

External relations



External relations

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External relations

9.1 Government and diplomatic corps

1. All matters of protocol relating to establishing a new UNHCR presence in an emergency are likely to be handled by the foreign ministry in the same way as for other UN organizations. However, substantive matters concerning the refugees may be handled by another authority, for example the president or prime minister's office or the ministry of interior. Guidance on the form of written communications with the government is given in section 9.5.

2. It is important that the diplomatic corps accredited to the country is kept informed of UNHCR's activities from the start of an emergency. The perceptions of local envoys may have a considerable influence on fund raising, quite apart from the local support possible through an informed and concerned diplomatic corps. It may be that there is already a contact group of the ambassadors most interested in refugee matters, who can be briefed in the early days of an emergency. More formal arrangements for regular briefings should be made as soon as possible. One approach is to invite the ambassadors of States Members of UNHCR's Executive Committee. The ambassador of the country currently providing the Chairman may be helpful here. An alternative is to ask the Dean of the Diplomatic Corp to advise on participants, or to ask the ambassador of the country currently President of the EEC (as the major donor group) or OAU, for emergencies in Africa. Whatever the approach, the aim is that, at least, no member of the Executive Committee should feel left out, while scarce time should not be devoted to a major protocol exercise.

3. A representative of the government should of course be present and these meetings should be attended by the other UN bodies and NGOs directly involved. Unless chaired by the representative of the government, the meeting should normally be chaired by UNHCR, with the other agencies encouraged to give account of their activities. These meetings will be counter-productive if

those practically engaged in meeting the needs of the emergency are not anyway properly co-ordinated by UNHCR. Initially these meetings may need to be held fortnightly or even weekly, but once a month is a reasonable interval once the situation starts to come under control.

4. When time allows, a useful complementary measure, which might eventually substitute for both the diplomatic and interagency general briefings, is a monthly written situation report prepared by UNHCR. This would cover statistical information (numbers, assistance delivered, contributions received, etc.), progress, problem areas and outstanding needs. Other UN bodies directly involved should contribute an account of their work. Such situation reports should be given a wide distribution.

5. Implementation of these arrangements will require time and effort, and clearly the priority is to deliver the emergency assistance needed by the refugees. However, if those interested do not have a regular source of information on the progress of the operation, Representatives and their staff may perforce have to spend a relatively longer time on individual briefings.

9.2 The UN system

1. While within the UN system the responsibility for refugees clearly lies with UNHCR, it is important to seek the support and assistance of other UN organizations from the start of an emergency. The Secretary-General's office must also be kept fully briefed both directly, by copying information to RO New York, and by Headquarters as appropriate. The involvement of other organizations may range from acting as an operational partner, for example WFP co-ordinating the food needs, through the provision of specialists or advice, to simple administrative assistance in the field.

Field-level

2. The UNDP Resident Representative is likely to have some system-wide responsibilities. One is as the senior official designated for security matters (in certain large duty stations this may be another senior UN official), responsible for the security and protection of all UN personnel and property within the country. For example, this official would give the order should an evacuation of UN personnel or dependants be considered necessary. Another is as the Resident Co-ordinator, who on behalf of the United Nations system has overall responsibility for and co-ordination of operational activities for development carried out at the country level. This responsibility is thus clearly distinct from that for the protection of and assistance to persons of concern to UNHCR, exercised at the country level by the UNHCR Representative.

3. The UNDP Resident Representative has certain administrative responsibilities in the determination of local salary scales, post adjustment and DSA. The UNDP Resident Representative is also ex officio the local Representative of WFP and UNDRO, though the latter responsibility is limited to natural disasters, and may act as Director of the UN Information Centre. Particularly in countries where UNHCR was not previously present, the UNDP Resident Representative will be a valuable source of information, advice and assistance, and should in turn be kept informed of UNHCR's emergency operation.

4. In the majority of emergencies involving refugees, UNHCR will be the lead organization. Frequent technical meetings in the field will be required with the government, the other UN organizations directly involved and the NGO sector. Field-level co-ordination of the implementation of the programme is discussed in chapter 6 and details of arrangements and procedures for specific co-operation are given in the appropriate chapter of Part 2. The Representative should also organize regular interagency briefing meetings.

These normally cover all interested organizations, a representative of the government, and representatives of other bodies involved, for example the operational partner, ICRC and/or Red Cross and the NGO Co-ordinating Committee. In certain circumstances, this meeting might also be combined with the briefing of the diplomatic corps. Minutes should be prepared by UNHCR unless a regular written status report makes this unnecessary.

Headquarters-level

5. Similar regular interagency meetings should be organized in Geneva for as long as is necessary in the emergency phase of major operations, particularly when the High Commissioner has been formally appointed Co-ordinator of the UN system's humanitarian response. In addition to the UN, participants would include the ICRC, LRCS, and ICVA. Minutes should be prepared by UNHCR.

9.3 Telex situation report

1. In major emergency situations co-ordinated by UNHCR, consideration should be given to issuing a regular (say weekly) telex sitrep from Geneva on the operation, at least during the first weeks when confusion is most likely. This sitrep would be based on the regular reports from the field. A suggested framework for these is given in annex 3 to chapter 6. The sitrep would be sent to interested missions (for example, of members of the Executive Committee), co-operating UN, governmental and non-governmental agencies, and the Geneva press corps. It should also be sent to the UNHCR field office(s) concerned, RO New York, and RLO Addis Ababa for emergencies in Africa.

2. While such regular sitreps could be very useful in ensuring a general exchange of information and better co-ordination, it is essential that they be accurate, up to date and co-ordinated, particularly with regard to the activities of other organizations involved. If it is decided to use these

sitreps, the concept and information-sharing purpose should be explained to the government of the country concerned. Potential problems, for example over numbers of refugees, should be considered in advance.

3. Other organizations, such as LRCS, may also be issuing regular sitreps on the same emergency. The UNHCR sitrep should give an overall picture and it is important that this is not at variance with other sources of information received by the addressees. The first draft of the sitrep would be prepared by the External Affairs Division and cleared with the focal point officer. If necessary, it should then be discussed with LRCS, ICRC or other organizations, as appropriate. Well-prepared sitreps can help to quickly establish UNHCR's central co-ordinating role and put order into apparent chaos, while a sitrep that appears contradictory, outdated and unco-ordinated will be counter-productive.

9.4 Relations with the media

1. The media has traditionally been an ally of UNHCR; there is a wide consensus on the value of the Office's ideals and work. In an emergency there may be considerable media interest, and perceptions of how the international community in general, and UNHCR in particular, is responding will be set in the early days, with important implications for support for UNHCR. Time is needed to correct an unfavourable first impression, and by then media interest may have shifted elsewhere.

2. The only way to have positive media coverage and support is to run the most effective emergency operation possible in the circumstances. Expertise in relations with the press can never substitute for performance, and in any case the emergency operation has overriding priority. There are, however, important considerations for UNHCR's relations with the media, which this section addresses with particular reference to the field.

3. UNHCR's relations with the media take two forms: the provision of information and the active promotion of media coverage. In a refugee emergency the former should be given priority, and every effort made not to overload the field office with public information responsibilities in the latter category. Promotion of media coverage may be very important to the refugees, for example when fundamental protection principles are at risk, but in an emergency this will generally be best handled at the Representative's initiative.

4. In general terms, newspapers and radio and TV news need factual stories on the emergency, with some background information, to tight deadlines. Magazines and magazine programmes cover the story in depth and have more time available for research and subsequent re-checking. The wire services, for example AFP, AP, Inter-Press Service (IPS), UPI and Reuters, need factual news stories, and have very short deadlines. They are likely to be the major source for the world-wide coverage of the emergency.

Locally-based media

5. The national media will be very important in determining local attitudes to the refugees. The government is likely to be far more concerned by this coverage than foreign coverage. A local foreign language newspaper will, however, be less important, except indirectly as a result of its effect on the diplomatic community or foreign press corps. The national media may give early indication of sensitive issues and even government policy.

6. Field offices should monitor coverage in the local media, including on the radio and television, which may play a much greater role in influencing public opinion than newspapers. Particularly important articles should be clipped and sent, or in exceptional circumstances telexed, to Headquarters. However, do not simply pouch every article that mentions UNHCR and when sending articles to Headquarters try and anticipate and answer in a covering communication the questions you think

they may raise in the minds of readers at Headquarters less familiar than you with the situation. Good relations should be developed with the local correspondents covering the emergency, but exercise considerable discretion until there is practical experience of the outcome of interviews. Language barriers are often a source of misunderstanding, particularly on the telephone.

7. The locally-based foreign media are likely to be members of a foreign correspondents club, and such a club will have a list of members with their affiliations. They may be unfamiliar with refugee problems or even unaware of UNHCR's existence and mandate, having been assigned to the country for other reasons but then requested to cover the emergency.

8. Where there was a UNHCR field office in the country before the emergency, relations with the locally-based media will already be established. In over 40 UN duty stations there is a UN Information Centre. In emergencies in these countries close liaison should be maintained with the UNIC, which can provide much advice and assistance and will itself be transmitting news of the emergency to the UN Department of Public Information in New York. Where there was no prior UNHCR presence and is no UNIC, the press officers of other UN organizations will be valuable sources of advice.

9. It will probably be useful to make early contact with the news editors of the main national (and any local foreign language) newspapers and explain UNHCR's role, stressing that every priority is being given to the needs of the emergency but giving a contact should further information be required, journalists wish to check out a news item, etc. In certain circumstances the news desks of local radio or TV stations should likewise be contacted.

10. A similar early approach to the president of the foreign correspondents club and/or selected members (e.g. correspondents of the wire services) may also be valuable. Such clubs often hold

weekly meetings. The emphasis in the approach should be on UNHCR's role, and willingness to clarify facts while getting on with the job, rather than on public relations. It is important to remember that locally-based media, particularly in the early days, may know more about the situation and problems than UNHCR.

Other media

11. In a major emergency, other foreign correspondents may arrive from the region or further afield. Some may know of and be known to UNHCR. Generally, all foreign correspondents will be in touch with any local foreign correspondents club, and they often congregate at the same hotel. TV news crews may stay a very short time, filing a same-day story by satellite.

Co-ordination field/Headquarters

12. A regular and swift exchange of information is essential. Many questions on the operation will be asked directly in Geneva and New York while important international media reports, including those based on UNHCR field briefings, may not be available in the field. The PI Section must have access to up-to-date information. In addition to bearing media interests in mind in normal reports, specific information on matters of particular press interest should be provided. There is a UN press briefing in Geneva every Friday morning, where interest will be high. In addition, PI spokesmen call special press conferences whenever necessary. There is a weekday press briefing at noon in New York by the spokesman of the Secretary-General. This draws inter alia on reports from the UNICs.

13. If an interview with a major foreign newspaper or network has been given, or if a foreign correspondent has been aggressive or appeared unsatisfied with the answers given in the field, PI Section should be forewarned.

14. On Headquarters part, the field office must be kept regularly informed of media coverage, particular interests and visiting correspondents, especially holders of UNHCR Press Cards. Visitors

who contact Headquarters in advance should, however, be clearly briefed that only limited attention can be devoted to them by the field office in the emergency phase. UNHCR-sponsored missions should be avoided unless they are self-sufficient, and initially limited to those essential for immediate fund-raising or public understanding of the situation.

Co-ordination with the government

15. The government may be sensitive to coverage of the refugees, and early contact should be established with the official press office or information service. In particular, remember that any general statement or press release by UNHCR must be shared with the government's information services and the department handling the refugees/UNHCR, and cleared with the government if necessary.

Guidelines for relations with the media

16. The first decision is on who should handle relations with the media. On the one hand, the media prefer information direct from those responsible, which can be very time-consuming. On the other, in a sensitive situation the Representative can spend nearly as much time briefing a UNHCR information officer as would be required to handle the enquiries directly, particularly if the information officer arrives late. In a major emergency, it is recommended that an information officer is a member of the UNHCR field team from the start, responsible for all aspects of relations with the media. Certain queries and interviews should nevertheless be handled by the Representative and other staff. Consideration should be given to including an information officer from Headquarters on any initial assessment mission.

17. The media will go to the location of the refugees, often unannounced, and expect a briefing from UNHCR field officers on the spot. This should be given, but to the extent possible limited to facts and practical intentions, with sensitive political or policy questions referred to the main UNHCR field office.

18. Correspondents and reporters generally respect the ground rules for an interview, provided these are clearly established in advance. An interview can be for full attribution, often tape recorded by the journalist. The interviewee may be quoted by name in direct or indirect speech. An interview can be for background, when what is said by the interviewee is not attributed directly. It is important to agree in advance how the journalist will quote you: by name, "a UNHCR spokesman", "UN sources", "sources close to the emergency operation", "sources in the international community", etc. An interview may need to mix full attribution, for the facts, and background, for information on political considerations and constraints.

19. Recorded or live radio or TV interviews can provide good coverage for UNHCR's aims. They are by definition for full attribution. If this is not advisable because of particular sensitivities, avoid such interviews. Bear in mind that the interviews, particularly on radio, can be edited and intercut, and may be broadcast some days later, when the situation might have changed.

20. In all interviews and comments to the media, when in doubt err on the side of discretion, particularly when you do not know the questioner or have no experience of the relationship between what appears and what you said. It takes considerable experience and self-discipline to limit yourself to what you had planned to say before starting. Having agreed to give an interview or answer questions, showing hostility or irritation will nearly always be counter-productive, no matter how unreasonable or loaded the questions are.

21. Where there are clear factual errors in a story, whether based on an interview or not, these can sometimes be corrected or set out, particularly in the press. It is extremely difficult to counter the results of editing of a radio or TV interview. Under pressure, newspaper editors will generally print a factual correction, and will often give space in opinion or correspondence

columns for UNHCR to comment on errors of interpretation of the Office's role and policy. The origin of the "error" and the position of the government should, however, be carefully considered. Factual errors in radio news broadcasts can sometimes be corrected in future bulletins by telephoning the news room. As a general principle, if the error has serious implications for UNHCR, do not hesitate to try and obtain a correction. It is not, however, advisable to do so when the problem is one of interpretation, not of error. UNHCR should be careful to avoid public polemical debate.

22. Certain controversial or delicate issues can be foreseen, while an intense press interest may be easily predictable after a specific event with sensitive implications. In such cases there is much to be said for preparing a short and simple statement, reading it to the enquirers and avoiding further comment. Close internal co-ordination with field staff is essential, particularly if the interest relates to an event occurring in location where UNHCR has field staff. Telexing the statement to Headquarters for PI may be very helpful if questions are likely to be raised in Geneva. Where there is time, Representatives should not hesitate to consult the PI Section at Headquarters by telephone or telex.

23. Few stories on refugee emergencies are based on field level press releases from UNHCR. Unless there is an efficient UN system (for example if there is a UNIC), local press releases are probably best avoided except when UNHCR really is first with the news, like the launching of an appeal in Geneva. Otherwise a telephone call to selected correspondents or news rooms will often be more productive.

9.5 Guidance on written communications

1. When establishing a new UNHCR presence in a country, there is likely to be a need for a number of formal written communications to the government or authorities. The purpose of this section is to give brief guidance on formal letters and notes verbales for those not already familiar with UNHCR practice and the UN Correspondence Manual (ST/AI/237, New York, 1976).

2. Formal letters are used for communications to ministers and senior officials (for example, the director-general of a department) on important matters. The following points should be noted:

(1) The proper opening salutation is "Sir" or "Madam", with "Excellency" used, if appropriate, only in the address. However, it may be local practice to begin and end "Excellency": when in doubt check with UNDP or use "Excellency";

(2) The expression "I have the honour ..." is usually required only in the opening sentence;

(3) "You" can normally be used in the text. However, in a long text it may be courteous from time to time to qualify this, as for example "I should be grateful if you, Sir (or "your Excellency"), would confirm that this is also the understanding of your Government";

(4) Formal letters end "Accept, Sir, (Madam, your Excellency) the assurances of my highest consideration".

3. Notes verbales (referred to in the text simply as a "note") may be addressed to a minister for foreign affairs or a ministry of foreign affairs, an ambassador or an embassy. Notes verbales are always in the third person and from person to person (e.g. representative to minister) or office to office (e.g. branch office to ministry). The following points should be noted:

(1) The note begins either, "The Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in (country) presents his/her compliments to ... and has the honour to ..."

or "the Branch Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in (country) presents its compliments to ... and has the honour to ..."

(2) Titles must be given in full, at least in the opening and closing paragraphs. Be sure to use the correct designation of the country (Kingdom of, Republic of, etc.)

(3) While a note verbale should in theory contain no complimentary closing, in practice the following formulation is widely used and should be adopted when in doubt:

"The Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in (country) avails him/herself of this opportunity to express (renew) to ... the assurance of his/her highest consideration", or, as appropriate, "The Branch Office ..." etc.

(4) Despite the instructions in the UN Correspondence Manual that the note should bear no signature or stamp and only the initials of the officer responsible for its dispatch, in practice the Representative and an alternate may be required to register their initials or even signatures with the protocol department of the foreign ministry. The note should therefore be initialled over the stamp of UNHCR by the Representative or an alternate.

(5) The date should appear on the right-hand side of the last page, below and clear of the stamp of UNHCR.

4. While both formal letters and notes verbales may bear file references on the top left of the first page, it is recommended that the only reference used be the chronological "out" number, with an alphabetical or numerical file indicator (see 8.6.3).

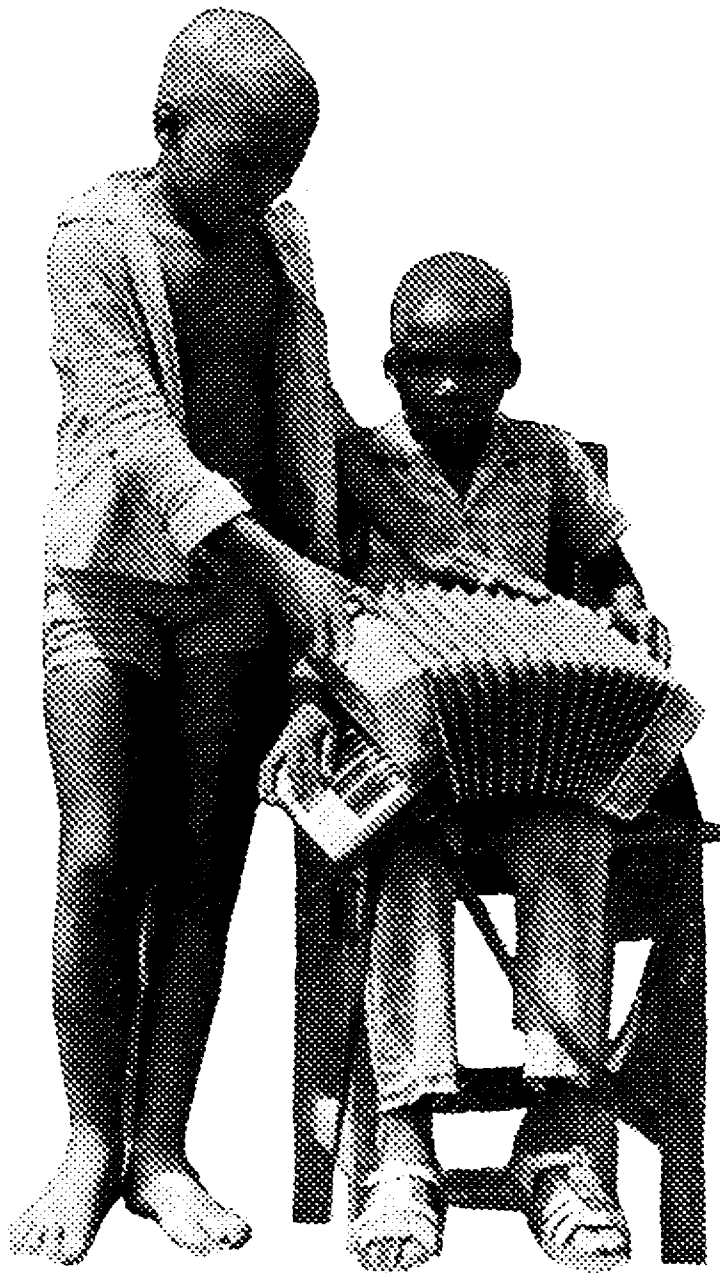
5. Notes verbales are always answered by notes, and formal letters by formal letters. Apart from the restrictions on the use of notes verbales given in paragraph 3 above, there are no completely clear-cut rules about which to employ when UNHCR is initiating the

communication. In general terms, the note conveys information and is the normal form for routine exchanges with the protocol department, for example when seeking customs clearance for relief supplies or advising of the arrival of international staff. References to important meetings with senior officials and major issues, particularly those already discussed, are better treated in a formal letter, and a formal letter may also reach the action officer more quickly than a note.

6. If it is necessary to set out UNHCR's position on a specific subject (policy, action taken, intentions, etc.), this may be done in the form of an aide memoire written in the third person. An aide memoire has no address and is simply headed "Aide Memoire", with the title below. A similar purpose is served by a "Note by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", a minor difference being that this description goes below the title. An aide memoire would normally be used to convey information to a government ministry or department, an embassy or the diplomatic corps. For a less formal or wider distribution, the "Note by ..." form may be appropriate.

10

Communications



Communications

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Communications

10.1 Introduction

1. Good communications between the field and Headquarters, within the country of asylum and as necessary with neighbouring countries are essential for any successful emergency operation. The immediate requirement will be for radio or telex links, but regular pouch, courier or mail services should be established as soon as possible.

2. Important as this is, care should be taken to restrict communications traffic to that which is absolutely necessary, and to determine priorities for means of transmission, for example, not using the telephone where telex would suffice or telex where the delay in mail or pouch is acceptable.

3. Under the pressures of an emergency there is sometimes a tendency to exchange information which is incomplete. For example, the field is asked whether particular services offered by an NGO are required without being given full details of these services, when they could be available, etc. Conversely, an incomplete report by the field can raise more questions than it answers. This adds unnecessarily to the communications traffic. Originators of communications should always ask themselves what their purpose is and whether the information contained is sufficient for this purpose. If not, and if the matter cannot wait, then acknowledgement of the gaps may save time and trouble, for example "further information being obtained but meanwhile please react on points ...".

4. Whenever possible use separate communications for clearly separate subjects.

10.2 Radio Communications

General

1. There are two basic communications requirements in an emergency situation. The first is an assured and effective link between the Representative and

Headquarters and the second is adequate links within the country and occasionally between neighbouring countries.

2. The first requirement should not be a problem where UNHCR already has a field office. The link will generally be via the international commercial telex system. Certain locations may use the UN radio network or that of UNDP (which may be either telex or the UN network). The clear advantage of telex for the majority of locations is that the addressee can be dialed directly, with immediate confirmation that the message has been received. It is thus UNHCR policy to install a telex in field offices whenever possible. The UNHCR Cable Unit telex number is 27492, with 28762 as an alternate. Both answer back UNHCR CH.

3. The UN system is a radio network linking the main duty stations and operated by specially trained Field Service personnel. Some UN links are direct, including the use of satellites, while others involve relay stations and/or onward routing by telex or telegram. The main links operate without interruption, others only for a fixed period each day. The UN system provides the possibility of automatic computer routing to certain destinations via Geneva or New York.

New offices

4. In countries where UNHCR was not present prior to the emergency, immediate arrangements should be made with another United Nations organization for use of a telex. Whenever possible that organization will be requested in advance by Headquarters to provide such assistance. In certain cases, it may be necessary to use the PTT or a hotel telex, though a hotel may add a heavy surcharge. A telex will generally be both quicker and cheaper than a telegram. The possibility of making temporary use of a private telex (for example, travel agents or a firm in same office building) should also be considered.

5. Meanwhile, provided the country is adequately served by the international telex system, immediate action should be taken to have a telex installed. The necessary financial authority will be given in the emergency allotment advice or amendment. There may be a need for an early démarche at an appropriate level with the authorities to ensure priority for UNHCR's installation, covering telephones too if necessary.

6. Although unlikely to be much used, the commercial telegram address "Hicomref ..." (name of town where main office is located) should be registered with the PTT as soon as possible.

7. In some emergency situations, the ICRC may already be operating in the country and will have a direct radio link with Geneva. Naturally this is not available to routine UNHCR traffic but this method could be considered for an extremely urgent message prior to the establishment of UNHCR's own system.

Sub-offices

8. Arrangements for communications between the UNHCR field officers located away from the main office will depend on local conditions. The telephone network may be sufficient, and there may be a telex somewhere in the area, for example at a hotel or mining complex. It is thus worth checking the local telex directory. The authorities will probably have a separate system for communications between the capital and provinces but this is unlikely to be available to UNHCR or meet the needs in other than exceptional circumstances.

UNHCR radio network

9. If available means of communication either with Geneva or within the country (or cross-border, for example in a repatriation operation) are not satisfactory, it may be necessary to set up UNHCR's own network. Details of the equipment used and guidance on how to proceed to establish the network are given in the annex to this chapter. Operating instructions will be supplied with the equipment. The following general points should be noted. The equipment used in the field is the same

for both internal and international radio communications and allows either CW (morse) or radiotelephone (voice) transmissions. A generator is supplied if necessary. The aerials are different. International links must be operated by qualified and licensed personnel; internal links may be operated by suitably trained UNHCR staff members. The critical factor in establishing either network will be obtaining frequency clearance from the local authorities. Thereafter, the network should normally be operational in a matter of days.

Schedules

10. Use of the UNHCR network should be planned for fixed times (called "schedules"). To the extent possible these should be chosen for the convenience of the field, but as radio propagation is affected by the time of day, this may be an overriding consideration for networks across long distances. Have a standing "fall-back" arrangement. For example, if there is no contact at the fixed time, agree in advance to try again automatically one hour later, but note that the next schedule always reverts to the original time.

11. The telex link with Geneva may not be open 24 hours a day. The PTT or local or region telex exchange will provide information on this. It may also be easier to dial Geneva from the field or vice-versa. If one has difficulty in dialling the other, consider setting up a schedule whereby a telex call is made the easier way at a fixed time to see whether the other has any messages.

12. If the link with Geneva passes via the UN system, the local UN operator will know when the line is open, schedules at weekends, etc. Whatever the means of transmission, both Headquarters and the field should know how cables will be sent and when they are likely to reach their destination. This may be hours, or in extreme cases even days, after signature by the authorizing officer.

Message handling and Duty Officer

13. Similarly, originators should be aware of what will happen to the cable after it has reached its destination. In the field, provided the telex is manned, the cable should reach the Representative within minutes of receipt. Where UNHCR was not previously present, field operators should let the Headquarters Cable Unit know relevant details as soon as they have access to a telex (e.g. location, hours manned, details if not UNHCR telex). Where cables are received through the UN network or the telex of another UN organization, arrangements must be made to collect them immediately on receipt.

14. The Cable Unit at Headquarters is normally staffed between the following local times: 0800-2000 weekdays, 0800-1200 Saturdays, and 1500-1700 Sundays (and other holidays). Swiss time is one hour ahead of GMT in winter and two hours ahead in summer. Arrangements will be made to extend coverage as necessary in emergencies. Telexes are, of course, received on the machines 24 hours a day, as are cables routed through the UN system; the UNOG Telecommunications Centre relays them to UNHCR Cable Unit by telex.

15. The UNHCR Duty Officer is available outside working hours to advise the UNHCR and UNOG Cable Units on the handling of incoming cables and to take the necessary urgent action to refer them to the responsible officer. The Duty Officer also checks the incoming cables on holidays at times that complement the regular coverage by the UNHCR Cable Unit staff. Field representatives originating cables which require action or attention before the start of the next working day should start the text, immediately after the cable number with the word "Immediate". The name of the responsible officer may also be added thus: "Immediate for (name)". The named or Duty Officer will then be alerted as soon as possible.

16. The UNOG Telecommunications Relay Centre is staffed 24 hours a day, and in cases of extreme urgency outside normal working hours a telex could be sent direct to telex no. 28 96 96

(answer-back UNATIONS CH) and prefixed with instructions to alert a particular officer or the duty officer. Make sure "For UNHCR" is in the prefix.

17. Should it be necessary to send a PTT telegram, delivery can sometimes be expedited by including the UNHCR Cable Unit telex number, thus ensuring onward routing from Berne direct by telex. Ask the local PTT if this is possible.

Numbering and addressing cables

18. An important aid to message handling is a sequential numbering system in both directions. This provides the reference for the cable and a check that none is missed, as long as a careful record is kept of all cables received and missing numbers requested once the sequence is broken. Every cable must be checked for sequence immediately it is received.

19. Sequential numbering should always be used between the field office and Headquarters, and between other UNHCR offices where the level of traffic warrants, for example between neighbouring countries and, of course, between main and sub-offices. A single HCR/MISC number is used only if none of the addressees of a cable has an individual sequence: there is no need to have both an HCR/... sequential number and a HCR/MISC/... number for the same cable.

20. Sequential numbering can also be used both ways for missions. For example, in an emergency in country X where UNHCR was not previously present, a mission might first proceed to neighbouring countries Y and Z, where UNHCR is already represented. Cables between Headquarters and the mission should be numbered sequentially in addition to the normal Y and Z to/from Headquarters sequences. Thus "HCR/123 Mission Number 4" would be cable 123 of the year to BO Z from Headquarters and cable 4 for the mission team, cables 1-3 perhaps having already been sent to them in Y. Use of sequential numbering is particularly useful in such circumstances, as cables may easily be missed, the mission having already left. Where, because of changed plans

or for any other reason, the mission may not have arrived, add "Hold for arrival (name)" to the start of the text.

21. All cables should end "UNHCR" (name of town). Thus it is not necessary to identify the originating location by initials after the HCR prefix to the number. Where the cable is sent to more than one addressee, add the locations and indicate whether it is sent for "action" or "info". Some examples:

- (1) BO X sends a cable requiring replies from Headquarters and RLO Addis, and copied for information to RO New York and BO Dar-es-Salaam. BO X uses sequential numbering with Headquarters and RLO Addis Ababa: "HCR/348 Geneva action HCR/72 Addis Ababa info New York and Dar-es-Salaam".
- (2) BO Y sends a cable requesting action by RO Bangkok and RO Kuala Lumpur and copied for information to BO Jakarta and SO Singapore. BO Y uses sequential number with Headquarters only: "HCR/MISC/227 Bangkok action Kuala Lumpur info Jakarta and Singapore".
- (3) BO Z sends a cable to Headquarters copied for information to certain offices in Europe. BO Z uses sequential numbering with Headquarters only: "HCR/179 Geneva info Bonn, London and Paris".

22. Refer to cables by number and identify the originator (Reour, Reur, Re Geneva, etc.). If an addressee did not receive the cable at reference, either copy it if necessary or indicate that it is not needed. For example, a follow-up cable from BO Z, example (3), but also copied to BO Rome might begin:

"HCR/180 Geneva info Bonn, London Paris and Rome. Reour 179" either "copied Rome separately" or "not needed Rome".

Failure to do this may result in unnecessary cable traffic of the "Your 179 not received please repeat" type.

Code

23. The United Nations has its own code system. Cables are enciphered and deciphered on a special machine by trained operators authorized by UN New York. Not all field offices have code facilities and as a general rule coded traffic should be avoided in emergency situations. Where code is necessary, separate instructions will be given.

10.3 Other communications

Telephone

1. International telephone calls can be very useful in an emergency, but the system may also then be overloaded. Some telephone links with Geneva are only open certain hours each day and both field and Headquarters should be aware of any such restrictions. Particularly in the early days of an emergency, members of a newly-arrived UNHCR mission may often not be available in the office, and consideration should be given to establishing a set schedule, for example a telephone call from Geneva (usually easier to obtain than one to Geneva) in the early morning or late evening. Telephone calls are expensive: as with any communication, consider what you wish to convey in advance and be as brief and clear as possible. Calls should be made through, or, in the case of calls from Headquarters, with the knowledge of the focal point officer.

2. In emergencies there is less time than normal to record the contents of telephone calls in notes for the file and to ensure those who need to know but were not party to the call are informed. Any important exchanges of information, instructions, requests, etc. should be confirmed by cable. The Duty Officer provides an identified point of contact at Headquarters outside working hours, for example when the competent officer cannot be reached. Obtain Geneva 31 02 61 as normal and ask for the Duty Officer.

Facsimile

3. Increasing use is being made internationally of facsimile. Rather than transmit the words of the text, a copy of the actual document is produced at the destination (as, for example, for some UNHCR cables between New York and Geneva). While facsimile is not available in many countries, and would anyway rarely be useful in emergencies, it should be noted that the UNHCR Cable Unit has an INFOTEC 6000 Facsimile, linked to Geneva telephone number 31 48 40. Transmission by facsimile to/from Geneva requires a normal telephone connection and compatible equipment to the INFOTEC 6000. The PTT services in a number of countries also provide facsimile links with Switzerland.

Mail and pouch services

4. If a UN diplomatic pouch service does not already exist, action to establish one will be initiated as necessary by Headquarters. This takes time and meanwhile less urgent correspondence should either be sent by registered air mail or by air freight, if the amount warrants. This should be done if possible on the same flight each week, and the airway bill and flight number cabled to the destination. Such air freight does not enjoy the same diplomatic immunity as a pouch. If problems are encountered in clearing it through customs and securing speedy

release to UNHCR, a démarche with the authorities may be necessary. A UN pouch service may exist but only via New York, where delays can occur. The date of dispatch and receipt of the first pouch to/from a new UNHCR field office via New York should be cabled to the destination, and a decision taken on the need for a direct pouch service with Geneva, and interim air freight arrangements, taken in light of the actual transit time via New York.

5. A P.O. Box should be rented as soon as possible at the central or nearest convenient post office, and Headquarters and those concerned locally informed of the number and address.

6. A regular and reliable mail or courier service between the main UNHCR office and sub or field offices should be organized as quickly as possible.

AnnexSetting Up a UNHCR NetworkEquipment and aeralis

1. The Headquarters station is a Drake TR-7 with an L-7 linear amplifier. The transceiver normally supplied to the field is at present the WBS-210, manufactured in Switzerland under licence from Scientific Radio Systems (the SR-210). Similar equipment is used inter alia by the ICRC and Swiss Disaster Corps. The transceiver will generally be set to operate on 230 volts AC (but can operate on other voltages including 12 volts DC, e.g. a car battery) and a generator will be supplied if necessary (normally the Honda E 3000 or EG 1000).

2. The WBS-210 has ten crystal-controlled channels and an average power of 100 watts. Whether for communications with Geneva or within the country, these channels will be pre-set on the following frequencies: ch1/4090 kHz, ch2/4615 kHz, ch3/5025 kHz, ch4/6260 kHz, ch5/6475 kHz, ch6/7395 kHz, ch7/20734 kHz, ch8/9004 kHz, ch9/9845 kHz, ch10/14405 kHz.

3. For operations within the country, a wire aerial (doublet dipole) is connected to the transceiver by a co-axial cable. The wire is cut locally to the length required for the frequency allocated. Sufficient lengths will be supplied, together with detailed instructions. This is a relatively easy aerial to install and can, if necessary, be put in a tree or set from a single pole.

4. For communications with Geneva, a directional aerial will probably be necessary. This is a horizontal metal structure on a vertical pole, like a giant TV aerial, as seen above many embassy roofs. This is relatively more difficult to install. Detailed instructions will be provided and the qualified radio operator who is anyway required to operate an international radio link will normally erect this aerial.

5. Where the transceiver in the capital is used both for communications with Geneva and with one or more location within the country, two or more aeralis may be needed.

6. The WBSD-210 will be supplied in a case (dimensions 75 x 44 x 39 cm) together with the doublet dipole wire and co-axial cable, total weight 40 kg. When necessary, the directional aerial will be supplied separately in a package (dimensions 263 x 21 x 17 cm), weight 21 kg.

Action in the field

7. Even before you are sure UNHCR radios will be necessary, mention the possible need at the highest appropriate level in the ministry competent for UNHCR matters (e.g. ministry for foreign affairs or ministry of interior), and seek advice from the technically competent authorities (e.g. ministry of communications or PTT). Section 9 of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations provides that the United Nations should enjoy for its official communications treatment not less favourable than that accorded to diplomatic missions.

8. Normally there is a standard PTT application form for frequency clearance and permission to operate a radio station. Obtain a copy as soon as possible.

9. As soon as the need is established, cable UNHCR Headquarters giving the proposed number and location of stations, distances between them and a brief justification of the need. If you are in doubt as to how to answer any question on the PTT application form, ask Headquarters for advice.

10. Check with UNDP and other UN organizations in case they have already received clearance for any of the ten standard frequencies listed in paragraph 2 above.

11. Select, say, three or four suitable frequencies. In general terms, the greater the distance, the higher the frequency. Seek expert advice if available, but as a rough guide: for distances under 500 km, channels 1-6; 500-1000 km, channels 5, 6, 8, 9; 1000-1500 km, channels 8, 9; over 1500 km (e.g. with Headquarters), channels 10, 7. If in doubt seek Headquarters advice on the suitable frequencies.

12. Request clearance from the authorities, who will allocate one or more frequencies from those you propose. It may expedite clearance if you send the application via the ministry competent for UNHCR matters, for example to the ministry of foreign affairs under cover of a note verbale referring to any earlier approach (see paragraph 7) and requesting that it be forwarded to the PTT for priority attention.

13. For links with Geneva, investigate the local availability of qualified radio-operators and advise Headquarters of the results.

14. Consider suitability for aerial sites if looking for new offices or sub-offices. If possible, the aerial should not be surrounded by buildings or trees, have a clear path in the direction of transmission, be 10-20 m above ground and 5 m above roof if applicable, and the co-axial cable linking the transreceiver with the aerial should be as short as possible. If the generator is necessary, it must not be operated in a confined space and needs good ventilation.

15. Advise Headquarters as soon as clearance is received. Charge any licence fees to code 441. Unless already sent, the equipment will then be airfreighted. A qualified operator may also be sent on mission to help install and erect the aerials, particularly for links with Geneva. If a suitable local operator is not available for international links, one will be provided by Headquarters.