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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Outcome of proceedings of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid held on 11-12 April 2019

Delegations will find attached the outcome of proceedings of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid held on 11-12 April 2019.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in CM 2374/19, with an AOB item added on the International Cooperation Expo in Rome (15-17 May).

2. Global Report on Food Crises 2019 *(incl. an informal exchange of views with WFP and FAO)*

As part of an informal exchange of views, Anne-Claire Mouillez, WFP Senior VAM officer, and Luca Russo, FAO Senior Food Crises Analyst and Strategic Adviser on resilience, gave an overview of the Global Report on Food Crises 2019. Two-thirds of food-insecurity crises were triggered by conflict, while the others were mostly due to climate-related factors and economic shocks. As a way forward WFP and FAO underlined the importance of reinforcing safety-nets, investing in conflict prevention and peace, encouraging simultaneous action across the humanitarian-development nexus, investing in resilience, and leveraging information and technology. Delegations and the Commission welcomed the report. The Commission stressed the usefulness of the Global Report and the Global Network Against Food Crises for their humanitarian policy and programming.

3. Early warning / Disaster Risk Reduction *(incl. an informal exchange of views with FAO)*

As part of an informal exchange of views, Dunja Dunjanovic, FAO Technical Officer Early Warning Early Action (EWEA), briefed the group on the FAO EWEA system, which draws on early warning information and resources for ensuring technically sound and timely early action to prevent or mitigate the impact of impending disasters and building resilience towards future shocks. To act early, flexible financing mechanisms like FAO's Early Action Fund were essential. Ms Dunjanovic also highlighted the EWEA system's complementarities with the World Bank's Global Infrastructure Facility (GIF) and the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

4. Children in forgotten humanitarian crises: Supporting protection of education in Ukraine *(incl. an informal exchange of views with Save the Children)*

As part of an informal exchange of views. Dariusz Zitek, Country Director, Save the Children Ukraine, presented the organisation's activities in Ukraine and in particular their efforts to enhance children's permanent access to schools. In the field, Save the Children was facing multiple challenges, from heavily damaged school buildings to a lack of delivery of school certificates. Mr Zitek presented his organisation's efforts in empowering children and warned about the gap in education funding for Ukraine, stressing the need for multi-year humanitarian funding. The Commission and delegations welcomed the presentation and expressed their appreciation of Save the Children's work in Ukraine.

5. Response to crises

a) Cyclone Idai

The Commission informed about its recent increase of its emergency relief by €12 million, bringing its total response to the floods and damages that occurred in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe in the aftermath of cyclone Idai to more than €15 million. They also informed about the activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism at the request of Mozambique, and thanked Member States for their generous contributions of assets and emergency teams. The Commission stressed that while in some areas of the three countries there are still emergency needs requiring a multi-sectoral response (shelter, WASH as well as food, non-food and health items), in other areas longer-term food and livelihood needs were emerging. Protection needs were considerable, and there was a risk of waterborne diseases in flooded areas. In Zimbabwe, the inundations exacerbated an already severe food insecurity crisis caused by prolonged drought and intensified by the economic crisis. Delegations concurred with the Commission's analysis and shared information about their national emergency responses to the crisis in terms of both civil protection assets and personnel as well as humanitarian assistance.

b) Myanmar / Rohingya refugees

The EEAS briefed on the political context to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, stressing that there were a number of armed conflicts, the most prominent one being the one in Rakhine, where the situation there was not ripe for returns. The Head of the ECHO field office in Myanmar briefed the group on the humanitarian situation in Rakhine, where hostilities affected six townships and have displaced more than 30,000 people. Access restrictions for humanitarian actors continue and the suspension of previously ongoing programs are affecting more than 95,000 people. Protection concerns related to violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) were also of concern, including an increased number of arbitrary arrests and excessive use of force. With the monsoon season approaching and precarious hygienic conditions, there were growing concerns about outbreaks of epidemics. The Head of the ECHO Office in Bangladesh reported on the conditions of some 900,000 Rohingya refugees spread across 34 camps in Bangladesh. Kutupalong had become the world's largest refugee camp, hosting 700,000 Rohingyas alone. A lack of prospects for return and for livelihoods combined with an almost total dependence on humanitarian assistance was leading to a sense of hopelessness among the refugees and the realisation that their displacement might become longer-term. Assistance for mental health was among the most worrying gaps in the response; around 97% of children and youth had no access to education.

6. Preparations for UNGA 74

The group discussed the EU humanitarian priorities for UNGA 74. There was a positive reception of the overall substance, but there was a need for further discussion regarding EU-level coordination in Geneva. The Presidency invited Member States to send further comments in writing.

7. Cash-based assistance

The Commission presented their recent "EU Cash Compendium 2019" which contains examples showcasing in which contexts (why and how) the Commission had used cash-based humanitarian assistance. The Commission also debriefed on a recent donor meeting on cash assistance and informed that a number of concerns about the UN approach to humanitarian cash transfers had been raised with USG Lowcock.

8. Scaling innovation in the humanitarian sector *(incl. an informal exchange of views with Elhra)*

As part of an informal exchange of views, Ian McClelland, Elrha Innovation Manager, briefed the group on Elrha's activities in funding and supporting research studies and innovation projects in the humanitarian field. He presented Elhra's "scale" definition ("building on demonstrated success to ensure that solutions reach their maximum potential, have the greatest possible impact, and lead to widespread change") and their three basic pathways to impact. He also briefed the group on challenges and barriers identified, and illustrated this through case studies, stressing that the humanitarian ecosystem significantly contributed to frustrating efforts to scale humanitarian innovation.

9. Chad

The Commission briefed the group about a recent meeting between the EU Ambassador to Chad and the Chadian Minister of Plan on the possibility of humanitarian aid being exempted from two government decrees of 24 December which impede the delivery of principled humanitarian assistance. The Commission also gave an overview of the obstacles faced by NGOS in the field due to the decrees. The EEAS reported about a broader trend in African countries to curb activities of international actors. On the basis of these updates, COHAFA discussed which humanitarian messages were required to advocate for humanitarian exemptions from the decrees.

10. Venezuela

As part of an informal exchange of views, Jose Barahona, NRC Emergency Response Director, briefed the group about the challenges facing humanitarian aid delivery in Venezuela. The politicisation of aid had led to the suspension of humanitarian activities for several weeks in February. Even if the situation had since improved, INGOs still faced impediments that slowed down staff accreditation and access to work visas. Humanitarian needs remained high in the country, with 94% of the population living below the poverty line. Mr Barahona also briefed the group on NRC efforts to keep children and teachers in school by providing food and non-food items. He recognised the EU's efforts to defend the humanitarian principles and open a non-politicised humanitarian space, and called on Member States to continue along this path.

After the informal exchange of views, the EEAS gave an overview of the political situation and reported on two meetings under the elections leg of the International Contact Group (ICG) aiming to create conditions for a political process towards holding a credible election. The Commission made a general presentation of the main humanitarian needs in Venezuela and its response to the crisis since 2016. The briefing also touched upon the broader regional impact of the massive migration as well as the increasing vulnerability of the displaced, caused by human trafficking, extortions and recruitment to armed groups, food insecurity, lack of access to legal information, health services, education and shelter, epidemics and growing xenophobia. The Commission recalled the work undertaken under the humanitarian component of the ICG in order to depoliticise the delivery of assistance, enlarge the humanitarian space in the country, including by reinforcing a fully-fledged coordination mechanism, and propose concrete steps allowing humanitarian actors to provide assistance in full compliance with the humanitarian principles. In this framework some positive steps had been achieved.

11. AOB

a) Third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region (12-14 March)

The EEAS and the Commission debriefed about the results of Brussels III. The EEAS stressed the strong signal sent by the € 3 billion worth of pledges raised for 2019 and beyond, about two-thirds of which came from the EU and its Member States, and the support expressed for the UN-led political process. The Commission highlighted the success of the Days of Dialogue, which had brought together more than 1,000 participants and sent a strong signal to Syrian Civil Society Organisations that their voice was being heard.

b) Humanitarian Action Strategy for the Spanish Development Cooperation (2019-2026)

The Spanish delegation presented their recently published humanitarian strategy covering the next eight years. It emphasises pro-multilateralism, the Grand Bargain, the nexus, humanitarian cash transfers, and humanitarian diplomacy. Priority areas include forgotten crises, improving the quality of humanitarian assistance, and cooperation with development assistance. It sets out that 10% of Spanish ODA will be earmarked for humanitarian assistance.

c) Humanitarian Hackathon (Brussels, 15-16 January)

The Belgian delegation debriefed about this event which had produced a number of innovative solutions and generated positive media coverage. They also shared some lessons learned with regard to achieving a balance between participants from the private sector and international organisations.

d) Warsaw Humanitarian Expo (11-13 June)

The Polish delegation provided an outlook on this first-ever trade event for the humanitarian and development sectors in central and eastern Europe, which will bring together businesses, NGOs, government representatives and international organisations (incl. UN agencies and the ICRC). The main objective of the Warsaw Humanitarian Expo is to stimulate the activity of national and international business in the area of humanitarian aid and to work on developing further ties between business and institutions which provide humanitarian and development aid. The event will be built around four pillars: 1) a platform for debates and meetings between institutions, humanitarian and development actors, and academia; 2) a high-level conference with the participation of USG Mark Lowcock; 3) a "procurement forum" helping companies to succeed in public tenders; and 4) an exhibition space involving the IT, logistics, medical, shelter, food, agriculture and security sectors.

e) UNHCR Standing Committee (Geneva, 5-7 March)

The Commission debriefed from this meeting.

f) exco2019 - International Cooperation Expo (Rome, 15-17 May)

The Italian delegation announced the global expo on innovative solutions in development cooperation, which will bring together development actors and agencies, government representatives, international organisations (including the Rome-based agencies and EU institutions). It will comprise an exhibition space, B2B meetings, workshops, and a conference.