in other areas, such as the military, to allow joint operations of troops from different countries and cultural backgrounds (e.g. NATO). In disaster response and humanitarian relief, interoperability is increasingly

recognised as a way to ensure efficient coordination and cooperation among various actors from affected countries, regional and international organisations and a vast variety of bilateral responders. Interoperability requires participating actors to have at least a minimal level of harmonization of strategies, policies, doctrines and structures, and a willingness to work together to achieve and maintain shared interests against common objectives.

There are several technical approaches to developing interoperable systems. One element of successful interoperability in humanitarian and disaster response is standardisation of key structures (e.g. Clusters aligned with Government ministries) and procedures (e.g. INSARAG Guidelines). This is often associated with high costs for participating parties as it might require modification of existing systems, and the development of guidance material and implementation of related training activities. Alternatively, interoperability can be accomplished through "brokers", whereby an interface between different systems is established through integration or exchange of liaison capacity (e.g. civil-military coordination). It can be observed that the challenge for successful interoperability lies in the identification, inclusion and buy-in of all relevant actors, to participate in and support the process of developing standards (protocols, procedures and structures), and to mobilise sufficient political support and resources to establish necessary capacity.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the side-event will be to:

- **Introduce the concept of interoperability:** define how interoperability in humanitarian action is understood, what the drivers of this concept are, and what its potential is for today and tomorrow.
- **Present the comparative advantages, motivations and limitations of the constituencies represented in the panel (Government, private sector, diaspora...):** Each group of actors has its own specialities, efficiencies and motives, which are important in understanding what they will deliver against in times of crisis.
- **Discuss how synergies across different actors can be strengthened and how relationships between them can be more predictable:** Many actors already have in place, or seek to develop, their own systems and processes for responding to humanitarian emergencies. Given these developments, it will be important for the United Nations and its partners to be able to operate with these systems and networks in order to maximize use of available capacity, to improve overall coordination and together provide humanitarian assistance to more people. This may require the development of new and complementary standard operating procedures between the international humanitarian system and other actors.
- **Identify potential new roles for international humanitarian actors:** The traditional humanitarian sector may have to negotiate new partnerships. International humanitarian agencies will be as important as ever, but their role may shift to one of

complementing this external capacity, developing synergies within and among it, and letting those best qualified to deliver do so.

### **The participants**

- **Chair:** Mr. Levent Eler, Deputy Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations in New York
  
- **Moderator:** Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, Chief of Policy Development and Studies Branch, OCHA
  
- **Panelists:**

### ***Government***

- **Mr. Halil Afşarata**, Head of Department for Strategy Development, Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, Turkey

### ***Private Sector***

- **Mr. David Vaughn**, Director of Business Continuity and Disaster Management Solutions at Fluor

### ***International network***

- **Mr. Christian Di Schiena**, Deputy Head of Operations Section, MSB /IHP-chair

### ***Diaspora***

- **Ms. Semhar Araia**, Diaspora African Women's Network

## **Biographies of panelists**



### **H. Halil Afsarata**

Head of the Strategy Development Department at the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD)

H. Halil Afsarata is currently the Head of the Strategy Development Department at the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). Prior to this position, Mr. Afsarata worked as a Diplomat of Turkey to Shanghai from 2011 to 2012; to Singapore from 2004 to 2005, and to London from 2002 to 2003. Between the years of 1994 and 1996, he worked on “Financing Health Care Project” of the World Bank in the Ministry of Health in Turkey. Mr. Afsarata managed quite a few national and international meetings as a moderator. He holds a Master’s Degree in Health Economics from the **London School of Economics** in London, UK, as he got his Chevening Scholarship from the British Council, UK. He graduated as an economist from the Hacettepe University, in Ankara. H. Halil Afsarata also published many academic articles, namely: ‘Recent Development on Turkish Economy and Structural Change of the Foreign Trade’, ‘International Arbitration and the Case of Turkey’, ‘Earthquake and Its Effects on the Turkish Economy’, ‘Target Market; Singapore; One of the most Liberalized Economy of the World’. He has also conducted a field survey ‘to analyze the Economic Effects of the Earthquake Following the 99 Earthquake in Turkey’. Mr. Afsarata is married with three children.



### **Semhar Araia**

Founder and executive director of the Diaspora African Women’s Network

Semhar Araia is the founder and executive director of the Diaspora African Women’s Network (DAWN), an organization whose mission is to develop and support the next generation of African diaspora women focused on African affairs. A lawyer by training, she specializes in US-Africa relations, diaspora engagement, international humanitarian law, conflict resolution & international development. She is an adjunct professor at George Washington University, teaching on conflict, identity & development in the Horn of Africa. Semhar previously worked for Oxfam International, US

Congress, The Elders, and as an attorney for the implementation of the 1998-2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia peace agreement. Semhar has extensive grassroots and leadership experience working with local communities in the diaspora and East Africa. She is a White House Champion of Change and African Union Diaspora Awardee of the Year, recognized for her outstanding contributions in the Africa diaspora community. Semhar earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Saint Thomas and her law degree from Marquette University Law School. She was born in New York City to Eritrean immigrant parents and resides in Washington, DC.



**David Vaughn**

Fluor Fellow and Director of Resilience Solutions, Secretariat of the WEF DRP

David Vaughn is a Fluor Fellow, the Director of Resilience Solutions. Resilience Solutions is a new offering by Fluor that helps anticipate risk and develop plans to counteract the negative effects. Our Clients gain value through risk modelling, deterministic / probabilistic risk assessments, risk management, mitigation, planning/ preparations, disaster response, disaster recovery, and lessons learned thus minimizing or preventing business interruption. David's experience in rapid deployment, planning, disaster management and reconstruction is a culmination of his work in support of the US Army Sustainment Command, FEMA and various private sector companies. David's passion for his profession is demonstrated by his personal commitment to a number of humanitarian projects, including mentoring the student group of Clemson Engineers for Developing Countries assisting people in economically challenged countries. Under David's guidance this team received awards in 2014 from the Institute of International Education and in 2010 from the University and the State of South Carolina for their work. In honour of his support for engineering students who are changing the world, David was awarded the 2012 Martin Luther King Jr. Excellence in Service Award from Clemson University. Mr. Vaughn's is serving as the Secretariat of the WEF Disaster Resource Partnership (DRP) based in Greenville, South Carolina. The DRP is a new model for coordinated private sector partnership in response to natural disasters. The DRP is structured so that it allows the activities of individual organizations to be facilitated through engagement at the national level, through the development of DRP National Networks, and at the global level, with the DRP International Services component. David is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte with a BS in Civil Engineering.



**Christian Di Schiena**

Deputy Head of Operations at Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB.

Mr. Di Schiena has previously worked at the World Food Programme, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, SRSA, and active UNDAC-member since 2009 with missions to Myanmar, Pakistan, Iraq, CAR etc. Most recently Head of Coordination MSB/IHP during the response to the typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) is currently the chair of the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP). The IHP is an informal network of seven governmental organizations in Europe working with emergency management on a daily basis. IHP has a strong capacity to support the United Nations, the European Union and other international organizations during emergency situations. IHP has been active since 1995, and present during all the major disasters. The most recent mission in a large scale sudden on-set disaster was during the typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. UNOCHA requested support to set up coordination infrastructure, three light office and accommodation structures to set up bases of operations, and logistics support. The IHP-members mobilized funding, equipment and a wide range of experts to be deployed to the emergency. The team consisted of experts within ICT, construction, logistics and water and sanitation. The first deployment of equipment and experts left Europe Monday 11 October (Request arrived 9<sup>th</sup> October). The support provided originates from the IHP agencies from Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden.