



## **FIFTH HUMANITARIAN SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING ON UKRAINE**

**28 January 2025, Brussels**

### **CHAIR'S SUMMARY**

*Note: This Chair's summary reflects the understanding of the European Union (EU) about the key messages shared by participants and of the overall thrust of the discussions at the fifth Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on Ukraine.*

1. The fifth SOM on Ukraine, organized by the EU, took place on 28 January 2025. Chaired by Director Andreas Papaconstantinou, the meeting brought together over 130 participants, including high-level representatives from the Ukrainian Government, from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, 26 EU Member States, key donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), international and Ukrainian NGOs, the World Bank, and EU services. Hadja Lahbib, European Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, delivered an opening address and DG ECHO Director-General Maciej Popowski gave closing remarks. Ukrainian Government representatives included Deputy Head of the Presidential Office Iryna Vereshchuk, Deputy Ministers Iryna Postolovska (Social Policy for European Integration) and Maryna Slobodnichenko (Health for European Integration), and Volodymyr Demchuk, Deputy Head of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU).
2. The three sessions built upon the discussions in the fourth SOM in April 2024 and focused on: (1) humanitarian needs and the evolving response, (2) sustaining humanitarian funding, and (3) the challenges and achievements of complementing humanitarian aid with recovery and reconstruction assistance. Additionally, key issues such as humanitarian access were discussed during the thematic sessions.
3. The humanitarian response in Ukraine faced a significant funding gap in 2024 of approximately USD 830 million (EUR 796 million). As the war enters its fourth year, needs remain as urgent as ever, with continued Russian attacks on critical infrastructure including in the energy sector. The 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) identifies nearly 13 million people in need of humanitarian and protection assistance. The HNRP seeks USD 2.6 billion (EUR 2.5 billion) to support over 6.1 million people in 2025. Since the escalation of the war in February 2022, 6.3 million refugees from Ukraine and an estimated 3.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been recorded. The meeting underscored the importance of continuing the support for IDPs, evacuees, and non-displaced populations severely affected by the war,

including returnees. Demographic trends, particularly long-term population shifts and their implications for Ukraine's recovery, were also discussed.

4. Donors reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to providing humanitarian support to Ukraine for as long as it is needed. All participants agreed on the need to prioritize assistance for the most vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, and displaced people. The importance of coordinated efforts among donors, international and local humanitarian organizations, and Ukrainian authorities was emphasized to effectively address the immense needs, optimize funding impact, and avoid duplication of efforts. Deputy Head of the Presidential Office Ms. Vereshchuk announced the forthcoming establishment of a coordination platform within the Office of the President. This platform will bring together government bodies, humanitarian workers, and donors to align goals, priorities, and resources. The announcement was met with strong support from all participants, who recognized that a unified and streamlined approach is essential to ensure aid reaches those in need, when they need it most.
5. In the context of persisting humanitarian needs and the challenges in prioritization of assistance, participants underscored the usefulness of looking for innovative financing mechanisms such as strengthening partnerships with the private sector. Participants called for an increase in direct funding to local actors. While locally led responses were noted to be more cost-effective, it was highlighted that only a limited part of humanitarian funding currently reaches local actors. Deputy Head of the Presidential Office Ms. Vereshchuk stressed the importance of prioritisation to focus on the most critical, high-impact, and urgent interventions. Dr. Omar from Ksrelief emphasized the need for advocacy to expand the donor base, strengthen coordination with the Government of Ukraine, and promote impact-driven, cost-effective initiatives that directly address the specific needs of the Ukrainian people. A number of participants expressed concern about the humanitarian consequences of the freeze on U.S. foreign aid.
6. The humanitarian situation is further exacerbated by ongoing Russian attacks on cities, towns, villages, and critical infrastructure, with hostilities intensifying significantly in recent months. The international community acknowledged the tireless efforts of humanitarian aid workers operating in these high-risk conditions, as well as the heroic work of SESU first responders. Deputy Head of SESU Mr. Demchuk reiterated the importance of sustained EU support, highlighting also the usefulness of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) in providing in-kind assistance.
7. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to continue supporting the localisation agenda. During the discussions, donors were encouraged to act with full regard to equitable partnership principles in their relations with local NGOs in Ukraine and to consider favourably the inclusion of Duty of Care measures for frontline NGO and civil society organizations (CSO) staff and volunteers in their partners' proposals. The provision of accident and life insurance, psychosocial support measures, first aid kits,

personal protective equipment, and tailored training were highlighted as best practices of Duty of Care. Participants emphasized the value of supporting the formation of consortia based on equitable partnerships, fostering collaboration between well-established organizations and smaller or newer ones to strengthen organizational capacities, including Duty of Care, and advance localization efforts. The localization strategy presented by the Alliance of Ukrainian CSOs, along with its operational planning, was broadly welcomed and seen as an exemplary model for other crises as well.

8. In parallel to addressing immediate relief and lifesaving urgent needs, participants agreed on the need to support recovery efforts that help communities rebuild and regain stability. During the discussions donors were encouraged to work together to set the foundations for sustainable solutions in Ukraine including by ensuring greater coherence between humanitarian and development actors. Building on best practice, agreed areas for action at scale included national leadership and ownership of collective outcomes, sharing evidence-based analysis, ensuring collaboration between humanitarian and development architectures to facilitate joint planning, and aligning humanitarian and development programmes and financing. Participants agreed to advance a more strategic and joined up approach in fora bringing together the Government of Ukraine, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), development actors, donors and civil society. In this context, the critical importance of humanitarian demining was also emphasized, with participants stressing the urgent need to clear landmines and unexploded ordnance to ensure civilian safety and facilitate recovery. Due to the extent of contamination, demining operations will need to continue for the foreseeable future.
9. Participants expressed deep concern regarding the persistent lack of regular and reliable humanitarian access to territories temporarily occupied by Russia. They stressed that the inability to reach affected populations in these areas severely hampers efforts to deliver life-saving assistance. Full, safe, unimpeded, and sustained humanitarian access was strongly advocated, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. Participants also underscored the importance of independent and neutral humanitarian action, urging all stakeholders to uphold the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence in the delivery of aid.
10. The SOM once again proved to be a crucial platform for assessing progress, identifying challenges, and reinforcing the shared commitment to delivering effective, timely, and needs-driven humanitarian assistance. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to continued cooperation in tackling the challenges ahead and ensuring that no Ukrainian in need is left behind. Moving forward, stakeholders will strive to follow up on the issues agreed upon during the SOM and reflected in this Chair's summary.

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