



## **Press Release IHA/964**

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### UNITED NATIONS LAUNCHES INITIATIVE TO FACILITATE ASSESSMENT OF HUMANITARIAN IMPACTS OF SANCTIONS

NEW YORK 19 November (OCHA) -- Today the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is launching a new initiative to assess the potential humanitarian implications of sanctions.

The United Nations has imposed sanctions in 13 cases between 1990 and 2004. They had been imposed only twice during the United Nations' prior four decades. The increased resort to the use of sanctions by the United Nations Security Council since 1990 has been accompanied by increased concern about their potential unintended humanitarian consequences. The Secretary-General has been a steadfast and determined advocate for efforts to ensure that the United Nations sanctions do not negatively impact the living conditions of civilian populations in targeted States.

The OCHA has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure that the United Nations sanctions do not negatively impact the living conditions of civilian populations in targeted States. At the core of this latest initiative is a sanctions assessment methodology, which seeks to make sanctions more effective by assessing humanitarian implications in advance of, during and following sanctions. Recognizing this increased concern, and seeing an opportunity to move away from the previous ad hoc approach to assessing the impact of sanctions on living conditions, OCHA embarked on a project to develop a standardized methodology for assessing whether and how sanctions can cause harm. The OCHA has previously undertaken assessments of the humanitarian implications of sanctions on Afghanistan, Liberia and the former Yugoslavia.

The methodology aims to address two important challenges that present themselves when assessing the impact of sanctions on humanitarian conditions: (i) accurate evaluation of the current status of humanitarian conditions, and (ii) separation of the effects of sanctions on health and well-being from those due to other causes. Identifying possible humanitarian consequences of sanctions early on can reduce

confusion about humanitarian conditions and their causes, and can help mitigate any unintended consequences.

The project -- funded by the Governments of Canada and Switzerland -- was undertaken in collaboration with humanitarian agencies within the United Nations system and beyond. The OCHA's project team also engaged in consultations with the United Nations Security Council Member States as the methodology was being formulated and refined.

The project has culminated with the publication of two documents: a Sanctions Assessment Handbook and a complementary set of Field Guidelines. Jan Egeland, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, strongly urges "those engaged in considering and designing sanction regimes to employ this methodology to minimize their unintended humanitarian consequences". The OCHA envisions that this important new approach will make a significant contribution to the protection of civilians in sanctioned States, and will enhance the capacity of the United Nations agencies and Security Council members alike to anticipate and prevent deteriorations in humanitarian conditions that may result from sanctions.

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