



Council of the
European Union

143968/EU XXV. GP
Eingelangt am 22/05/17

**Brussels, 19 May 2017
(OR. en)**

9383/17

**DEVGEN 104
ACP 51
RELEX 429
COHAFA 39**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	19 May 2017
To:	Delegations

No. prev. doc.:	9417/17
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Subject:	Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus - Council conclusions (19 May 2017)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, as adopted by the Council at its 3540th meeting held on 19 May 2017.

Council conclusions
Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

1. The world today continues to face extremely serious crises, with 20 million people at risk of famine in North East Nigeria, South Sudan Somalia and Yemen, more than 65 million people forcibly displaced by conflict, violence, human rights violations, in addition to those displaced due to natural disasters, including as a consequence of climate change, and 130 million people relying on humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian system alone cannot address needs of such magnitude and diversity, especially as crises will often reverse development progress, in particular when these crises become protracted.
2. As stated in the New European Consensus on Development, poverty, conflict, fragility, and forced displacement are deeply inter-linked and must be addressed in a coherent and comprehensive way also as part of the humanitarian-development nexus. The Council recognises the linkages between sustainable development, humanitarian action and conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as the importance of diplomatic and political solutions to support peace and security, in line with the EU Global Strategy and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The Council stresses the importance of investing in prevention and addressing the underlying root causes of vulnerability, fragility and conflict while simultaneously meeting humanitarian needs and strengthening resilience, thus reducing risks.

3. The Council recalls its previous relevant conclusions¹ and the outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit and underlines the need to strengthen resilience by better linking humanitarian assistance and development cooperation to anticipate, prepare for and respond to crises and disasters, man-made or natural. It is crucial to further strengthen the operational links between the complementary approaches of humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and conflict prevention, in full respect of humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law.
4. Operationalising the humanitarian-development nexus requires a common vision and cultural changes in organisations resulting in new approaches in policies and legal frameworks to systematically foster complementarity, synergies and cooperation between humanitarian, development and other relevant actors. The overarching aim is to promote, at the earliest opportunity, coherent ways of working that are more effective and efficient in analysing the factors of fragility, vulnerability and conflict, as well as the local/national capacities to address risks and vulnerabilities, and in developing prevention measures, enhancing response, supporting early recovery and stabilisation, addressing needs, building self-reliance and reducing risks. In doing so, initial and continued focus should be on delivering collective outcomes, also at country level, by working collaboratively and in complementarity across institutional boundaries on the basis of comparative advantages of each community of actors while fully respecting humanitarian principles, and seizing synergies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

¹ Conclusions of 19-20 November 2007 on an EU response to situations of fragility; Conclusions of 28 May 2013 on the EU approach to resilience; Conclusions of 12 May 2014 on the EU's comprehensive approach, Conclusions of 12 May 2016 on the World Humanitarian Summit, Conclusions of 12 May 2016 on the EU approach to forced displacement and development.

5. Development cooperation and humanitarian assistance should be designed and delivered in a more complementary manner to respond earlier and more effectively to the dynamics of fragility, poverty and vulnerability. Development actors should be able to maintain a presence during crises to support resilience and the transition to development from the early stages in a predictable manner and orient their response to encompass resilience building activities. Root causes of fragility and vulnerability and conflict need to be tackled in line with the five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals², including by promoting human rights and inclusive governance, addressing structural inequalities and reducing underlying risks. Environmental degradation and climate change increase the risk of conflict and entrench vulnerability. Local capacities for risk reduction and preparedness must therefore be built and livelihoods strengthened to gradually end dependence on humanitarian assistance by fostering self-reliance so that vulnerable communities can withstand future natural and human-induced crises even as they recover from them.
6. The Council stresses the importance of systematically mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the humanitarian-development nexus. In particular, the role of women as actors of change, including in humanitarian action, development assistance, peace building and security, mediation, reconciliation and reconstruction, conflict and crisis prevention as well as their heightened vulnerability in crises should be fully recognised. The diverse needs of persons in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, gender-based violence victims, displaced people, older persons and children, should further be taken into account throughout the response cycle.
7. The Council stresses the importance of timely exchange of information by humanitarian and development actors and systematic joint context analyses that identify risks, assess causes of fragility, coping capacities and resilience at different levels. Where possible, joint context analyses should support country-driven response planning and allow for flexible funding. They should be conducted at an early stage and at regular intervals, including with information from early warning systems that could trigger early action.

² <https://www.newdeal4peace.org/peacebuilding-and-statebuilding-goals/>

8. The Council welcomes the various ongoing initiatives aimed at fostering complementarity and cooperation between humanitarian and development actors, including in the framework of the EU approach to forced displacement and development. The Council encourages the Commission and the Member States to further operationalise the nexus and take forward this approach in a number of pilot countries to be proposed by the Commission in consultation with Member States, with a view to systematise cooperation, enhance the use of best practices and the generation of evidence. To do so, humanitarian and development actors should be encouraged to define collective outcomes in line with the common objective to strengthen resilience, participation, livelihoods and local capacities, in particular among the most vulnerable.
9. The Council also stresses the need to enhance coordination internally within the EU institutions and between the EU and its Member States, as well as externally with other actors, including emerging donors, UN departments and agencies, regional and multilateral development banks, in conducting joint analyses and planning, with a view to identifying needs and pulling together additional capacities, know-how and resources. Innovative partnerships with the private sector are key and should be actively pursued when appropriate.
10. The Council encourages increased use, by humanitarian and development actors, of multi-annual planning and programming cycles, joint risk and vulnerability analysis, joined-up planning , as well as co-ordinated programmatic approaches where applicable, based on a better understanding of the socio-economic, political and security contexts of the country of implementation, and while fully respecting humanitarian principles. This requires flexible and well-coordinated financing instruments and modalities, allowing for quick response and adjustment in emergency and recovery activities, especially in fragile situations, as well as for prevention. It also requires increased use of multi-annual financing, as appropriate, to better address protracted crises. The evaluation of recent experiences with EU trust funds could provide useful lessons in that regard.

11. Development interventions in fragile and conflict-affected situations should bear in mind the “do no harm approach” and need to adopt a more context-specific and flexible planning approach, recognising the high risk of failure and the need to quickly adapt to changing situations. Programmes and operational set-ups should foresee contingencies to tackle changing risks. Throughout the programming cycle, it is important that the EU and its Member States and other stakeholders continue to critically assess their progress against long-term impacts on peace and conflict dynamics.
12. The Council stresses the importance of strengthening democratic national and local ownership, governments’ leadership and governance capabilities, as well as of building risk sensitive systems, including social protection systems, to improve transparency and accountability, and governments’ capacity to reduce violence, build inclusive societies, improve service delivery, social justice and economic opportunities to people and communities affected by crises. The key role of civil society, including local CSOs, in fostering dialogue and reconciliation, promoting social reconstruction and cohesion should be fully recognised. Dialogue at local level, mediation and appropriate governance mechanisms should be strengthened with a view to facilitating community engagement, participation and feedback. The development of inclusive local and national disaster risk reduction strategies, including disaster risk insurance mechanisms that enable local ownership of the response and increase funding predictability, as well as the development of an all-of-society and all-hazards approach to disaster risk management are equally important to reduce fragility and vulnerability and to increase resilience.
13. The Council stresses the need to continue drawing on experience and lessons learnt from the field and calls on the Commission to look into means for sharing best practices and information, including through the Capacity4Dev platform, to develop effective and practical tools and sustainable solutions. The Council invites the Commission and the EEAS to report within a year on progress in operationalising the nexus, including activities with the Member States. Proper linkages with existing and similar reporting mechanisms need to be ensured.
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