2015 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

Strengthening Protection in Humanitarian Settings

Sponsored by:
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office in Geneva and
Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office in Geneva

18h30 – 19h45, Thursday, 18 June 2015
Room XXIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

This Global Protection Cluster/UNHCR side-event will be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year’s theme: *The future of humanitarian affairs: towards greater inclusiveness, coordination, interoperability and effectiveness.*

**Background and objectives**

Civilians often bear the brunt of armed violence and conflict. Forced and multiple displacement, impeded freedom of movement, family separation, arbitrary detention, indiscriminate fighting, disappearances and violations of international law and impunity, ethnic and sectarian violence, and the deliberate targeting of medical and educational facilities threaten their daily existence and create serious protection needs.

The first responders of protection are often affected communities themselves. It is necessary to explore the different and complementary approaches to protection by these actors, including the capacity and limits for communities to protect themselves.

In light of the IASC Statement on the Centrality of Protection, we should consider how we, as humanitarian actors, contribute to community-based protection efforts? What limits are placed on our capacity to protect civilians at the onset of a crisis? And what challenges do Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and protection actors face when trying to address the risks and prevent the recurrence of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law?

The past ten years have illustrated how expectations have risen for humanitarian actors to provide protection and assistance in extremely adverse situations such as active conflict settings. It is timely to examine humanitarians’ contributions to and complementarity with local protection structures and capacity. The ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment will provide an opportunity to reflect on how protection is best achieved, from the local and operational level to policy considerations. It should also allow participants to share experiences on leveraging mandates and expertise in support of communities.
Discussion points
Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the importance of:

- Nurturing community-based approaches;
- Supporting the local protection response: building on the knowledge and capacity of local groups in host communities including non-traditional actors; and
- Capitalizing on the diverse strengths and contributions of international actors

Format
The Global Protection Cluster side event will involve a panel discussion with a moderator. The panelists will make short presentations related to the theme of the side event, drawing on their expertise and experience. A brief documentary video will also be shown highlighting the ways in which local community groups have taken the lead in self-protection in a conflict setting.

Moderator/Chair:
- Volker Turk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR

Panel composition:
- Dr. Pauline Elaine Riak, Executive Director of the Sudd Institute, South Sudan
- Eva Svoboda, Research Fellow, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute
- Kevin Kennedy, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis

Background Material
- Understanding Community-Based Protection, UNHCR Protection Policy Paper
- The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action, Statement by the InterAgency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals, December 2013
- GPC Roundtable Summary Notes: Humanitarian Evacuations in Armed Conflict and Cross Border Humanitarian Relief operations
- Fighting Bombs with Perfume: video developed by NGO Local to Global Protection (L2GP)
- Sudd Institute website (http://www.suddinstitute.org/), Juba, South Sudan

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