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European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Climate change and Environment

What is it?

Climate change affects millions of people worldwide, deteriorates the humanitarian situation and multiplies the needs of vulnerable communities. It alters the earth's temperatures and weather patterns, leading to global warming and extreme weather events.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change is undeniably caused by human activity. The EU supports the most vulnerable people affected by crises caused or worsened by climate change. We also aim to reduce the environmental impact of humanitarian work.

Why is this important?

Human-induced climate change affects the pattern and severity of extreme weather events, which have become more frequent and less predictable. According to the IPCC, since 1900, human activities caused a temperature increase of 1.1°C.

Climate change is a serious threat to the world's poorest countries, aggravating pre-existing crises and requiring higher efforts to meet the rise in humanitarian needs. Among its most common consequences there are:

- **food insecurity and water scarcity:** extreme weather threatens agricultural resources. Lack of access to clean water results in waterborne diseases and diarrhoea, one of the main causes of death for children.
- **epidemics/health risks:** as temperatures rise, diseases such as cholera, malaria and dengue fever, spread faster and are harder to contain.
- **migration and displacement:** populations affected by natural hazards leave their land to seek shelter.
- **conflict and security:** food shortages and scarcity of key resources can exacerbate tensions within entire regions, worsening the humanitarian situation for people already affected by conflict.

Over the last 2 decades, the number of low- and middle-income countries exposed to climate extremes increased from 76% to 98%, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

By 2050, over 200 million people could need humanitarian assistance every year due to climate-related disasters, as analysed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

How are we helping?

The EU has a long-standing commitment to using cash in humanitarian settings, where the context allows. Our commitment is grounded in the policy and operational work of EU humanitarian work. It is also backed up by the political endorsement of Council Conclusions on Common Principles for Multi-Purpose Cash assistance, adopted in June 2015.

How are we helping?

The current climate and environmental crisis calls upon a new self-directed approach for the EU to reduce its environmental footprint both in the EU and globally, including within humanitarian action.

On 14 July 2021, the EU adopted a set of proposals summarised in the European Green Deal tabled in December 2019. The aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make Europe the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

To achieve the goals set by the European Green Deal, the EU has pledged to mobilise at least €1 trillion in sustainable investments over the next decade. At the 26th UN Climate Change Conference in November (COP26), the EU committed to pledging €4 billion for climate finance for the least developed and most vulnerable countries.

The EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations have joined the EU's environmental journey. We are supporting the implementation of a greener humanitarian response and reducing the environmental and climate footprint of EU-funded humanitarian operations.

To do this, we help our humanitarian partners address environmental issues and reduce their footprint on the ecosystem. We are also facilitating collective learning within the humanitarian sector.

Climate and weather-related events requiring humanitarian assistance are intensifying. As a result, the EU humanitarian budget allocated for disasters caused by natural hazards has steadily grown over the years. It integrates dedicated programmes and tools, including:

- **Disaster Preparedness:** a set of measures to reduce loss of lives and resources. It aims to help governments, organisations, communities or individuals respond to disasters. It focuses on (i) establishing early warning systems, (ii) developing contingency plans, (iii) stockpiling equipment and supplies, and (iv) building the resilience of communities.
- **Early Warning and Information Systems:** The EU's early warning and information systems help the Emergency Response Coordination Centre monitor hazards and events around the world, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical cyclones, volcanic activity, droughts, floods, and forest fires.
- **Copernicus satellite:** The European Union's Earth Observation Programme Copernicus monitors our planet and its environment. Copernicus services deliver near-real-time data and mapping on a global, regional and local level. It helps us better understand our planet and sustainably manage the environment we live in.
- **Emergency toolbox:** The emergency toolbox is a funding instrument designed to respond to unexpected emergencies. It addresses large, medium and small-scale natural hazards and technological disasters, responds to and prevents epidemic outbreaks. It also includes the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, belonging to the IFRC.

The EU allocates an average of €50 million of its annual humanitarian funding to targeted preparedness actions.

In 2021, €150 million have been allocated to the Emergency Toolbox. The funding helps communities affected by natural hazards fulfil urgent needs, e.g., food assistance, health, water, sanitation, shelter, rehabilitation of basic infrastructures, protection, logistics and coordination.

Facts & figures

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