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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 on 8-9 November 2018

Delegations will find attached the outcome of proceedings of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid held on 8-9 November 2018.

Outcome of Proceedings COHAFA 8-9 November 2018

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in CM 4997/18. AOB items were added on the recent GHD High-Level Meeting, EDRIS, Yemen, technical aspects of humanitarian-related instruments proposed by the Commission in the context of the new MFF, and the European Solidarity Corps.

2. Counterterrorism measures and principled humanitarian action (*incl. an informal exchange of views with NRC*)

As part as an informal exchange of views, Emma O'Leary, Humanitarian Policy Adviser with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), briefed the group on the findings of their recent report entitled 'Principles Under Pressure'. The report highlighted the potential negative impact of counterterrorism measures on humanitarian operations, and called for an increased dialogue between the humanitarian community, governments, donors and financial organisations.

A number of Member States shared good practice about dialogues between humanitarian and other arms of Government which they had initiated to address the issue at the national level.

3. WFP Executive Board Second Regular Session

The group discussed four draft statements to be made on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the forthcoming session of the WFP Executive Board (Rome, 26-29 November 2018). The statements were to be finalised by written procedure after the meeting.

4. Response to crises

a) Chad

COHAFA discussed the complex humanitarian crisis in Chad based on a debriefing by the Commission on a recent field mission with the UN and the World Bank. The mission had confirmed high humanitarian needs as well as opportunities for implementing the Humanitarian-Development Nexus in the country. The EEAS highlighted the political dynamics within Chad during the long-awaited electoral process. During the subsequent discussion it was stressed that in addition to internal factors the humanitarian crisis in Chad was exacerbated by the nutrition crisis affecting the entire Sahel region and the different crises in CAR, Darfur and the Lake Chad region.

b) Iraq (*incl. an informal exchange of views with MSF*)

As part of an informal exchange of views, representatives of Médecins Sans Frontières briefed COHAFA on the humanitarian situation in Iraq in terms of protection, health and mental health.

In closed format, the group discussed the wider humanitarian situation in Iraq in view of the overall political context. The Commission warned against a premature reduction of humanitarian funding and stressed the need to prioritise protection measures concerning people confined in camps, IDPs and detainees.

c) Libya

The group discussed the humanitarian situation in Libya and the response required to meet emergency needs and ensure the protection of civilians. The EEAS stated that political stabilisation under a UN plan remained a political priority for the EU. The Commission briefed on factors exacerbating the humanitarian situation in Libya, including the breakdown of the rule of law, discrimination of minorities, protection issues, the partial collapse of the health system, and the destruction of schools.

d) Sahrawi refugees

COHAFA discussed the humanitarian needs of Sahrawi refugees following the Commission's debriefing on a mission to the Sahrawi camps they had organised for Member States organised in September. Needs remained substantial but varied considerably among families; thus there was a need for a transparent vulnerability assessment. There was also a growing risk of youth radicalisation, and some administrative hurdles for international aid agencies remained. The EEAS updated the group on the UN process for reaching a political solution to the conflict underlying the Sahrawi refugee crisis.

5. International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (*incl. an informal exchange of views with IHFFC President Thilo Marauhn*)

As part of an informal exchange of views Prof. Marauhn briefed COHAFA about the setup and functioning of the IHFFC, stressing that it was state-driven and that its goal was not to improve accountability for breaches of IHL but to make confidential recommendations to conflict parties in order to prevent further IHL violations.

6. Syria (*Mama was invited to join COHAFA for this item*)

The Commission briefed the groups on the humanitarian situation in Syria, where 13.1m people remained in need of humanitarian assistance. The groups discussed humanitarian access, protection of civilians, the question of returns, and contingency planning for Idlib. They were also debriefed on the Senior Officials Meeting in Berlin on 22-23 October 2018, and discussed the question of humanitarian advocacy needs.

7. AOB

a) Good Humanitarian Donorship High-Level Meeting (Geneva, 24 October)

The Commission debriefed on this meeting as GHD Co-Chairs together with Switzerland. GHD work will focus in the coming two years on a limited number of issues such as IHL, the impact of counterterrorism measures on principled humanitarian aid, innovative financing modalities as well as the impact of the UN Development System reform on the humanitarian system at field level. The goal was also to ensure greater links between the GHD initiative and the field, and to have a regular exchange on early-warning signals.

b) EDRIS

The Commission informed delegations of the latest developments regarding the improvement of the EDRIS database. A new release would shortly be published allowing for encoding multi-annual funding. Also, adaptations would be made to ensure compatibility between the IATI and EDRIS data formats.

c) Yemen

COHAFA discussed the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Yemen, where 14 million people depend on life-saving humanitarian assistance, and the very real danger of a mass-scale famine in the near future. Member States were invited to look into increasing their humanitarian funding in order to prevent such a disaster. The Commission recalled that this was a man-made crisis and the EEAS added that a political solution was needed as the conflict couldn't be resolved through military means.

d) Technical aspects of humanitarian-related proposals under the new MFF

The Commission answered delegations' questions regarding the proposed functioning of the Emergency Aid Reserve and the third pillar of the rapid response mechanism of the new NDICI instrument. Both instruments are part of the proposals made by the Commission for the new EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

e) European Solidarity Corps

The Presidency responded to delegations' questions and comments regarding the process leading towards the adoption of a partial general approach by the Council with regard to the Commission's proposal to integrate the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative into the European Solidarity Corps.
