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Implementation of Executive Board decision 2007/4 on crisis management and business continuity capacity

Background

1. In its decision 2007/4 (E/ICEF/2007/7 (Part I)), adopted at the first regular session of 2007, the Executive Board approved a supplementary budget allocation of \$9.6 million to cover the additional costs in the 2006-2007 biennial support budget to strengthen capacities for crisis management, business and operations continuity, and to protect staff health and safety in the event of a protracted crisis, such as a human influenza pandemic.
2. The Executive Board also requested a report on further progress at its second regular session of 2007, including an update on the coordination and sharing of resources with other United Nations entities, including the identification of a suitable data-centre site and a related analysis of relevant costs.
3. The present report has been prepared in response to decision 2007/4.

Business continuity as an institutional priority

4. An Executive Directive was issued in June 2007 outlining business continuity as an organizational priority and stipulating that all UNICEF headquarters locations and regional and country offices should have a business continuity plan by the end of 2008. The overall objective for UNICEF is to have business continuity institutionalized as a core functional plan of all offices globally.
5. A dedicated Business Continuity Unit (BCU) has been established, with staff in place, within the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS). The Unit comprises a Chief (P-5), a Manager (P-4) and an Administrative Assistant (GS-5). The BCU has been strengthened technically with the secondment of a Senior

* E/ICEF/2007/13.

Business Continuity Expert from the World Food Programme (WFP), the result of an inter-agency business continuity partnership arrangement established in April 2007.

6. An accelerated BCU workplan has been developed and agreed with a focus on four major objectives:

(a) Completion of business continuity management plan for New York and other headquarter offices (end 2007);

(b) Establishment of an alternate disaster recovery centre outside of New York for purposes of storing UNICEF information technology (IT) mission-critical systems and information (end 2009);

(c) Completion of a business continuity training package (September 2007) and training for all regional and country offices (end 2008);

(d) Establishment of coordination arrangements for all inter-agency partnerships on business continuity (ongoing).

7. The following sections outline progress achieved to date toward these objectives.

Completion of a UNICEF business continuity plan

Progress: Most critical UNICEF functions established; risk assessment and business impact analysis exercises under way.

8. A business continuity plan for UNICEF stemming from the earlier human influenza contingency 2006 exercise will be completed by December 2007, using an accepted industry-standard methodology developed by WFP and Citigroup.

9. The business continuity expert seconded from WFP will oversee, facilitate, develop, complete and test the UNICEF business continuity plan. The plan will serve as a guiding tool for UNICEF senior management in identifying critical functions that will need to be operational in a minimum sustained environment as a result of a disaster or internal crisis. The plan will establish the delegation of authority for transitioning management from New York headquarters to another headquarters location outside New York. Other approaches, such as outsourcing and inter-agency arrangements, will also be taken into consideration as part of the internal preparedness mechanisms. The completed plan will continue as a “live” document that will be revisited and updated on an annual basis to maintain its relevance.

10. As of late June 2007, the risk assessment and the business impact analysis exercises involving all UNICEF headquarters divisions in New York had begun. Critical UNICEF functions have been identified by senior management. By end of the third quarter, necessary recovery time periods will be determined based on existing capacities and processes which support these critical functions. Mitigation strategies and business continuity management procedures will be formalized by November. It is expected that by the end of 2007, a draft business continuity plan for New York will be completed. The various business continuity plans for headquarters offices outside New York are expected to be completed by the end of 2007.

11. UNICEF will share the New York business continuity plan for peer review by a group of private sector business continuity professionals organized in collaboration with the New York University Institute for Enterprise Preparedness. The peer review will help to ensure that the UNICEF business continuity plan is in line with the highest possible standards, and is afforded access to an external technical network that benefits UNICEF preparedness.

Establishment of an alternate disaster recovery centre

Progress: Site study commissioned; project owners group established for study oversight.

12. A study has been commissioned for a disaster recovery alternate site to determine the most suitable location to establish a data-recovery centre. The study will review options, including possible co-location opportunities with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (Brindisi, Italy); United Nations International Computing Centre (Geneva); United Nations (Valencia, Spain); or a possible joint disaster recovery partnership arrangement with WFP. Within UNICEF, the capacities of the offices in Copenhagen and Geneva will be reviewed. The study will also consider commercial locations/enterprises, either in the United States and/or internationally, as outsourcing data centre options. The study will provide UNICEF with recommendations based on thorough cost-benefit analysis exercises, geographical factors, overhead and recurrent costs. The study is expected to be completed by August 2007.

13. By mid-September, action is expected to be initiated on the necessary hardware procurement and on-site contractual services. Procurement procedures for 2008 support services and negotiations for inter-agency partnership arrangements and/or additional commercial outsourcing will be initiated in October-November 2007.

14. A Project Owners Group, composed of Directors from EMOPS, the Information Technology Division (ITD), the Division of Financial and Administrative Management and Supply Division, has been established to oversee the policy and decision-making activities for this exercise. It is supported by a Disaster Recovery Project Group which will oversee the implementation mechanisms through the various ITD technical areas/teams.

Coordination and partnership mechanisms with other agencies

Progress: WFP business continuity expert seconded to UNICEF; introductory inter-agency workshop on business continuity held.

15. UNICEF has established a partnership arrangement on business continuity with WFP established at both headquarters and country office levels. WFP has seconded a business continuity expert to UNICEF as a technical resource. Together with the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF hosted an introductory inter-agency workshop on business continuity for New York-based agencies in June. The workshop established mechanisms for information sharing, networking and coordination among the funds and programmes and the United Nations Secretariat as part of required linkages with respect to contingency planning in New York.

Completion of business continuity training for regional and country offices

Progress: Business Continuity Training Development Group formed; training package due mid-September.

16. A training package on business continuity for UNICEF regional and country offices will be developed and completed by mid-September, as a follow-up to earlier emergency preparedness and response country training. The training curriculum will be agency-neutral to facilitate inter-agency participation, training and collaboration at the country level.

17. A Business Continuity Training Development Group chaired, by UNICEF with the participation of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund and WFP, will complete the training package based on Citigroup technical modules on business continuity. A test workshop of the new training package will be held in October with the first regional roll-out scheduled in Asia in December. Other regions will be scheduled in 2008. In addition, both the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have expressed interest in this generic training package, as well as possible joint training for their respective missions and offices outside New York.

18. An agency-neutral training package will provide opportunities for joint agency business continuity training at the country level. The final product of the training will be agency-specific business continuity planning; however, it will provide opportunities for collaborative inter-agency country arrangements such as outsourcing common disaster recovery IT centres.
