

Committee on Coordination (ACC) has held Consultations since 1992 on "Early Warning of New Flows of Refugees and Displaced Persons." The Consultations are held every month or two; they are organized and chaired by DHA and include many UN agencies (FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, WHO, WFP, IOM), UN Secretariat sections (e.g., DPA and the Centre for Human Rights Affairs), as well as the ICRC as an observer. Consensual reports from the meetings are prepared for the executive heads of the agencies and offices represented, as well as the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. In these reports, short lists of cases of urgent situations that might give rise to new flows are presented along with possible preventive/preparative measures to be taken by the Secretary-General or other high officials. Recently, the cases have been classified in terms of both the timing of the expected crisis and the estimated size of the displacement. The Ad Hoc Working Group also collaborates with the newly created Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which also has been given an early warning role.<sup>39</sup>

The IASC is composed of the executive heads of the UN humanitarian organizations as well as ICRC, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies, the International Organization for Migration, and the non-governmental consortia International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Interaction and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response. The IASC usually develops the terms of reference for inter-agency appeals for international support in response to a natural or man-made disaster. So far, it has confined itself to disasters that have already occurred, not ones that are forecast.

#### 4. Dissemination and the Political Will of Member States

Even the most progressive early warning body, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Early Warning of Refugee Flows, complains that warnings that are not acted upon or even not considered:

The effectiveness of the Ad Hoc Working Group's access to the executive level has, regrettably, remained a serious concern of every participant. While the reports of the Consultations on Early Warning reach the offices of executive heads, there is uncertainty as to whether the message contained in these brief alerts is received and acted upon. Everybody is aware of the information-overload problem of senior managers and of the self-evident need of senior officials to attend to the pressing issues of the moment. Still, if the costs in human lives and resources of today's megacrises are to be lowered markedly, the current neglect of early warnings for preventive purposes must be reversed.<sup>40</sup>