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Subject: Partial summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament's  
**Committee on Development (DEVE)**, Brussels, 23 February 2015

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**1. The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine - Exchange of views with Jean-Louis De Brouwer, Director for Operations, DG ECHO**

Mr Jean-Louis DE BROUWER, Director for Operations of DG ECHO and Mr Vincent COCHETEL, Director of the Bureau for Europe of UNHCR, attended the EP's Development Committee (DEVE) to exchange views on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. During the exchange of views there was broad agreement on the need for better coordination in aid.

Mr DE BROUWER emphasised that the crisis in Ukraine had reached an alarming rate. However, the challenge is not only quantitative, but also qualitative. Problems of protection, safety in combat areas, as well as the question of access for humanitarian workers are pressing. Besides that, the role of the UKR government needs to be taken into account. Humanitarian intervention must focus on three objectives:

1. Short term immediate needs of the population (particularly the needs of vulnerable groups in the conflict areas.)
2. Medium term needs of displaced persons (i.e. displaced persons should be supported with re-integration in the social-economic sense.)

3. Boosting the capacity of UKR authorities (administrative difficulties; fundamental problem of capacity, particularly in managing civil protection services.)

So far, the EU has been very active and funding was available immediately. However, Mr DE BROUWER also said that the EU could have been more robust. UKR already has basic needs, EU/MS should provide things that are urgently needed: "gap-filling". A more efficient approach is needed, instead of replacing what is available in the UKR market. EU/MS should focus on the real needs, such as medical equipment. Some MS already do so, but there is hope for more.

One of the main problems was the administrative obstacles. Problems with NGOs and taxation are limiting the impact of humanitarian intervention.

Mr DE BROUWER stressed the need to convince others (besides MS) to contribute to UKR, because the new ceasefire will lead to new needs. It will make it possible to reach people who were unreachable before. Example of new needs is helping Internal Displaced People (IDP) back to their homes.

Mr COCHETEL (UNHCR) gave an explanation on figures on IDPs in Ukraine. The number of IDPs had doubled since mid-December 2014. A quick response was needed.

Mr COCHETEL distinguished four constraints for a quick response:

- Fragile ceasefire (ceasefire is not respected)
- Staff security (do not get access)
- IDP law is not implemented (restrictions of movement for both citizens and aid workers)
- New regulations (no social transfers).

He emphasised the importance of partnership, cooperation with local NGOs and community mobilisation. The capacity of the UKR government had to be re-enforced in order to cooperate in a better way.

Mr COCHETEL concluded by underlining that it was necessary to ensure coordination between different forms of bilateral aid. He encouraged coordination of bilateral aid with multilateral aid, in order to achieve a more sustainable aid. UKR assistance will stop mid-April, and it is very important that MS do not take over tasks that the UKR government should do. Focus should be on supporting the government, capacity building and cash assistance.

Questions and remarks by MEPs:

Mr GUERRERO (S&D, ES) said that the point of view of the DEVE Committee was clear: the EP had to support the efforts to achieve peace. The EP had come up with a political position on Ukraine, voted at the previous plenary and the European Council (President) would report on Wednesday. However, GUERRERO was critical of the lack of coordinated cooperation and clear objectives. More pressure should be put on member states to coordinate their aid and to avoid duplicating. He stressed the need to put more pressure on the Council, to come up with a coordinating mandate.

Mr STIER (EPP, CRO) also argued for the need for better cooperation. He asked about the fatigue in the UKR system and potential problems in managing the crisis. "Is there a risk of collapse of the system?" He hoped that ceasefire would take place, but what if not?

Ms HAUTALA (Greens/EFA, FIN) asked who had the legal responsibility of life, safety and health of IDPs, refugees, etc.? "Is it an area where the UKR government is still in charge?" Also, social transfers had been stopped: was this a legal and politically wise decision?

Mr GUERRERO asked about the position of Russia: was there any cooperation? What was Russia's role? Ms HAUTALA wanted to know more about the situation of people who have fled to Russia. Does Russia use this as propaganda (i.e. people are voluntarily choosing to live in Russia)?

Ms HEUBUCH (Greens/EFA, DE) agreed that coordination between member states should at least be discussed and asked for elaboration on how to help IDP pensioners (60% of IDPs) to get their pensions. "How does that work with lack of administrative support from Kyiv?"

Chair McAVAN agreed that it was a shame when MS do not coordinate their efforts and asked whether COM is involved in this and how UNHCR engages with MS: "Who in the EU gets requests of the UNHCR?"; "Should there be a coordinating mechanism? Who in the EU should coordinate?"

In reply to the questions by MEPs, Mr DE BROUWER:

- Emphasised that UNHCR respects fundamental principles of humanitarian assistance and that UNHCR does not have a political agenda. Work is done in a neutral way, and therefore the role of Russia is not important.
- Explained that throughout UKR, the UKR authorities are responsible.
- Made clear that UNHCR tries to strengthen organisational capacity, helps establish plans, however a lot of work still has to be done. Therefore, enhanced coordination is crucial. The coordination during the Ebola crisis could function as an example. He emphasised the need for a coordination mechanism with the UKR administration. Although with delay, the UKR government has now admitted that there is a humanitarian crisis.
- Explained that the stopping of social transfers will have devastating consequences for the well-being of people. There is an urgent need to support people in conflict zones, but UKR is still responsible.

In reply to the questions by MEPs, Mr COCHETEL:

- Stated that the answer to the UKR crisis should be more predictable: protection and shelter are key. When MS want to do something bilaterally, they should at least coordinate their actions.
- In terms of needs, ECHO's strategy requires 160 million dollars for immediate needs. The humanitarian budget is not sufficient to cover the needs, MS budgets should complement.
- Added that the responsibility of authorities is more limited in some areas. (For example not accountable for Crimea).
- Explained that there is assistance to people who arrive in Russia. However, many UKR who flew to Russia did not do so because of ideological reasons, but because of relatives or pensions. Whenever IDPs decide to go back from Russia to UKR, they often do not go to the same place but to government-led areas.

- Elaborated on the discontinued social transfers. Was done so by UKR government because money did not reach the right people. Putting an alternative system into place is hard. At the moment there is a pilot project in cooperation with the UKR government. In Minsk II, a full paragraph is dedicated to the need for full restoration of economic and social connection, including social transfers. Another paragraph is dedicated to safe access. This paragraph refers to "access based on an international mechanism". However, according to him, it is not clear which mechanism is meant, or whether this is something that has to be set up.
- underlined that UNHCR does not want humanitarian aid to be institutionalised.

2. **Making aid more effective and more efficient - How to move towards Zero Hunger - Exchange of views with Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) and Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management**

Chair McAVAN in her introduction put the exchange of views in the larger context. EP had in a recent resolution called to stand up for the crisis in Iraq and Syria and also adopted a resolution on child malnutrition. She mentioned the world summit on humanitarian aid of next year and budgetary challenges. There was a lot of work to do, and therefore this discussion was timely. At least in the non-conflict zones, it should be possible to solve hunger problems.

Ms COUSIN said malnutrition must be addressed. The global community had made some progress, but never before had crises demanded more from organisations, including WFP. She distinguished three kinds of support that were needed:

- 1) More food assistance (i.e. not only food was required, but also access to food and providing tools such as cash and vouchers)
- 2) Logistical support
- 3) Air support.

She emphasised that we should focus on the needs, not on what we want to bring to the people. Furthermore, she stressed the importance of cooperating with partners, such as communities, NGOs and the EU. EU support consisted not only of financial help, but was also about creating efficiencies to make sure that money was spent well. Having partners was vital to ensure the ability to assist in needs. Humanitarian reform was needed.

Ms COUSIN elaborated on key crises that needed more attention.

- Ebola: massive, localised and coordinated assistance (food, air services to ensure access for health professionals, logistic support, emergency telecommunication) was needed. Use of services and expertise for the benefit of the humanitarian system (more efficient).
- South Sudan: Severe access problems and urgent needs. Despite complexity (intensifying armed actors, transport threats), effective programmes.
- Syria: Deterioration of food situation. Coordinating with NGOs. Reduced number of people they assist is a risk.
- Yemen: the international community, including the DEVE committee, should focus on humanitarian needs in Yemen. Yemen is moving into a crisis situation, just as fast as UKR. In Yemen, 5 million people are reached. However, when the level of access changes, this number will increase.

Commissioner STYLIANIDES recognized the importance of the partnership with WFP and underlined that it was not only about money, but also about values. He wanted to make humanitarian aid more sustainable and effective. He admitted that the international community had underestimated the Ebola crisis. However, coordination had made progress and must continue to be alert because the crisis was not over yet. Also, when it is over, continuous support would be needed to help recover the affected people.

The Commission answered on how to make humanitarian aid more effective and efficient as follows:

- 1) Resilience (Humanitarian responses should build resilience in the long term.)
- 2) Nutrition (Undernutrition causes 45% of child death. Food security of families and communities is essential.)
- 3) Delivery/Modality (EU is one of the most important promoters of food assistance transfer: cash and vouchers. Choice between delivery and modality should always be asked. Direct provision of food remains, but all options should be considered in parallel to vouchers. Vouchers should not only be considered as second best).

### Questions and remarks by MEPs:

Mr STIER (EPP, HR) underlined the connection between good governance and zero hunger and asked Ms COUSIN about the cooperation between WFP and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Mr GUERRERO (S&D, ES) wanted to focus on support for small farmers, and help them build resilience. He also wanted to discuss the market fluctuations that are not linked to food production itself, but to international relations. Many investments are made in agriculture, fisheries, etc., but investments should be made in a responsible way to avoid abuses. He agreed that combining different ways of actions was efficient. He also asked COM how food was integrated in development and humanitarian aid. Mr GOERENS (ALDE, LUX) asked about the position on topics such as national disasters, difficulties, rebellions or man-made crises. WFP always needed cash. He had hoped for more down to earth speeches. He asked Ms COUSIN to elaborate on the WFP's needs. Ms HEUBUCH (Greens/EFA, DE) asked about how to deal with the use of land (who has access; traditional use of land) and policy consistency and coherence. Chair McAVAN asked COUSIN for positive examples of achievements. Moreover, she asked the Commission what possible problems vouchers could pose. She also mentioned that while doing short term humanitarian aid, the long term should be kept in mind. Some MS are not coordinating aid, how could this be improved?

In reply to the questions from MEPs, Ms COUSIN:

- Explained that WFP and FAO were working together. FAO was a normative organisation, they partner to make sure the right tools are offered to farmers. WFP can support market access.
- Agreed that good governance was key in creating durable, sustainable solutions. But that is not the work of WFP. That is why the UN community works together.
- Gave examples of good news: N. Korea; China; Guatemala; Uganda.
- Stated that support between crises should be maintained by investing in resilience building. This will ensure that the number of people affected in a potential next crisis will decrease. Responses need to be flexible. Countries must be asked to invest in themselves, and should receive support only in exchange.
- Acknowledged that markets should be analysed before providing vouchers. Vouchers should not be given to communities when it will lead to inflation.

In reply to questions from MEPs, Commissioner STYLIANIDES:

- Acknowledged that reducing corruption was a massive challenge. It can be done better by 1) the same level of payment and commitment, and 2) the highest level of accountability.
- Agreed that hunger caused by political reasons needed political solutions.
- Agreed in general with Ms COUSIN's answers: He underlined the need to support production and added that focus should be on sub-Saharan/horn of Africa. On vouchers, all options needed to be left open and situations should be examined case by case and country by country.

### 3. Next meeting

- 31 March 2015, 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
  - 1 April 2015, 9.00 – 12.30 and 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
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