**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

**Standing Committee
51ˢᵗ meeting**

Staff safety and security issues, including refugee security

Contents

I.   Introduction

1.   This report provides an update of the progress made by UNHCR on the *Security Management Plan of Action and Strategy for Implementation for 2010 to 2011,* which followed the 2009 audit on security governance undertaken by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).   The need for a proactive approach to security management underpinned the development of the Plan of Action.

2.   The recent and unexpected unrest in the Middle East and North Africa region has further underscored the importance of enhancing overall security preparedness, including procedures and capacity, in anticipation of a wide range of potential scenarios and threats. UNHCR's Field Safety Section (FSS) continues to spearhead efforts in this direction, while simultaneously supporting the large volume of emergency needs arising from security events in the Field.

3.   Meanwhile, recent changes of policy and operating modalities within the United Nations Security Management System have generally strengthened the ability of UN operations on the ground to manage risk effectively.   At the same time, they require continued engagement through inter-agency processes to ensure harmonization of policies and common understanding within the UN system.   For its part, UNHCR is working to strengthen the organizational culture of security based on sound risk management practices, which allow the Office to continue operating within the boundaries of acceptable risk even in places where dangers remain.

II.   Field support

4.   FSS at Headquarters and UNHCR Field Safety Advisers (FSAs) in the Field continued to assist operations by providing security risk assessments, technical advice, training, and input for inter-agency security management processes.   In addition FSS helped manage critical incidents, providing support both to managers at Headquarters as well as to heads of offices in the Field.

5.   FSS also fielded numerous missions to the Field, to provide direct back-up and support.   In 2010, missions to the Field totaled 413 days – allowing the Office to respond to security challenges in operations as diverse as the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Tajikistan.   During the first half of 2011, the pace has accelerated with deployments to Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and Tunisia, as well as to the Western Sahara operation.   In addition to these missions fielded from Headquarters, Regional FSAs also undertook missions to countries within their areas of coverage, in order to provide assistance and support.   With such an extensive presence of UNHCR personnel operating in environments with potential or real risks, UNHCR continues to face challenges in responding to the high volume of demands for support in the Field.

6.   In 2010, UNHCR recruited a dedicated FSA for engineering, structural and blast assessments.   This has allowed the Office to begin assessing UNHCR premises, which have been deemed vulnerable, in a number of countries, as well as offices and other facilities which need to be established or relocated, so that potential risks can be addressed.

7.   The Office has also established an adequate stock of armoured vehicles over the past 12 months.   Managing this stock, including a continuous review of the suitability and quality of the vehicles available (both at the manufacturing location and before shipment),

has enabled UNHCR to provide appropriate equipment to the Field in a timely manner, allowing it to operate safely in challenging security environments.

III. Staffing and training

8.   The ability of UNHCR to meet the wide range of security challenges facing its operations in the Field, and to shape a culture of security within the organization, depends not only on the quantity but also on the quality of its FSA workforce. As a result, FSS has given priority to the recruitment and training of security staff deployed to the Field.

9.   As of May 2011, UNHCR had a total of 53 FSA posts. Standards for recruiting security staff, have been set high and include demonstrated technical proficiency, experience in humanitarian operations, and language skills. FSAs were provided with training in order to understand the safety needs not only of staff, but also of persons of concern. This distinguishes UNHCR FSAs from their counterparts in other organizations. FSS worked together with the Global Learning Centre to develop targeted training in the following areas:

(i)   Increasing the capacity of managers in the field, because their decisions have a far-reaching impact on so many people around them, managers in the Field have been prioritized in the provision of security training. Since 2005, when UNHCR piloted the innovative Security Management Learning Programme (SMLP), over 400 managers have been trained in the tools and techniques of risk management. In 2011, the Security Management Exercise (SMX), a version of the SMLP but tailored to specific country operations, was launched. By presenting the core content of the SMLP for a country team *in situ*, SMX provides a unique opportunity to exercise planning and apply risk assessment tools directly in a challenging operation. To date, SMX has been conducted successfully in four medium to high-risk duty stations, with eight more planned for the remainder of 2011.

(ii)   Ensuring that security professionals meet the highest technical standards, the professional development of security staff is a second area of priority. In 2011, the Office focused on providing training in two areas: threat analysis and communications. The objective was to allow FSAs to be better able to assess problems accurately, and then communicate strategies to deal with the threats to decision makers. These two skill sets have been the subject of specialized trainings this year.

(iii)   Training all staff on safety and security, safety and security training aimed at making staff aware of threats in their environment, and thus able to manage risk more effectively, was a critical component of UNHCR's efforts over the past year to create an organizational culture of security. The overall objective was to increase opportunities for all staff to receive security training, in a user-friendly and cost-efficient way. UNHCR maximized e-Learning possibilities, developing on-line content for training in specific areas such as vehicle security when undertaking missions, residential security, and security for women. It is also developing an electronic collection of templates and other materials providing instructions and advice for security-related tasks, such as putting in place security plans and providing instructions for guards.

10.   In addition, in 2010, UNHCR organized 18 tailored training events for staff in the most high-risk operations, benefiting more than 560 people. In 2011 each SMX event has been accompanied by a safety awareness training opened to a broader staff audience but still tailored to the specific risks. A total of 700 people are projected to receive such training in 2011.

IV.   Information gathering and analysis

11.   UNHCR's Security Management Strategy places emphasis on the proactive use of information tools and resources to better understand and manage risk, and ultimately to enable country programmes to operate safely. The Plan of Action identified a number of measures to be undertaken to achieve better information gathering and analysis.

12.   In 2010, UNHCR recruited an experienced professional to fill the new post of Senior Security Analyst. The responsibilities include: (i) identifying locations with emerging security concerns (a "watch list"), in close coordination with the Regional Bureaux, and providing analysis to support decision making; (ii) providing information and analysis on current emergency situations, particularly the threat and risk for staff and persons of concern; and (iii) contributing security-related analysis on thematic issues of strategic importance to the Office. The Senior Security Analyst has also been deployed with emergency teams in response to multiple emerging crises, enabling him to develop first-hand knowledge of these operations and build information networks.

13.   UNHCR has continued to revise and improve its security information reporting system. In the past year, standard formats, procedures and thresholds for security reporting have been established and reinforced. Nevertheless, technical challenges remain to ensure efficient capturing of data for future analysis. Inter-agency efforts to rectify this are currently underway, with the aim of agreeing on an incident reporting and database solution that is fully compatible, that avoids duplication, and that can provide data of relevance to each agency.

14.   In order to further enhance the analytic capacity of FSAs, UNHCR, in coordination with the Threat and Risk Unit of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), has begun organizing training in security analysis and planning processes. Twenty FSAs underwent this training in 2010 and a similar number will do so in 2011. The training supports the objective of ensuring the capacity of security staff to analyse information proactively in support of effective risk management.

V.   Oversight and Headquarters processes

15.   UNHCR has continued to review and evaluate security management in the Field through several channels:

(i)   The Security Steering Committee, established by the High Commissioner in 2009, reviews on a regular basis operations which have challenging security environments. This mechanism has provided relevant Headquarters sections and offices in the Field, with an opportunity to evaluate the impact of potential changes in the security environment and reflect on how they may need to adjust operating modalities or enhance mitigation measures to allow operations to continue.

(ii)   The Office continues to review the status of compliance with the United Nations Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS), on a biannual basis, in accordance with UNHCR's Global Strategic Priorities. At the end of 2010, UNHCR deemed that 82 per cent of its offices were MOSS compliant. This figure is slightly lower than in 2009, owing largely to the establishment of 40 new offices in 2010. At the end of 2010, UNHCR had 356 offices in the Field with more due to open in 2011. FSS works closely with country operations with new or expanding programmes to support them in achieving full compliance.

(iii)   UNHCR continues to engage actively in inter-agency security management processes, through the Inter-agency Security Management Network (IASMN).   This

engagement, along with regular interaction with UNDSS, is critical to ensure that the security needs of UNHCR operations are understood and addressed appropriately. Recent changes of policy within the UN Security Management System include: efforts to operationalize the "how to stay" rather than "when to leave" approach, the new Security Level System introduced in 2011, and efforts to standardize methods of conducting programme criticality assessments in high-risk operations.

VI. Security of beneficiaries

16.   UNHCR's mandate obliges the Office to adopt a holistic approach to security risk management for both staff and persons of concern. Although the physical security of persons of concern involves international protection, it is also an area where security officers have relevant expertise to offer, such as in designing a suitable camp layout or organizing an orderly registration exercise. Moreover, in camps and refugee-populated areas, and in urban settings with sensitive caseloads, the safety of beneficiaries and staff helping them cannot easily be separated.

17.   The selection and recruitment of FSAs with the right profile to handle operational environments in the Field, and measures taken to further develop and prepare safety personnel who can advise on beneficiary safety, are a first step in addressing this issue. In the Field, FSAs have been positioned to routinely contribute to, and sometimes take the lead in, advising on camp security; liaising with host-nation law enforcement authorities; training of local camp security forces; and coordinating on civil-military aspects.

18.   UNHCR's Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS), in cooperation with the Division of International Protection (DIP), is leading an initiative aimed at producing a Manual for Security of Persons of Concern. The Manual is designed to provide guidance for UNHCR and partner staff on how to respond to recurring security threats against persons of concern. Based on good practices and practical advice from the Field, it will reinforce a multidisciplinary approach to resolving problems associated with beneficiary security. The Manual will complement existing references and guidelines and is due for completion by the end of 2011.

VII. Conclusion

19.   Efforts to enhance preparedness, procedures and governance are well underway, but work remains to be done, as the Office continues to be challenged by its capacity to respond to growing needs. Work began in 2010 to provide enhanced support to the Field; improve the quality of services provided by Field Safety Advisers; increase the capacity of managers to manage risk effectively; provide more training opportunities for all staff; improve information gathering and analysis; review and evaluate security management through oversight and Headquarters processes; and ensure the security of beneficiaries. This will continue throughout 2011 and into 2012. The ultimate aim of these efforts is to foster a culture of security based on sound risk management practices, allowing UNHCR to continue delivering protection and assistance to people in need even in areas where dangers remain.