



Council of the  
European Union

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COHAFA 114  
DEVGEN 254  
ALIM 16  
ONU 148  
FAO 63  
MAMA 183  
MOG 101  
COEST 301  
COASI 168  
PROCIV 107  
RELEX 1190

#### OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

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Subject: Outcome of proceedings of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and  
Food Aid held on 4-5 December 2019

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Delegations will find in annex the outcome of proceedings of the Working Party on Humanitarian  
Aid and Food Aid held on 4-5 December 2019.

The UK delegation did not attend this meeting.

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted (CM 4824/19 REV1), with an AOB item added on the response by the EU and Member States to the recent earthquake in Albania.

**2. Forced displacement** (*incl. an informal exchange of views with Women's Refugee Commission*)

As part of an informal exchange of views, Manisha Thomas, Geneva Representative of the Women's Refugee Commission, briefed COHAFA on the situation of women and girls, men and boys in refugee and internal-displacement contexts such as in Myanmar, Libya and South Sudan, highlighting some of the specific challenges and discrimination they face. Ms Thomas also presented WRC's work on eliminating gender discrimination in nationality laws, which is key to preventing statelessness. Twenty-five countries worldwide still discriminate against women in their ability to confer their nationality on their children on an equal basis with men. Ms Thomas's presentation also touched upon how to ensure an age-, gender-, disability- and diversity-inclusive approach with regard to the implementation of the Global Compact for Refugees.

In closed format, the Commission updated delegations on EU preparations for the Global Refugee Forum, which will take place in Geneva from 16 to 18 December.

### 3. Response to crises

#### a) South Sudan

The EEAS briefed the group on the political challenges that have led to multiple extensions of the pre-transition phase ahead of the formation of a transition government. The Commission provided an update on the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, where 7.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 1.5 million are internally displaced. The Commission identified three expected drivers of humanitarian needs in 2020: man-made causes (conflict and intercommunal violence); natural disasters (e.g. floods); and returns (although it is unlikely that there will be large scale returns given the lack of progress in the implementation of the peace agreement). The Commission also shared information on common messages agreed by 14 international donors to advocate for the cessation of obstructions to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including violence and access impediments, bureaucratic impediments, and diversion and manipulation of humanitarian assistance.

#### b) Cameroon (*incl. an informal exchange of views with the HC/RC*)

As part of an informal exchange of views, Allegra Baiocchi, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system and Humanitarian Coordinator in Cameroon, briefed the group on the threefold humanitarian crisis in the country. She recalled that for the second year in a row, the Cameroon Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) had been the most underfunded HRP in Africa, although 4.2 million people in Cameroon were in need of humanitarian assistance. Ms Baiocchi's presentation covered the three crises that affect the country in different ways: the resurgence of Boko Haram in the north, the impact of some 270 000 CAR refugees in the east, and the separatist movements in the Anglophone regions in the northwest and the southwest. Member States informed about their national responses and enquired about additional ways in which they could provide support.

In closed format, the EEAS briefed the group on the political situation in Cameroon, with a focus on the attempts to resolve the armed conflict in the Anglophone region. The Commission updated COHAFA on its humanitarian response in Cameroon and invited Member States to increase funding, including through providing funding via DG ECHO's External Assigned Revenues scheme.

c) Yemen

The EEAS briefed on the political background to what is the world's biggest humanitarian crisis. Both the EEAS and the Commission stressed the sharp deterioration of the operational environment for humanitarian actors and the shrinking humanitarian space. The Commission further briefed on the latest developments regarding the humanitarian situation, reporting that 10 million people were at the risk of famine and 6.4 million people were out of reach of the humanitarian response. Several attempts have been undertaken by the UN, donors and international NGOs to advocate for better humanitarian access and the creation of conditions that enable the delivery of unimpeded, principled humanitarian assistance. In view of the urgency of the situation and the need to support the negotiations with a coordinated position among donors, the group decided to update its latest set of common humanitarian messages to support the ongoing advocacy efforts.

**4. Gender in humanitarian action** (*incl. an informal exchange of views with UN Women and UNFPA*)

As part of an informal exchange of views, Hiba Qasas, Chief of the Humanitarian Action and Crises Response Office, UN Women, presented the findings of the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) gender policy review and briefed on the normative work on gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian sector. Although there has been significant progress in the past years in terms of normative policy on gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance, there is still room for improvement in terms of implementation, as only about a third of the projects funded under HRPs mainstream gender. Siestske Steneker, Director UNFPA Brussels Office, briefed on UNFPA's work in addressing sexual and reproductive health needs in humanitarian emergencies, where there is an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), early marriage, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, unsafe child births, and maternal deaths. Ms Steneker also briefed on the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP), which has become a standard tool to address reproductive-health needs within 48 hours from the onset of a humanitarian crisis. Member States shared information on gender mainstreaming and gender-specific aspects of their humanitarian policies and programming, and additional efforts undertaken to promote gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance at a global level. The recent Oslo SGBV conference and the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies were highlighted as useful initiatives and partnerships.

In closed format, the Commission updated the group on the three main ways in which its humanitarian assistance takes gender into account. These include targeted actions, in particular in the combat against sexual and gender-based violence and in the field of sexual and reproductive health; gender mainstreaming through the use of the DG ECHO gender-age marker; and supporting global capacity-building projects.

#### **5. EU endorsement of non-binding commitments made by donors to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the international aid sector<sup>1</sup>**

The Commission gave an overview of the non-binding commitments made by 22 donors, including 13 EU Member States, at the October 2018 London Summit on ‘Putting people first: tackling sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment in the aid sector’ to drive collective action to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the aid sector. Several delegations stressed that it was essential now to implement the commitments made, and informed the group about the actions they have taken at national level to this end. COHAFA and CODEV welcomed and endorsed at Working Party level the Commission's intention to sign up to these commitments on behalf of the EU. This endorsement is to be approved by Coreper and Council in order to authorise the Commission's signature of the commitments.

The Commission also made a presentation on the July 2019 OECD/DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance. Recognising the need to rebuild trust in the aid sector, the DAC recommendation aims to set ambitious standards built around six pillars. Member States highlighted the importance of the recommendation and urged the Commission to take a leading role in its implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> COHAFA was joined by CODEV for this item

## 6. COHAFA working methods

The Presidency outlined the results of discussions on this topic at previous formal and informal COHAFA meetings. The group expressed its support for a revised Presidency paper setting out existing practice and a number of suggestions for the future, such as regular meetings at Director-level. The Presidency concluded that the paper could thus remain a reference document to guide the group's work, and confirmed that this was without prejudice to the outcome of ongoing horizontal discussions on working methods.

## 7. AOB

### a) Humanitarian events in December

The Commission gave an overview of relevant international humanitarian events in December, including the CERF pledging conference and the OCHA Donor Support Group High-Level Meeting in New York.

### b) Debriefing of WFP Executive Board Second Regular Session

The Commission debriefed on this event, at which five statements had been delivered on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

### c) Briefing on the EU-UN High-Level Workshop on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord), International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Protection of Civilians (PoC) in Mali/Sahel

The Commission debriefed on this event, which had been jointly organised by the EU (DG ECHO and EEAS) and the UN (OCHA and the UN Liaison Office for Peace & Security – UNLOPS) on 1 October.

### d) COHAFA priorities of the incoming Croatian Presidency

The incoming Croatian Presidency gave an overview of their priorities for COHAFA for the period January-June 2020. These include the nexus, disaster risk reduction, the protection of the most vulnerable groups (with a focus on youth), and psychosocial support in humanitarian crises.

e) Update on negotiations on the humanitarian instrument in the new MFF and humanitarian elements of NDICI

The Commission provided an update on the state of play of the negotiations.

f) Debriefing on meeting of the Food Assistance Convention

The Commission debriefed the group on 12th Session of the Food Assistance Committee and informal meeting, held in London on 14-15 November.

g) Debriefing on the Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Syria

The Commission debriefed the group on this meeting, which was held in Copenhagen on 19-20 November.

h) Albania

The Commission debriefed the group about the response by the EU and Member States to the 26 November earthquake, which had been coordinated through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, and informed about the most pressing humanitarian needs in the affected areas.

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