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8063/19

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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 6-7 March 2019

Delegations will find attached the outcome of proceedings of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid held on 6-7 March 2019.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in CM 1908/19, with an AOB item added on Chad.

2. United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) network *(incl. an informal exchange of views with WFP)*

The group held an informal exchange of views with Jakob Kern, WFP Director, Supply Chain, who gave an overview of the functioning of WFP logistics services along the entire supply chain, from WFP's six global depot facilities and the UNHRD network to the Logistics Cluster and the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS).

3. Draft Council conclusions on European Court of Auditors Special Report No 35/2018

The group reached a provisional agreement on the revised text.

4. Syria / Brussels III Conference

The group discussed the latest developments relevant to the humanitarian situation in Syria based on briefings from the EEAS and the Commission. The Commission recalled their needs-based approach to delivering humanitarian assistance, and highlighted the need to advocate for wider humanitarian access and the protection of civilians. The EEAS and the Commission also briefed on the preparations of the third Brussels Syria Conference.

5. The Ebola epidemic response in DRC *(incl. an informal exchange of views with MSF)*

As part of an informal exchange of views, Inma Vazquez, MSF Representative to the EU, briefed the group about the challenges that the Ebola response was facing in the DRC, warning that the epidemic was not under control. Treatment centres needed to be protected from attacks while at the same time any association with armed forces created suspicion and distrust by local communities. Increased outreach and dialogue was required to rebuild trust in the international response.

6. Humanitarian Resolutions adopted by UNGA 73

The Commission provided an overview of humanitarian resolutions adopted by UNGA 73. Delegations shared their assessments of the results achieved and shared first ideas regarding the preparation of EU priorities for humanitarian resolutions to be adopted by UNGA 74.

7. Response to crises

a) Venezuela

Based on briefings by the EEAS and the Commission, the group discussed the humanitarian situation in Venezuela. The need for de-politicising humanitarian aid was stressed, ensuring a needs-based delivery of assistance in line with the humanitarian principles.

b) Afghanistan

COHAFA discussed, on the basis of briefings by the EEAS and the Commission, the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan caused by increasing conflict, widespread drought and severe floods, and exacerbated by a shrinking humanitarian space. The discussion also touched upon the humanitarian needs of Afghan refugees in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran.

c) Sudan

The group was briefed by the EEAS and the Commission on recent developments pertaining to the humanitarian crisis in the country. The discussion covered issues ranging from conflict-induced internal displacement, the situation of refugees in Sudan, extremely high levels of malnutrition, and the need for ensuring independent assessments of humanitarian needs that reflect the deterioration of the humanitarian crisis during the last year.

8. Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (Geneva, 13-17 May 2019)

a) Draft EU statement

The group discussed the revised draft statement to be made on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the Global Platform. The text was to be finalised in the PROCIV Working Party.

b) Informal exchange of views with VOICE

Representatives from the VOICE Brussels office gave a presentation covering the key findings of a 2017 VOICE study on Member States' DRR policies and practice, the VOICE priorities for the Global Platform event, and VOICE recommendations for promoting Disaster Risk Reduction at EU level.

9. OECD-DAC recommendation on promoting coherence across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus *(incl. an informal exchange of views with Rachel Scott, OECD – COHAFa was joined by CODEV for this item)*

As part of an informal exchange of views, Rachel Scott, Head of Crisis and Fragility within the OECD, gave a presentation to the two groups on the recently agreed DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. She described the process leading up the adoption of the Recommendation; its 11 'principles' in the three fields of 'better coordination', 'better financing' and 'better programming'; and the next steps with regard to broadening adherence, implementation, and monitoring.

10. The situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria *(incl. an informal exchange of views with UNRWA)*

As part of an informal exchange of views, UNRWA Director of Syria Affairs, Michael Amany, highlighted the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian refugees in Syria, who are among the most vulnerable groups in the country. The presentation covered the services and support provided by UNRWA, the impact the war has had on both the refugees as well as the agency and its staff in Syria, and the consequences of the US funding cuts, which forced UNRWA to considerably cut its food and cash assistance to Palestinian refugees last year. The Commission echoed the concerns over the dire situation of Palestinian refugees inside Syria (PRS), and informed about EU support to PRS and to UNRWA.

11. EU concept for effective civil-military coordination in support of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief

The Commission made a presentation on the EU concept on effective civ-mil coordination in support of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, approved by the EU Military Committee on 30 January 2019. The concept aims at operationalising internationally agreed guidelines and recommended practices on the use of military assets in the EU context. It outlines key elements, concerns and needs of both humanitarian actors and the military, presenting concrete ways to work together at HQ and in the field.

12. AOB

a) Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises

The Commission presented the details of a mapping exercise they would like Member States to take part in to enable better cooperation amongst all EU actors in the field of education in emergencies and protracted crises, with regards to both humanitarian assistance and development cooperation.

b) “The Future of the EU's Humanitarian Aid” (European Parliament Development Committee, 27 February)

The Commission debriefed COHAFA on this public hearing with Commissioner Christos Stylianides and representatives of UN-OCHA, ICRC, IFRC and MSF.

c) World Food Programme Executive Board First Regular Session (Rome, 25-27 February)

The Commission debriefed the group on this meeting at which three statements were made on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

d) Chad

The Commission informed the group about two recent government decrees in Chad that are likely to have a negative impact on the humanitarian space and on humanitarian programming in the country.
