



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 28 November 2016
(OR. en)

14867/16

FIN 825
COHAFA 72
DEVGEN 265
ACP 174

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 28 November 2016
To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 14297/16 FIN 785 COHAFA 67 DEVGEN 241 ACP 151

Subject: Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 15/2016: "Did the Commission effectively manage the Humanitarian aid provided to populations affected by conflicts in the African Great Lakes Region?"

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 15/2016: "Did the Commission effectively manage the Humanitarian aid provided to populations affected by conflicts in the African Great Lakes Region?", as adopted by the Council on 28 November 2016.

Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 15/2016: 'Did the Commission effectively manage the Humanitarian aid provided to populations affected by conflicts in the African Great Lakes Region?'

1. The Council welcomes the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 15/2016: 'Did the Commission effectively manage the Humanitarian aid provided to populations affected by conflicts in the African Great Lakes Region?'
2. The Council appreciates that the Court deems the Commission's management of humanitarian aid in the African Great Lakes Region during the period 2011-2015 to have been generally effective. The Commission had worked in accordance with well-established, needs-based main priorities, ensured flexibility in programming and funding, and put in place an appropriate monitoring framework. Most of the projects examined were found to have delivered satisfactory results in a difficult working environment characterised by, amongst other things, security constraints and challenging logistics.
3. The Council also notes the eight recommendations made by the Court and welcomes the fact that the Commission accepts them. The Council notes that the Court recommends that the Commission should:
 - better document the project selection procedure: the comparative advantages and cost efficiency of funding requests should be better documented, in particular with regard to consistency between the selected projects and the priority areas.
 - improve the design, structure and documentation of project assessments: before authorising a final payment, a clear link should be established with the results achieved by a project; additional funding and time extensions should be clearly justified and documented.
 - clearly identify issues for follow-up and document what further action has been taken.

4. The Council is concerned by the Court's finding that reports from partners for the projects examined had frequently been late, and by the statement that this may have limited their usefulness in some cases. All humanitarian partners, including UN implementing agencies, should do their utmost to report comprehensively and in a timely manner. At the same time, the Council acknowledges that partners are often faced with a multitude of different reporting requirements from different donors. In this regard, the Council recalls the commitments made by some Member States¹ and the Commission to harmonise and simplify reporting requirements by the end of 2018.
5. The Council reiterates the point that Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) remains key to building resilience², and that this is particularly important in protracted humanitarian crises. To that end, the Council supports the Court's recommendation for the Commission to prioritise LRRD projects and programmes in the African Great Lakes Region wherever appropriate and possible.
6. The Council reiterates that the humanitarian system alone cannot address the growing and evolving needs of the forcibly displaced and of the countries and communities hosting them, especially as more crises become protracted. Therefore, the humanitarian response should be anchored in a needs-based approach, in accordance with the humanitarian principles and with synergies with long-term development support from the early stages. The Council thus also recalls the commitment of strengthening the strategic and operational links between development and humanitarian approaches, whenever appropriate and possible.³

¹ either through individual commitments made by Member States at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 May 2016, or by Member States signatory to 'The Grand Bargain, a Shared Commitment to Better serve People in Need', presented at the World Humanitarian Summit

² 9325/13: 'Council Conclusions on the EU approach to resilience'. Also 11554/13: Commission Staff Working Document 'Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020'

³ 8832/16 Council Conclusions on the 'EU Approach to Forced Displacement and Development'. Also Com (2016) 234: Commission Communication 'Lives in Dignity: from Aid-Dependence to Self-Reliance. Forced Displacement and Development'

7. The Council welcomes the Commission's intention to look into reporting each year on the implementation of its Humanitarian Implementation Plans, as recommended by the Court. This should allow for a more strategic analysis of funding allocations and responses to protracted crises, and for the sharing of best practices and lessons learned across projects in different countries and regions.

 8. The Council welcomes the fact that the Commission is already addressing some of the recommendations. It invites the Commission to consider whether the improvements it will carry out in response to this Special Report would apply not only to the management of humanitarian projects in the African Great Lakes Region, but also to projects it manages in other parts of the world.
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