



EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM 2023

Brussels, 20-21 March

#EHF2023

NEW GLOBAL REALITIES | Shaping humanitarian action together



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European Humanitarian Forum

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Co-Hosts Summary by the European Commission and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU

New global realities – Shaping humanitarian action together

1. The European Commission and Sweden, in its capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, co-hosted the second edition of the European Humanitarian Forum on 20-21 March 2023, in Brussels. The event gathered almost 3,000, out of which more than 1,700 in-person, participants from EU Member States, international, national and local organisations, humanitarian partners, international financial institutions, multilateral development banks, the private sector and other stakeholders to discuss challenges for the humanitarian action. The Forum offered an opportunity to further strengthen the cooperation and partnership among participants. High-level discussions, political debates and practical workshops allowed to put forward innovative approaches to address the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time and find common solutions.

2. The Forum took place in a context of sharply increasing humanitarian needs, changing geopolitical realities and a shrinking humanitarian space. Principled and effective humanitarian response is more needed than ever. The Forum re-affirmed the EU's and its Member States leading role as humanitarian donors by announcing initial humanitarian funding of €8.4 billion for 2023. Together, the EU and its Member States are providing more humanitarian aid than ever before.

3. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has caused colossal human suffering, loss of lives and destruction of civil infrastructure. Furthermore its effects continue to ripple across the globe. This war, the global rise in food prices and the escalating consequences of climate change and natural hazards are creating additional pressure on the livelihoods of millions of people across the globe, exacerbating humanitarian needs even further. The UN estimates that more than 330 million people around the world are in need of lifesaving humanitarian assistance – a steep increase from 274 million last year.

4. The EU and its Member States are continuing their efforts to channel emergency assistance to Syria and Türkiye following the devastating earthquake. The Donors' Conference co-hosted by the European Commission and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, in

coordination with the Turkish government, held in Brussels, mobilised additional funds in support of the people suffering from this tragic disaster.

The EU and its Member States have delivered since the last Forum

5. Since its launch at last year's European Humanitarian Forum in March 2022, the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) has helped to fill critical delivery gaps, through humanitarian air bridge operations, provision of common logistical services and expert support to frontline responders. So far, the EHRC has been used to deploy aid in ten countries¹, as an expression of the EU's commitment to help people affected by disasters and conflicts across the world.

6. International humanitarian law protects civilian populations, supports principled humanitarian action and protects humanitarian and health care workers. Following last year's Forum, the European Commission issued a call for establishing a yearly independent report on International Humanitarian Law.

7. Climate change and environmental crises are one of the main drivers of growing humanitarian needs. In August 2022, the European Commission published its Guidance on the operationalisation of the Minimum Environmental Requirements and Recommendations for EU-funded humanitarian aid operations. The first annual progress report on the 2022 Donor Declaration on Climate and Environment illustrates how its signatories support the most vulnerable people affected by crises caused or worsened by climate change.

Tackling soaring humanitarian needs: mobilising resources, improving performance, reducing needs

8. This year's Forum focused on how to address the increasing gap between humanitarian needs and resources. The participants noted the commitment by the EU and its Member States towards securing additional humanitarian funding in order to ensure a more sustainable and balanced sharing of **humanitarian financing within the EU**.

9. The participants discussed how to mobilise additional **humanitarian funding globally** and achieve a more balanced funding structure to address growing humanitarian challenges by increased dialogue with emerging donors, the private sector and international financial institutions (IFI's). These efforts go hand in hand with rallying support for principled humanitarian assistance in line with the principles of good humanitarian donorship and international humanitarian law.

10. The Forum highlighted the importance of ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in aid delivery, including by enhancing the **participation of local and national actors** and women-led organisations. To this end, the European Commission launched its own guidance on localisation on how to achieve equitable partnerships between international and local responders, building on experiences and best practices.

¹ Ukraine, Afghanistan, Somalia and Burkina Faso as well as Madagascar, Moldova, Uganda, Mozambique, Syria and DRC.

11. The participants confirmed the importance of transparent and **principled prioritisation of scarce resources**, both between and within crises, and committed to pursue efforts towards making analyses of severity of need comparable across crises, connecting needs assessments and response planning, and ensuring quality through independent oversight.

12. The Forum also discussed the value of **quality funding**, in terms of multiannual funding and flexible funding, for quick scale up of response to urgent needs, ensuring operational continuity in neglected crises, in line with the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. To provide incentives for increased flexible funding, participants recognised the need to further improve visibility, transparency, and reporting and encouraged the use of programme-based approaches as a flexible arrangement to support partners.

13. The Forum discussed ways to **reduce humanitarian needs**, including by mitigating climate-driven disasters and combining approaches to tackle root drivers of crisis while addressing people's immediate acute needs and strengthen their resilience. The European Commission reconfirmed its commitment to continue allocating funding for disaster preparedness including by ensuring the mainstreaming of preparedness and resilience.

14. The Forum highlighted that climate change and environmental degradation are drivers of humanitarian needs and threaten to deepen already wide inequalities. The vital importance of taking **anticipatory action** was underscored, aiming to cut the humanitarian needs and direct more development and climate assistance to climate-related crisis, such as droughts and floods, to build resilience, mitigate and prevent shocks from developing into full-blown humanitarian emergencies. Adaptation, preparedness, early warning and a strong focus on building resilience for the most vulnerable communities with all available tools can help to mitigate these negative impacts. The European Commission will continue convening the signatories of the Donor Declaration on Climate and Environment twice a year.

Addressing conflict and preserving humanitarian space: enabling safe and efficient humanitarian action in conflict areas

15. Conflict remains the primary driver of humanitarian needs and the erosion of humanitarian space affects the ability to deliver aid in an unhindered and safe manner. The participants expressed alarm at the shrinking space for **principled humanitarian action** and emphasised the need to maintain a principled humanitarian approach also in contexts where political neutrality was not possible.

16. The participants stressed the need for a more systematic approach to intensify **humanitarian diplomacy** and invest in capacities for humanitarian negotiations and community-based initiatives to improve respect for IHL by armed actors; secure and sustain access to people in need; and unblock administrative obstacles to effective and principled humanitarian action.

17. The EU and its Member States remain committed to **Education in Emergencies**, not least in terms of investment, focus on quality and the protection of education from attacks.

18. The participants recognised the need to mainstream **gender equality** and the empowerment of women in all stages of humanitarian response, taking into account the

specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of women, girls, men and boys in the design of needs assessments and the implementation of all programming.

19. The Forum underscored that the **protection of affected people** is a shared responsibility and should be at the centre of all humanitarian action. Humanitarian actors must step up their engagement to address protection risks and reaching meaningful protection outcomes, in cooperation with peace, development, human rights and local actors.

20. The participants stressed the importance of ensuring that sanctions regimes do not impede the effective delivery of principled humanitarian assistance, and for effective and transparent **humanitarian exceptions in sanctions regimes**. In this context, participants called for a harmonised transposition and implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2664 (2022).

The European Humanitarian Forum - the way ahead

21. The European Humanitarian Forum has become the annual platform to explore and address global humanitarian issues in a wider, cross-sectoral context and jointly bring forward innovative and more sustainable, effective, and efficient solutions.

22. The Forum's third edition will be co-hosted by the European Commission and Belgium, in its capacity as the next President of the Council of the European Union, in the first half of 2024.
