

*Check against delivery*

**BRIEFING BY CAROL BELLAMY  
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CHILDREN'S FUND  
TO THE JOINT MEETING OF EXECUTIVE BOARDS:  
UNDP, UNFPA, WFP, AND UNICEF  
ON UNITED NATIONS STAFF SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**Monday January 26, 2004**

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, guests and colleagues,

I am very pleased to be here today to represent the four agencies on the issue of Staff Security and Safety and to let you know that we are all very pleased that you have included this item on the agenda of this joint meeting. For the UNDG Executive Committee agencies, as indeed for the entire UN system, there is no asset more precious to us than our people and therefore their security and well-being is of utmost concern to us. We are both angered and saddened by recent developments which have made their demanding job even more difficult and dangerous.

We are angered by the senseless loss of life of dedicated and committed international servants who are trying to help those unfortunate enough to be caught up in war, civil conflict and poverty. Saddened, because the era where UN staff members, whether international or national, were ensured a degree of safety and security through their role as neutral, impartial providers of humanitarian support and development assistance on the basis of need, is now finished. In fact, the pendulum of UN security has now swung far past the mid-point and in many cases UN staff members are no longer seen as neutral providers of services but rather are considered as deliberate targets for terrorist attacks.

While the truck bomb attack of 19 August 2003 on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad is the worst-case situation of the United Nations as the object of a deliberate, vicious and direct attack, it has brought into focus all of our apprehensions concerning staff security and the ability to deliver UN programmes. We are all too aware that this attack and others in Iraq have taken place in a context that is sadly not unique – a country awash in weaponry and suffering from widespread social stress, economic collapse, the breakdown of government and other institutions, ethnic and political tensions, and general insecurity. The implications for UN operations in other countries and other parts of the world cannot be ignored.

While the catalogue of acts of terrorist violence in recent years is lengthy and distressing, it has also been paralleled by a continued upward trend of more “traditional” criminal acts involving UN personnel - theft, car-jacking, harassment, assault and even murder. While the Baghdad bombing caused the single largest loss of life to UN staff, we have seen over the last year some 270 violent attacks against United Nations and NGO compounds and convoys, with over 160 cases of harassment of staff members, 250 cases of assault and seven hostage-takings. There were more than 30 reported bomb threats against field offices, all of which, at least in this period, proved to be hoaxes. More than 550 incidents of theft of office equipment, official vehicles, staff residences, and personal belongings were reported. In addition to the significant impact on the personal safety and well-being of UN staff members and the integrity of UN field installations, such thefts are now of such a magnitude as to have a direct affect on the quantity of material resources available for UN programmes.

What is clear from this sad litany of events is that the UN now faces the threat of deliberate and targeted terrorist attacks and increasing numbers of other forms of violence and criminal activity. These ever-increasing threats require a change in approach and attitude towards security as a necessary support for the delivery of development and humanitarian assistance. They will on occasion change the way in which we implement programmes. They will require an appropriate response from our government partners.

My aim today will be to survey existing security structures, to outline the threats the UN and its staff now face, and to lay out our response – both actions already taken and our future plans, as far as we now know them. I wish also to outline some of the implications of the threats to our programmes and programme delivery and to offer suggestions of what host and donor governments can do in support of UN activities and staff security.

This having been said, and even though UN staff no longer have the universal protection of neutrality or of the terms of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, I want to reassure you on behalf of the four agencies represented here today that all of us remain committed to the total fulfilment of our mission and the delivery of our mandated services. However, we will do so in a manner that takes into full account the protection of all our staff – both national and international. As managers within the UN system, responsible for the safety and well-being of our staff, we can do no less.

The current system of field security management has evolved over two decades and was designed to deal mainly with criminal threats and random or accidental acts of violence. Thus the emphasis was on protection - protection against theft, car-jacking, harassment and assault; protection against being taken hostage; protection against being caught up in civil disorder or the cross-fire of someone else’s war. The essentials of our response in these cases consist of passive protective measures coupled with movement control – not to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

At headquarters, under this structure, overall responsibility for security management rests with the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD). Recent

decisions by the General Assembly have substantially improved the ability and capacity of UNSECOORD to carry out its mandate, including the monitoring of security arrangements, providing advice and tracking incidents. UNSECOORD has gained additional capacity for conducting a wider range of missions designed to support field offices in carrying out their security tasks and meeting accountability standards.

At the headquarters level, an important activity of UNSECOORD is support of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, the IASMN, made up primarily of representatives of UN agencies, funds and programmes, including the four here today. This Network oversees activities in the agencies designed to review, validate and adjust staff security procedures and practices. Matters currently under consideration include further enhancement of security training, the application of minimum operating security standards in the field (MOSS compliance), air safety, communications compatibility, the validation of security phases and special security issues concerning women.

In the field, emphasis by UNSECOORD has been placed on fully staffing approved posts for field security coordination officers and agency security officers. There are currently some 114 field security coordination officers and 200 national support staff deployed throughout the world to assist the 150 designated officials and security management teams made up of senior representatives of the UN agencies and programmes in all countries in which the UN operates. In addition, the four agencies here today employ some 54 professional security officers to represent their specific needs and at the same time to also support the Designated Official and UN Security Management System in the countries in which they are deployed.

At the country level, the Designated Official – the DO, appointed by the UN Security Coordinator on behalf of the Secretary-General, is a key element within the field security system. The most critical tasks assigned to DOs include risk and threat assessments, contingency planning, the leadership of the post Security Management Team, and the engendering of a pervasive culture of security awareness and compliance among all United Nations and associated staff members in the country. These are enormous responsibilities that can only be performed with the active support of host governments and UN staff and a persistent insistence on security as a personal, professional, and organizational priority.

Over the past year, the four agencies represented here have been working with other UN system partners and with UNSECOORD and the Designated Officials to reduce the risk to which UN staff members are exposed. We have placed a great deal of emphasis on MOSS compliance – that is the full implementation of minimum operating security standards which are verifiable standards for facilities and structures, security planning, training, telecommunications and other equipment that correspond to assessed risks and threats.

Of the 150 duty stations throughout the world, the latest Secretary-General's report on staff security indicated up to 90 percent were reporting either full or substantial partial compliance with the standards. We would note that this was generally recorded before

the recent revision of MOSS. Now, with the need to improve access and parking controls, perimeters, barriers and install blast film on windows in many countries where the risk warrants the extra measures, this will take additional time and will require additional resources. At the present time, we are probably only 65-70% compliant, on a global basis, but every country is in the process of making improvements and assessing their needs as a high priority.

The threat and risk assessment function of the DO is central to determining what needs to be done, where, when and how in order to provide for the safety and security of personnel, facilities, and equipment under the particular circumstances in any country. The threat and risk assessments are designed to address these key questions in a specific manner leading to a security plan that can be budgeted and then effectively implemented. All UN agencies in the field are expected to provide the inputs needed by the designated official. As Executive Heads, the four of us have issued instructions to ensure that this is done promptly and effectively.

Traditionally we have relied on host national governments or local authorities to identify more menacing threats such as armed attack on UN premises or personnel, through established policy and security services and involving, if necessary, the deployment of full-time armed protection. Generally in the past, however, we were able to ensure security through the inherent protection offered by our multilateral and therefore neutral nature, our generally humanitarian role in active conflict situations, our geographically diverse workforce and our arms-length relationship with governing authorities, as well as through our on-going identification and implementation of improvements through an inter-agency process of consultation and burden-sharing. As we have now seen, this is no longer enough.

Nevertheless, we still believe the established UN security management system provides a good foundation for managing and addressing the risks brought on by the new threats of terrorism as well as the intensification of traditional vulnerabilities.

First of all, it is built on and oriented towards actual experience, particularly in field locations. It therefore reflects the needs of the staff members of field-based UN agencies as well as those of operational UN secretariat departments.

Second, the country security management teams and the Inter-Agency Security Management Network provide a consultative framework to develop well-considered policy and procedural changes in response to new problems. This Network also serves to secure system-wide approval and support through the Chief Executives Board for Coordination – the CEB – on major changes and thereby provides flexibility and unity to the system.

Third, the current system has as its basis a simple, short and direct channel of authority, responsibility, and communications that extends from the staff member in the field, directly to the zone warden and then, through the Designated Official, to the Secretary-

General. This provides the clear and direct single chain of command and responsiveness that is essential for dealing quickly with crises.

And, fourth and finally, the field security management system is, in its essence, mature and tested. It has brought the UN family through many crises over the past twenty years, including the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to countries ranging from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe and, when necessary, the reduction or evacuation of staff members. In the past year alone, we have seen two evacuations from Iraq and three from Liberia. We do not need a new security system. Rather, we need to improve and strengthen the one we have.

At the core of any good security system is the capacity to respond to an expected level and nature of threats and to adapt quickly to new sources of danger. In this regard, we see a number of trends. First, the traditional dangers of theft, harassment, physical assault and hostage-taking will continue and possibly increase. Second, the United Nations will continue to work near, around, and occasionally on the active or potential low-intensity battlefields of this world. This trend applies not only to traditional humanitarian relief activities, but also to human rights, political interventions, rehabilitation, and development functions either as country programmes, or in the context of multi-disciplinary peacekeeping operations. In dealing with these “traditional” threats, we now face an issue of scale rather than scope.

If we are given the resources for a sufficient and continuous presence in the field, and assuming that existing policies and procedures are fully and diligently applied, we believe that our current field security management system can continue to deal adequately with the “traditional” threats.

It is the possibility of direct terrorist attacks that far outstrips in scale and scope the capacity of the current field security management system, particularly in cases where only limited protection is available from host governments or local authorities. This new threat could exist in a context of steady violence, lack of law enforcement capacity, widespread crime, political and social unrest and uncertainty, outbursts of inter-factional strife and sporadic returns to active warfare, as in Iraq today. The occurrence of similar conditions in other countries is not out of the question. Even UN headquarters sites are not located in cities outside the reach of terrorists.

Since such attacks could occur anywhere, they are difficult to predict and could result in large-scale casualties. Protective measures are onerous and expensive. Terrorism thus imposes a quantum rather than incremental increase in its demands on security systems. For the United Nations, it necessitates a far more sophisticated and robust security management system both at headquarters locations and in the field.

With respect to sophistication, we can no longer administer an evolving and rather slow-changing security system designed to deal with threats that are familiar in character and extent. Rather, we must manage a security system that is constantly changing in response to a volatile and mutating threat that could appear anywhere with little warning. This

requires us to monitor systematically our environment; to anticipate security incidents and to plan for them in advance; and to enhance readiness and protection through training, equipment, and physical security measures. In that connection, we have commenced at New York an ongoing world-wide threat assessment process so that we can target, prioritize, and focus our response. This process, being led by DPKO, relies extensively, but not exclusively, on inputs from Designated Officials in the field. It will enable us to adjust, prioritize, and focus our efforts.

With a constant eye to the threat, and working collaboratively with all concerned, we also intend to intensify the development, updating, and distribution of relevant, practical, effective security practices, procedures, and standards; and to systematize further the associated training and monitoring to ensure timely and proper implementation and to maintain their relevance. Both Iraq and Liberia clearly demonstrate that our response to new security requirements must be more than reassigning security personnel still required somewhere else, or undertaking time-consuming fund-raising and recruitment. This approach is not acceptable in a world where there are no safe areas. It is neither responsive nor sustainable, and must be replaced with an enhanced cadre of field security officers backed up with a stand-by reserve.

Last year, and pursuant to the GA Resolution 57/155 on the “Safety and Security of Humanitarian Personnel and protection of United Nations personnel”, an independent team of consultants was commissioned to evaluate the Security Arrangements within the United Nations. Their report was completed and submitted to the Secretary General on August 11th 2003, the week before the tragedy of the Canal Hotel bombing.

This review made a number of key recommendations aimed at unifying security management within the UN, as undertaken by UNSECOORD and the IASMN, by DPKO and by the UN Safety and Security Service at Headquarters and Regional Commission locations.

Following the Baghdad bombing, there was an immediate need to examine the facts and ensure that any lessons to be learned from the tragedy were in fact learned. As such, further work on the independent evaluation was put on hold while this was undertaken.

As you are aware, the Ahtisaari Panel completed its findings in October, and these have now been examined alongside those of the Evaluation. Under the direction of the Deputy Secretary General, a Steering Committee was formed to look at further actions – a Committee in which I was asked to represent the agencies, funds and programmes.

In terms of specific actions, I can now report that a Senior Change Manager has been appointed to recommend ways of implementing all the possible improvements identified. This includes the challenges of developing effective Risk and Threat Analysis, enhancing MOSS, introducing accountability mechanisms, and defining how we should respond to future major incidents. Within the UN, Work Groups have been established for each of the main subject areas, and all of our four organizations are actively involved in them.

You will also be aware that more recently the Secretary General appointed a further independent panel, led by Mr Gerald Walzer, to examine the question of accountability in the events that led up to the explosion at the Canal Hotel. This investigation is still ongoing and it would clearly be improper to comment specifically on the outcome until investigations are completed. We expect the report to be finalized in February.

What is important to note at this time is that we are all committed to supporting the process of enhancing Security Management within our agencies and the UN as a whole. Let there be no doubt that we are prepared to respond to any criticism with a willingness to change, and implement any recommendation that is aimed at reducing the risks faced by all our staff and those we strive to serve.

Complementing these actions, very shortly after the explosion in Baghdad, we convened in New York a Working Group meeting of the IASMN. This Group endorsed establishment of an integrated risk and threat assessment unit, the development of a new risk and threat assessment model, and an increase in field security coordinators. It asked UNSECOORD to survey the extent of country-specific MOSS implementation, and to redesign MOSS to address terrorist threats. The Working Group further recommended that the concept of housing all or many United Nations staff in one building or compound be reviewed, and asked that each Designated Official and security management team urgently consider the appropriateness of their respective premises given the security considerations prevailing at their duty stations.

To ensure that MOSS, with a central role in our security management, remains relevant, we are making adjustments so that it will stand up to the new threats.

In principle, MOSS already caters to working in high-risk areas. However, in view of the potentially catastrophic risks that we now face, we must insist more firmly than ever on full and sustained MOSS compliance. This includes up-to-date plans; conscientious training and briefing of staff members; maintenance of complete, accurate, and timely personnel records; and firm control of movement in properly equipped vehicles under the umbrella of an integrated communications system. We cannot allow our personnel to enter areas of danger unless they are provided, in advance, the protection afforded by full MOSS compliance.

MOSS must provide the bridge between security policy and threat assessment on one hand and practical standards, procedures, and resourcing on the other. While everyone has responsibility towards security, compliance with a pre-determined set of MOSS standards eliminates the need for everybody to be a security expert. If MOSS is appropriate to the threat, and if it is implemented in a conscientious and timely manner, then we can take prudent satisfaction in having done what is possible for the safety and security of our staff.

Addressing MOSS shortfalls and upgrading the overall field security management system will of course require additional resources for all members of the United Nations family including the funds and programmes and UNSECOORD. The four agencies here today

have already allocated a total of \$47 million for additional security expenditure in the next biennium (UNICEF - \$14 million; WFP - \$20 million; UNDP \$11.5 million; UNFPA - \$1.8 million).

In recognition of the fact that every staff member bears some responsibility for their safety, security awareness training has now been brought directly to all civilian staff members of the UN system. An interactive CD-ROM course entitled “Basic security in the field: staff safety, health and welfare” has been developed collaboratively by UNSECOORD, UNHCR and other UN agencies and programmes including the four of us here this morning. The course is available in English and in French with some 6,000 copies distributed to UN agencies, funds and programmes for further distribution to their respective staff. Thanks to a contribution from the Government of Japan, the course is now being also produced in Arabic and Spanish versions.

All staff members are required to take this course and, as of the end of 2003, no staff member of any of the four agencies here today is allowed to travel on official duty without having successfully completed it. There are no exceptions and the course has proven very successful and popular. We now estimate that about 80 percent of staff members in the four agencies have successfully completed this training programme and we expect to reach 100 percent compliance by the end of the first quarter of 2004, once we have availability in all languages.

A second CD-ROM course is now being prepared focusing on enhancing the security skills of staff operating in the field in particularly challenging conditions. This programme will contain expanded material on communications, first aid, methods of dealing with military or militia forces and child soldiers and other relevant topics.

Traditionally, programmes for service delivery in both developmental and humanitarian conditions have stressed the primacy of output delivery. Now, there is a clear need in many cases to design these programmes also taking security conditions into account. The challenges of programme delivery and accountability for resources and results in conditions of MOSS compliance or in high security phases may require a different approach to programme design and delivery. It is an issue that requires more work on the part of UN agencies.

As a group, the four agencies here today, along with several others, have worked together to identify ways in which we can adapt implementation methods and strategies to the new challenges. We have agreed to review and consider how we can further empower national staff to deliver programmes effectively in instances where international staff are relocated. We have also agreed to, and in fact we already increasingly do, make greater use of national counterparts – government, NGO or private sector - for project execution, delivery of supplies and other programme outputs. In support, we increasingly rely on available communication systems and networks for virtual consultation between national and international staff so that the latter can continue to provide technical and operational support to the former. We are identifying ways in which the operational and specialized agencies can work together around priority themes and sectors. And we are updating our

systems to enable us to authorize and effect the procurement and delivery of inputs from off-shore locations if and when required.

While these measures will enable us to mitigate the impact of insecurity on humanitarian response and programme delivery, we must stress that none of them can substitute or fully compensate for the fundamental requirement – that of effective and safe access for humanitarian workers to those most in need at times of crisis. This is something that only governments and recognized authorities can provide.

It is quite clear, overall, that the UN cannot accomplish the highest levels of staff security without the full and active collaboration of host governments. In addition to the failure to provide humanitarian space, there are instances where the efforts of the organization have been frustrated even in achieving MOSS compliance. By way of example, in some countries international organizations continue to encounter difficulties obtaining permission to import communication equipment and an unwillingness of governments to provide other import clearances. This remains a serious concern and we appeal to all member states that have implemented such restrictions to abolish them in the interest of the safety and security of United Nations staff.

Of the 196 deaths of United Nations civilian staff due to malicious acts prior to 30 June 2003, only 24 perpetrators have been apprehended. We are dismayed that there has all too often been an unwillingness to investigate fully and to bring to justice those responsible for attacks or threats against international and locally recruited United Nations and associated staff members or hold perpetrators accountable under international and national law. Not pursuing those committing these crimes is a double blow to UN staff. First it demeans the important role that they perform in serving the people of the country in which they are working and, second, it gives the appearance, as wrongful as it may be, that host governments somehow condone these criminal acts – which could further affect security and our ability to respond.

Also, we remain dismayed by the apparent unwillingness in many cases to provide the United Nations with timely information in the event of the arrest or detention of national UN staff members. While we will continue to enhance our security management system for the benefit of our personnel, it must be constantly borne in mind that host governments have the primary responsibility for the security of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel.

The safety and security of staff members will also require additional resources. Funding is required for universal implementation of MOSS compliance, the full implementation and operation of an improved security management system including security training, as well as the operation of an effective stress management counselling system. We thank the Executive Boards for their approval of additional cost items in our respective administrative and programme support budgets. We urge donor governments to keep the issue of staff security in mind when they review our CAP Appeals.

To these ends, we would also urge donor governments, and all governments in a position to do so, to contribute generously to the Trust Fund for the Security of Staff Members of the UN System. In this regard, we would like to thank those governments that have already provided funds. We believe it is appropriate also to re-visit the issue of making greater use of United Nations regular budget resources to fund safety and security expenditures.

Mr. President and distinguished delegates, in summary, the UN now faces new threats that are potentially catastrophic. We can, realistically, counter these threats and their consequences through a combination of analysis and planning, and the determined, meticulous implementation of state-of-the-art security procedures and standards. While the current field security management system gives us a good basis to work from, it needs to be significantly enhanced. There will be costs that need to be borne by member states and actions that member states can take to improve the security of UN staff.

Let me remind distinguished delegates again that our mandate and our responsibility are humanitarian assistance to those who are most vulnerable and development assistance to a broader range of recipients. In these tasks we will continue to operate in a neutral and impartial manner. However, successful accomplishment of this mission also requires, first and foremost, access to those in need, and second, adequate security and safety for our staff members. Member states have the responsibility to ensure that both the humanitarian space and security are available.

Mr. President, we remain committed to carrying out our mandated tasks. In the past, we have perhaps succeeded all too frequently in “pushing the outer limits of acceptable risk-taking” in the belief that the United Nations flag was its own protection. Sadly, we can no longer hold this to be a universal truth.

Thank you.