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6141/20

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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 held on 14-15 January 2020

Delegations will find in annex the outcome of proceedings of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid held on 14-15 January 2020.

The UK delegation did not attend this meeting.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in CM 5242/19.

2. COHAFA work programme of the Croatian Presidency

The Presidency outlined their priorities for the coming six months (see ST 5130/19). These include the triple nexus, disaster risk reduction, the protection of the most vulnerable groups with a focus on youth in emergencies, and psychosocial support. Several delegations took the floor to welcome the work programme and highlight overlaps with their own national priorities, notably on issues such as psychosocial support, youth, and vulnerable groups in general.

3. Community-based mental health and psychosocial support in emergency and displacement *(incl. an informal exchange of views with IOM)*

As part of an informal exchange of views, Guglielmo Schininá, Head Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Intercultural Communication of the IOM, briefed COHAFA on MHPSS in emergencies and displacement and the IASC Guidelines on MHPSS. He outlined the multi-layered needs requiring MHPSS in a crisis situation: from an undignified, culturally inappropriate provision of basic services and a breach of social support networks to the occurrence of distress and grief and an increased prevalence of severe mental disorder. The IASC Guidelines on MHPSS in emergency settings provide a framework for integrating MHPSS into humanitarian action.

Member States welcomed the presentation and referred to related events held in October such as the Amsterdam High-Level Conference "Mind the Mind Now" and a conference on strengthening child and adolescent health organised by Italy in Amman, Jordan. The Commission stressed the importance of MHPSS in humanitarian action and informed that in 2019 they funded MHPSS-related activities under projects covering health, nutrition and education in emergencies worth a total of EUR 16 million.

4. Response to crises

a) Sahrawi refugees (*incl. an informal exchange of views with UNHCR*)

As part of an informal exchange of views, Agostino Mulas, UNHCR Representative in Algeria, briefed COHAFA on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Saharawi camps, where the refugee population is entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance. Mr Mulas stressed the need for finding durable solutions and increased funding in order to tackle the long-term needs of the camps, especially in terms of sustainable water supply, as two camps still rely on inefficient water trucking. Funds are also needed to implement long-term strategies on nutrition, education and livelihood opportunities. Several Member States and the Commission stressed the importance for donors to have reliable data regarding the number of the most vulnerable people and the identity of the beneficiaries of food assistance in the camps.

In closed format, the EEAS provided an overview of the political situation, with an emphasis on the UN process and the joint political declaration of the June 2019 EU-Morocco Association Council. The Commission informed that in 2019, ECHO was one of the few stable humanitarian donors, providing EUR 9 million, chiefly for food and nutrition but also health, WASH and primary education. A shift from a short-term humanitarian approach to a long-term sustainable vision is needed, in particular in light of the risk of radicalisation of Sahrawi youth, who face a lack of purpose and livelihood opportunities. The Commission invited Member States to join them on a field visit to the camps in the autumn.

b) Yemen (*incl. an informal exchange of views with UNICEF*)

As part of an informal exchange of views, Sara Beysolow Nyanti, UNICEF Representative Yemen, briefed COHAFA about the situation of Yemeni adolescents, who are particularly vulnerable to radical indoctrination, in the world's biggest humanitarian crises. There is an increasingly non-permissive environment, in particular in the north, jeopardising the delivery of principled humanitarian assistance, and there is a risk that this may be emulated in other regions such as the south. Member States agreed with the analysis of the situation and the urgent need to improve humanitarian access, and highlighted the importance of donor field visits.

In closed format, COHAFA agreed a set of common humanitarian advocacy messages (see ST 5323/20). The EEAS briefed on recent political developments and EU diplomatic outreach to improve the conditions for delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Commission complemented the briefing on the humanitarian situation and informed about ECHO humanitarian action in Yemen.

c) Niger

The EEAS gave an update on the latest political developments and the security situation in the run-up to the presidential elections, which had been marked by two large-scale attacks claiming scores of victims. The Commission warned that almost 2 million people were at risk of a food crisis during the upcoming 2020 lean season, a steep increase compared to previous years. Niger ranks last on the human development index but has the highest fertility rate in the world, with an average of 6-7 children per woman. Member States expressed their concern at the high numbers of displaced people in Niger, with more than 200,000 refugees and more than 180,000 IDPs. COHAFA discussed the humanitarian impact of the state of emergency declared by the authorities in response to the recent armed attacks; a ban on riding motorbikes has limited people's livelihood opportunities. Member States and the Commission stressed that an obligation for humanitarian convoys to be accompanied by armed escorts was unacceptable.

5. WFP Executive Board First Regular Session (Rome, 24-25 February)

The Commission informed that they were planning to prepare two EU statements for the upcoming WFP Executive Board First Regular Session, on items 5a and 5b. The draft statements will be discussed at the next COHAFA meeting on 13-14 February.

6. Triple nexus (*incl. an informal exchange of views with VOICE*)

As part of an informal exchange of views, representatives from the Brussels VOICE office presented the conclusions from a recent VOICE study on the triple nexus: There still is no common definition of the triple nexus accepted by all involved, and collective outcomes are still not collectively welcomed. Implementing the triple nexus requires a huge investment in coordination. Both NGOs as well as local actors must be meaningfully engaged. More flexible, multi-year funding is essential for a successful implementation, as are simplified and harmonised contractual frameworks. All relevant actors need to work towards a culture shift. Member States welcomed the presentation and reiterated the need for multiannual financing and for more conceptual clarification of the peace element. There is also a need for development actors to step up their commitment to the nexus, and for double- and triple-hatted actors to consider how they are being perceived.

7. Debriefing on the state of play of negotiations on the European Solidarity Corps

The Chair of the Youth Working Party, which is in the lead of the file within the Council, debriefed COHAFA on the state of negotiations with the European Parliament after three trilogues. He reported that the EP had suspended all further negotiations until the Commission would table new horizontal proposals regarding the Governance of three related Youth programmes and the Presidency would confirm that the budgetary breakdown between these programmes could be negotiated under the Ordinary Legislative Procedure.

8. Debriefing on humanitarian events in December

The Commission debriefed on a number of important humanitarian-related events that had taken place during the previous month. These included the launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview (Brussels, 4 December), the CERF pledging event (New York, 9 December), the OCHA Donor Support Group High Level Meeting (New York, 10 December), the 33rd International Conference of the RCRC (Geneva, 9-12 December), the GHD High-Level Meeting (Geneva, 12-13 December), and the Global Refugee Forum (Geneva, 16-18 December).

9. AOB

a) ECHO Forgotten Crisis Assessment 2020

The Commission presented the results and recalled the methodology of their annual assessment of 'forgotten' humanitarian crises. Fifteen humanitarian crises had been identified as 'forgotten' according to the defined criteria. As an established principle, the EU as a global, principled donor is allocating at least 15% of the initial annual humanitarian budget to forgotten crises.
