GAZA EMERGENCY – Meeting Minutes

LOCATION: Global Communities Office (Ramallah) WFP Office (Jerusalem) WFP Office (Gaza City)

DATE: 09 September 2014

CHAIR: Logistics Cluster Coordinator

PARTICIPANTS: World Food Programme (WFP Gaza, Jerusalem), Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU Ramallah), Global Communities (Ramallah), Handicap International, Hurryyat (Ramallah), Internews, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA Gaza), Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC Ramallah), PINGO (Ramallah) USAID, UN Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), World Health Organization (WHO Gaza), World Vision International (WVI)

ACTION POINTS:

- Partners were reminded to inform the Logistics Cluster of their current and planned pipelines before the next meeting in two weeks;
- The Logistics Cluster will provide more details on the use of the crossing and issues that have occurred since the operation began;
- The Logistics Cluster to investigate PRCS trucks movements.

AGENDA:

1. Brief on current humanitarian situation
2. Logistics gaps and bottlenecks
3. Logistics Cluster services Update
   - Future options for Logistics Cluster Gaza Emergency Operation
4. AoB

1. Brief on current humanitarian situation

- The Logistics Cluster Coordinator welcomed partners in the three meeting locations (Ramallah, Jerusalem and Gaza City) and asked attendees to introduce themselves.
- No overall brief on the current humanitarian situation was given.

2. Logistics gaps and bottlenecks

- The logistics gaps and constraints remain similar. Capacity limitations at Betunia crossing from West Bank to Israel continue to cause delays to cargo movements forcing trucks to be diverted, increasing costs and lead times. The Logistics Cluster is liaising with partners and relevant authorities to increase operating hours of Kerem Shalom which would give trucks additional time to reach Kerem Shalom before closing for crossing into the Gaza Strip.
- Trucks are passing through Tarqumia (West Bank to Israel) and Kerem Shalom (Israel to the Gaza Strip) but procedures are time consuming.
- WFP, the Logistics Cluster and the crossing management authorities COGAT (Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories) will be holding a meeting to discuss the capacity of Betunia and the discordant information received on crossing opening hours between Betunia and Kerem Shalom from different parties. Updates will be shared with partners.

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Betunia’s current capacity of approximately 30 trucks per day is insufficient to absorb requirements and queues at the crossing delays trucks arriving at Kerem Shalom prior to closure for trucks to cross into Gaza.

The total implications of the delays at Betunia for the Logistics Cluster since activation (30 July) has been approximately 200 hours and USD10,000. WFP has incurred approximately twice that amount. The Logistics Cluster will collect and share more details on the use of the crossing and issues that have occurred since the operation began.

The NGO ‘Internews’ asked if the Logistics Cluster coordinates with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS). A small amount of private donations has been delivered to PRCS in the Gaza Strip. The Logistics Cluster responded that PRCS manage their own logistics and depending on if they use commercial or PRCS trucks, they can use alternative crossings. The Logistics Cluster will investigate PRCS trucks movements and update partners.

3. Logistics Cluster Services

A summary was given of the Logistics Cluster Gaza Emergency Operation movements since activation on 30 July 2014. Humanitarian relief transportation movements appear to be reducing, but the Logistics Cluster is still receiving requests for cargo.

Most transportation requests have been carried out on behalf of private donors and the Palestinian Authority (PA). A smaller amount has been moved for NGOs and very little for the UN Agencies. Transportation for the PA involved moving private donations coordinated directly through the PA as opposed to locally coordinated private donations. The majority of humanitarian relief items moved have been water, shelter items and cooking equipment.

The Logistics Cluster Coordinator updated partners on funding status. The original budget in the Special Operations (SO) fund (WFP Project Document that provides funding for the Logistics Cluster) of USD2.4m is not expected to be increased. We have received contributions of approximately USD1m. Additional contributions may be required to continue the free services.

In order for the Logistics Cluster to plan accordingly, needs and requirements for the coming period need to be shared before the next meeting. Although the situation is dependent on political developments, organisations should have an indication of pipelines for the next month.

In response to discussions at the previous Logistics Cluster Coordination meeting, the overall consensus is for an extension to the provision of free services until approximately mid-October to mid-November and information management (IM) and coordination support until the end of the year.

Partners were requested to share comments on the proposed direction and the services offered.

Global Communities in Ramallah expressed the need to prepare for additional deliveries into the Gaza Strip but timing and volumes of cargo are yet to be confirmed.

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- PARC Ramallah may complete their humanitarian relief programme by the end of September.
- Handicap International advised that they plan to send additional medical items. They have already used the Logistics Cluster services for one shipment and will require additional transport but timing is unconfirmed.
- World Vision International (WVI) expect a large shipment humanitarian relief items requiring transportation in the coming weeks but were unable to confirm exact timing. They will share details with the Logistics Cluster once confirmed.
- ‘Internews’ advised that from the perspective of people in the Gaza Strip, aid deliveries are decreasing. The Logistics Cluster confirmed that as the humanitarian assessments have just been finalised, regular programmes will be redesigned according to the results and needs will be met accordingly.
- Internews advised that according to a statement given in the EOC (Emergency Operations Centre) meeting in Ramallah, no more water deliveries will be made to Gaza. The Logistics Cluster advised that this should be raised in the WASH cluster meeting. The Logistics Cluster representative in Gaza confirmed that OCHA is present in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) meeting to represent members of the Clusters and the Logistics Cluster has been calling into the EOC meeting in Gaza so that is aware of any developments.
- Attendees in the Gaza City meeting suggested OCHA can provide assistance with information management (IM) needs in the phase down period. The Logistics Cluster Coordinator advised that OCHA could provide support, however the IM function was vital to ensure logistics efforts are not duplicated and to have a central coordination mechanism to collect and share information.
- The prioritisation of cargo procedures were raised. The type of humanitarian relief being transported into the Gaza Strip is appropriate but we need to ensure a balance with the commercial market restarting. The Logistics Cluster is working closely with Cluster leads on defining priority items and coordinating with the Palestinian Authority on both sides so they are aware of exactly what we are shipping into Gaza.

4. AoB

- UNRWA requested information from any partners who have used the two customs procedures options, the 380 procedure and PA donation number as they have been experiencing delays. Mercy Corps confirmed that have used the PA donation number and no issues were reported.
- The WFP Head of Logistics advised partners that WFP and the Logistics Cluster met with Erez crossing authority representatives to discuss future options for increasing transportation capacity from Israel into the Gaza Strip. According to crossing authority representatives, no additional crossing points will be opened but an extension of opening hours or physical expansion of Kerem Shalom. It is a long term project and issues on the Palestinian side would also need to be resolved.

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- The Israeli authority states Kerem Shalom has the capacity for approximately 450 trucks per day. Currently, the crossing is being utilised at a maximum of 50% capacity which should be an area for investigation.

- The Logistics Cluster has conducted an independent overview analysis, presenting a series of suggestions for the Humanitarian Coordinator. The use of containerised cargo to increase utilisation is a possible future option. The equipment is already available however, discussions at a political level would need to take place.

- WFP confirmed that the second convoy crossed Rafah from Egypt into the Gaza Strip successfully. No requests have yet been received for non-food shipments via Rafah.

- It was agreed that the next coordination meeting should take place in two weeks’ time when a final decision on the plan for the future of the Logistics Cluster Gaza Emergency Operation will be made. By this time, the humanitarian situation should be clearer, requests will be monitored and partners should share pipeline information. It was also agreed that holding the meeting in three locations was suitable for all.

- The Logistics Cluster Coordinator reminded partners that updated information is available on the Gaza Emergency operations page on the Logistics Cluster Website: http://logcluster.org/ops/gaza14a

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