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Council of the European Union

Brussels, 9 September 2026
(OR. en)

12945/26

COHAFA 73
INTER-REP 72
RELEX 1135

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	9 September 2026
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Humanitarian Diplomacy - presentation by Clingendael

Following the meeting of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) on 8 September 2026, delegations will find in Annex the presentation made by Clingendael [1][2].

1 The Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, identification number in the EU Transparency Register: 450109092006-03.

2 This document contains a presentation by an external stakeholder and the views expressed therein are solely those of the third party it originates from. This document cannot be regarded as stating an official position of the Council. It does not reflect the views of the Council or of its members.

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Clingendael
Netherlands Institute of International Relations

Scene Setter Humanitarian Diplomacy

For COHAFA

8 September 2026

THE CLINGENDAEL INSTITUTE

Who We Are

The Clingendael Institute is an independent think tank and academy on international affairs, based in The Hague.

What we do

Through analyses, training, publications and events we aim to inspire and equip governments, businesses, and civil society in order to contribute to a secure, sustainable and just world. Clingendael offers 40 years of top knowledge and training.

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Clingendael Research provides independent, interdisciplinary, evidence-based and policy-relevant analyses and recommendations about urgent and long-term international issues.

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Humanitarian Programme

- Since 2016 we run activities that aim to protect humanitarian space in over 50 humanitarian contexts
- More than 2.500 humanitarians, humanitarian mediators and diplomats trained in negotiation, mediation and humanitarian diplomacy skills
- 80-85% national staff
- 85% work in areas with high to extreme access constraints
- Capacity strengthening of international humanitarian organisations and Ministries of Foreign Affairs

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Humanitarian Diplomacy Objectives

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Scene setter

1. (Brief) Timeline of Humanitarian Diplomacy Old & New
2. *Umwelt* of Humanitarian Diplomacy Around Europe: Now & In the Future
3. EU Joint Communication & Its Opportunities

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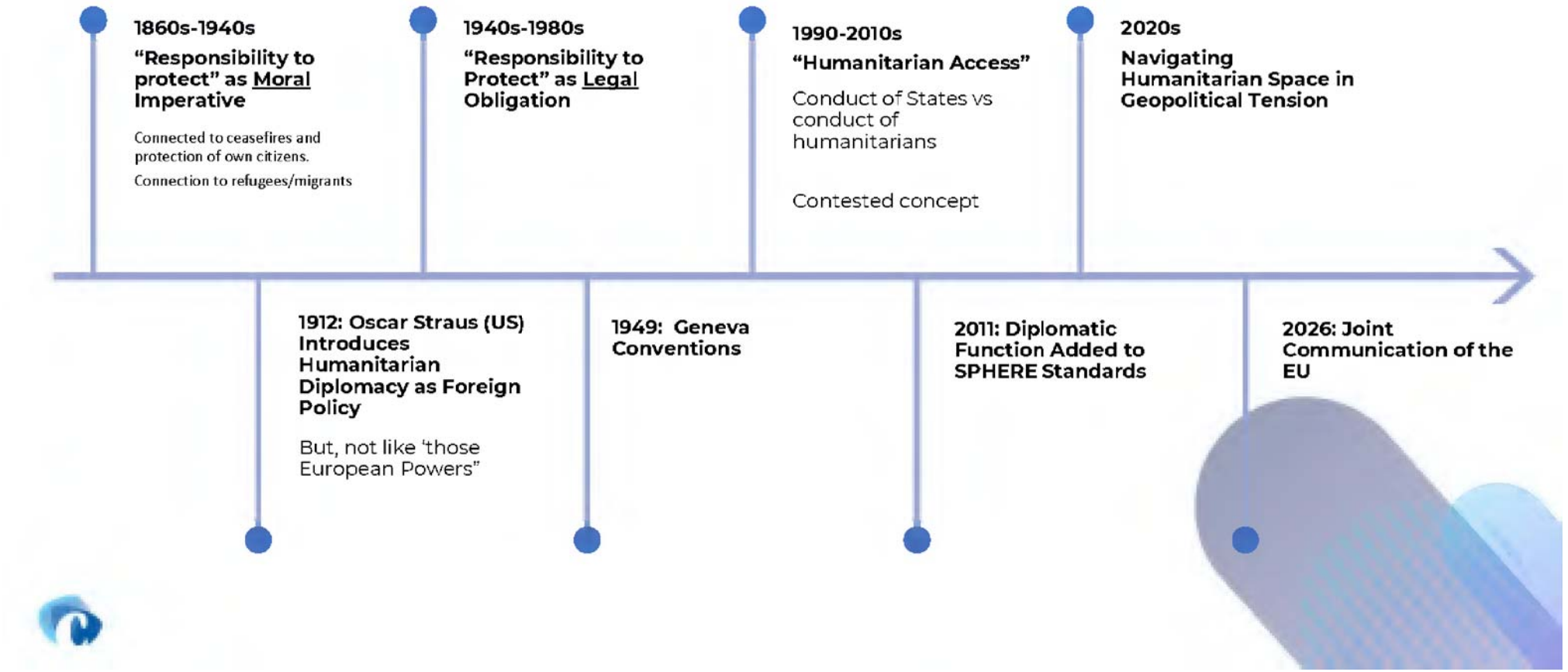
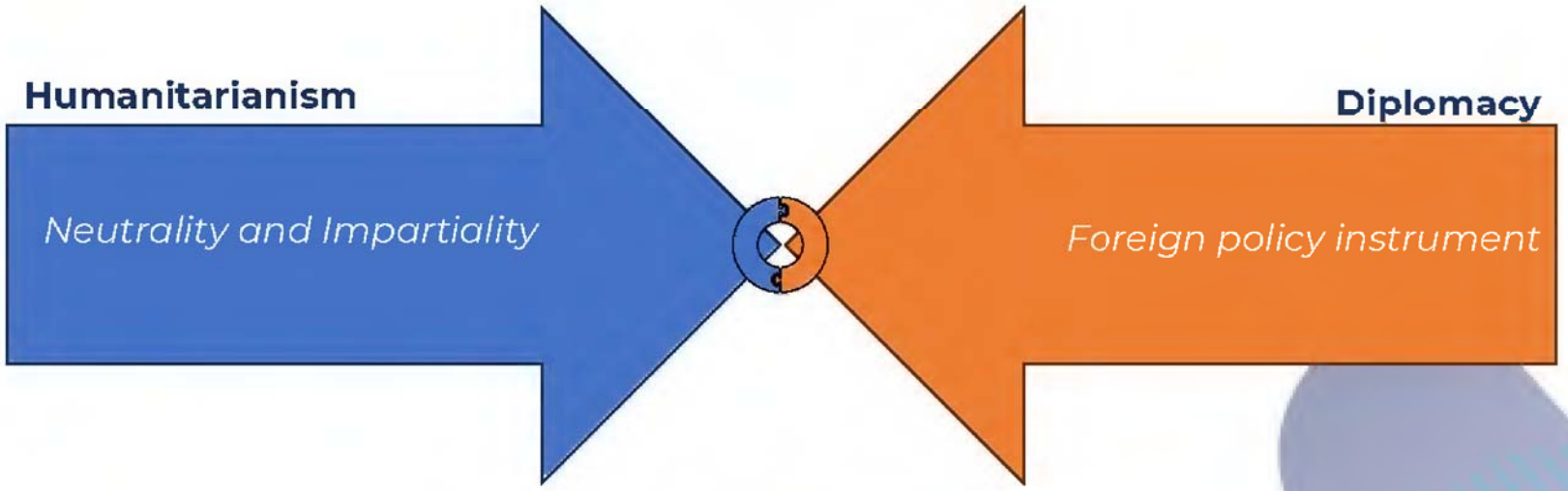
(Condensed) Milestones of the term



Humanitarian Diplomacy as a Contested Concept



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No Universal Definition

IFRC/ICRC	"Humanitarian diplomacy is **persuading decision makers and opinion leaders** to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles."
European Union	"EU humanitarian diplomacy is the **use** of humanitarian, political, economic, security or diplomatic instruments by official EU representatives to engage decision-makers, parties to armed conflicts and their sponsors or influencers, help prevent, mitigate and resolve humanitarian crises, to improve compliance with international humanitarian law (including by granting humanitarian actors rapid and unimpeded access) and support greater alignment with international humanitarian principles and objectives, as defined by the humanitarian community and in the interest of people in need."
Examples from EU Member States	Spain: "Humanitarian diplomacy is the **use** of diplomatic and political instruments to promote respect for international humanitarian law and its progressive development, facilitate humanitarian missions, and raise awareness of the importance of the humanitarian agenda." Belgium: "**Using** its international influence to ensure access, safeguard humanitarian space, promote respect for international humanitarian law, protect civilians and support inclusive dialogue."
Hugo Slim	"Diplomacy for Humanitarian Purposes"

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Our alumni's view on Humanitarian Diplomacy

Humanitarian diplomacy is not *only* a tool for securing access:

- A means of **protecting humanitarian space, principles and legitimacy**
- Building trust among stakeholders, a **relationship-driven practice**
- Navigating increasingly complex political environments
- Importance of managing the **Scope of Humanitarian Diplomacy**

"An essential condition for humanitarian action itself"

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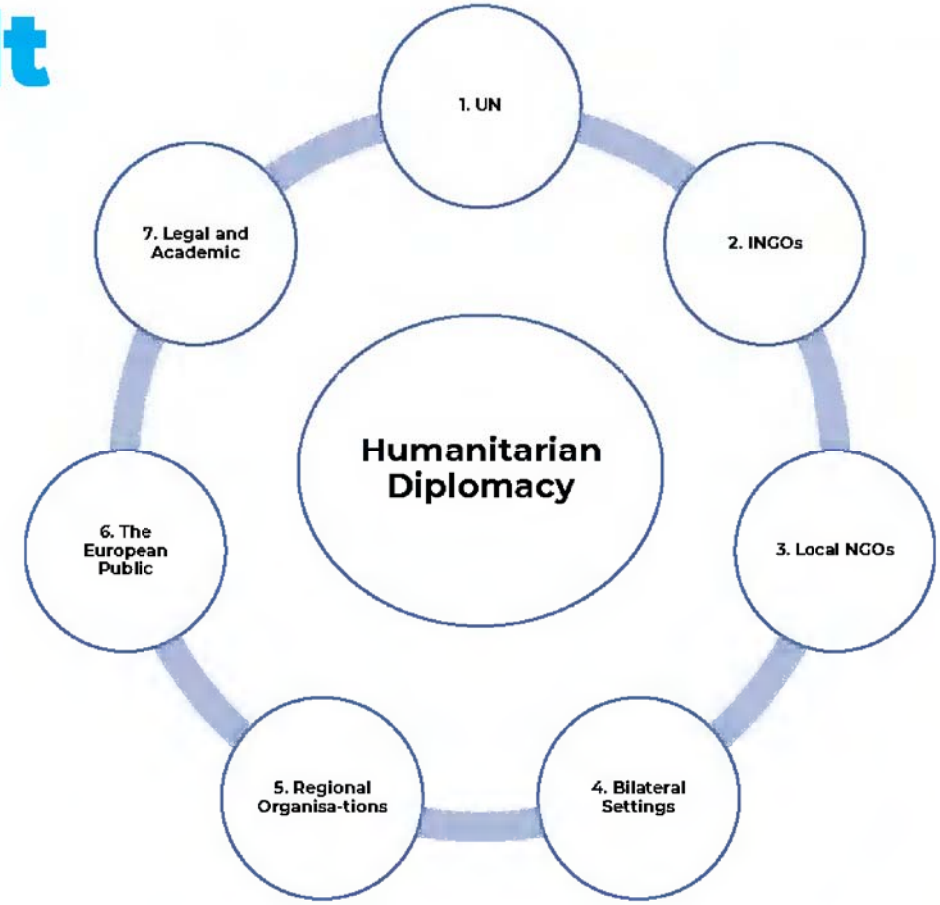
Umwelt



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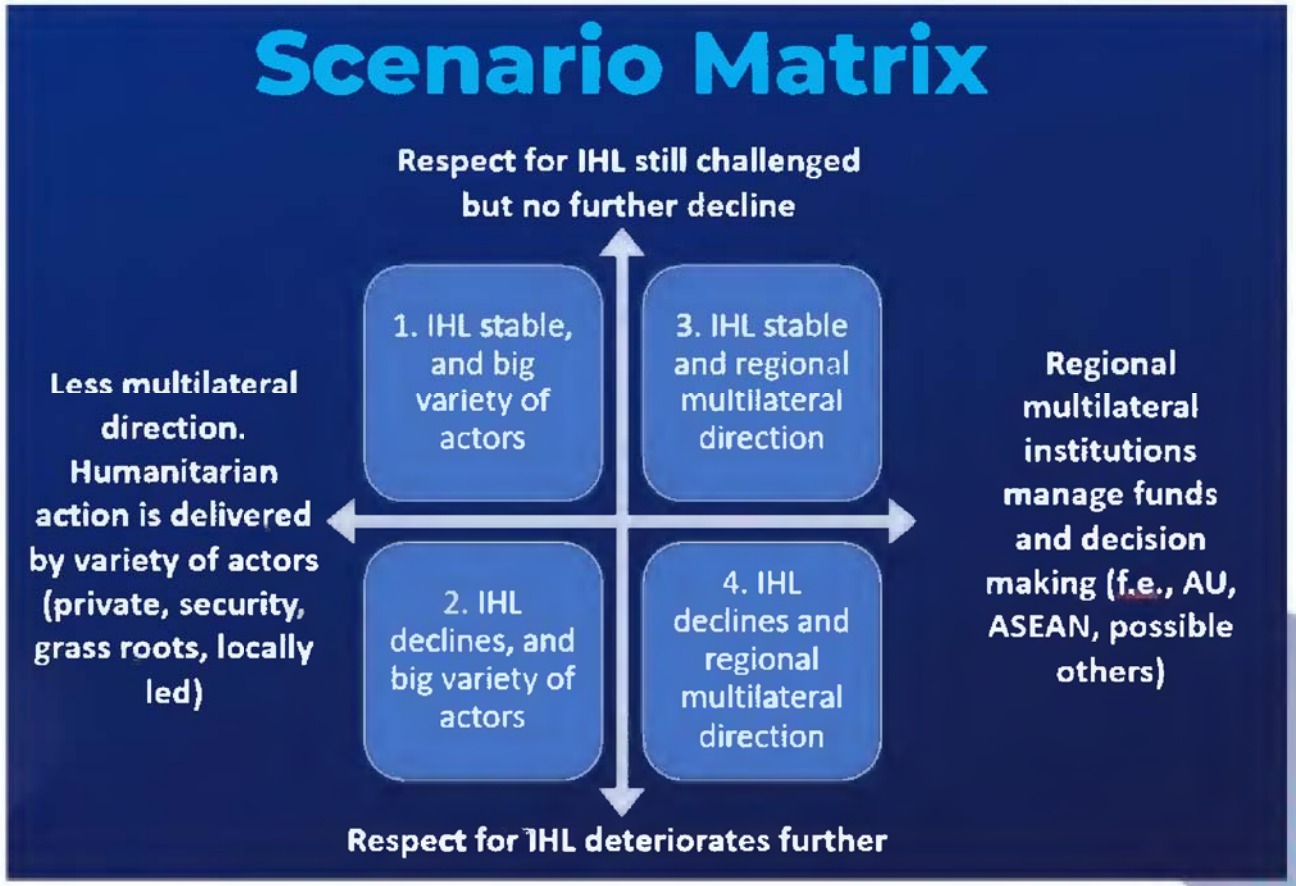
Strategic Foresight (2025 about 2030)



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EU Joint Communication and ECHO Strategy: Opportunities

- Timing & Positioning
- Convening Power
- Finance and Other Levers
- Moral and Legal Landscape

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