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NOTE

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Subject: Coordination and cooperation between civil protection and humanitarian actors in the aftermath of natural and man-made disasters
Presidency Report from the workshop held in Luxembourg on 15-16 July 2015

**Coordination and cooperation between civil protection and
humanitarian actors in the aftermath of natural and man-made
disasters**

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I. Introduction

This report is inspired by the discussions at the Presidency's workshop on *Coordination and cooperation between civil protection and humanitarian actors in the aftermath of natural and man-made disasters outside the European Union (EU)*, which was organised in Luxembourg on 15-16 July 2015 by the Rescue Services Agency of Luxembourg (Ministry of Interior) and the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Action of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. The theme is a priority for the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The workshop brought together representatives from Member State authorities (civil protection and humanitarian aid), EU institutions as well as practitioners (UN organisations, NGOs, Red Cross) and private partners. The aim of the workshop was to help representatives of both communities to better understand their respective roles in and approaches to crisis response at all levels and to identify concrete ways for better coordination and cooperation between the two sides, as they are increasingly responding to the same emergency situations outside the EU.

The Presidency has sought to present in this report an overview of various ideas and suggestions expressed by different workshop participants, with no claim to completeness. As a Presidency report, it does not in any way commit the workshop participants to follow-up action. The Presidency hopes, however, that it will provide useful impetus for identifying, in a second step, concrete opportunities for strengthening the cooperation and coordination between the EU's civil protection and humanitarian aid actors.

The context: civil protection and humanitarian aid policies

Civil protection and humanitarian actors are different in their respective response approaches to crises as well as in their way of thinking and acting. In the European context, civil protection teams are deployed immediately after a disaster for short-term missions inside or outside the EU, upon request from the government of an affected country. Humanitarian actors, by contrast, work with partners to be rapidly deployed for longer-term missions outside the EU with the acquiescence of the government of an affected country. The disasters on which the humanitarian aid and civil protection departments of EU Member States and EU institutions cooperate are therefore those happening outside the EU.

Civil protection actors are “first responders” to natural, technological/environmental (such as industrial accidents, marine pollution) and man-made disasters (e.g. terrorist attacks). They also work on disaster prevention and preparedness. EU Member States’ civil protection units have highly specialised capacities, including in urban search and rescue, response to CBRN¹ accidents/attacks, high-capacity pumping, forest-fire fighting, health, nutrition and water, etc. which are mostly deployed for relief missions but also for prevention and preparedness missions. Humanitarian actors, in contrast, provide emergency assistance in relief missions as well as protection of victims of natural disasters (e.g. floods, droughts) and armed conflicts (international and non-international). Humanitarian organisations are generally specialised in the protection, health, water and sanitation (WASH), shelter, food, assistance and nutrition sectors during relief, preparedness and rehabilitation missions (including LLRD² efforts). Civil protection and humanitarian aid are therefore complementary but do not substitute for each other. The different mandates and *modi operandi* have to be acknowledged and respected while reinforcing the respective strengths.

Thanks to this complementarity, and to the fact that both communities are increasingly called to respond to the same emergencies outside the EU, there is ample room for coordination and cooperation between them. The Treaty on the Functioning of the EU states in Articles 196 on civil protection and 214 on humanitarian aid that providing assistance, relief and protection to people confronting natural or man-made disasters is a common goal. In 2007, the Council, the Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission signed the *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid*.³ This sets out a common approach and vision on how the EU and the Member States can and should help people in need all over the world. The Consensus specifically encourages cooperation between humanitarian and civil protection actors in crisis response (Art. 57-60). The potential of synergies has been repeatedly demonstrated in practice, such as recently in the context of the Ebola crisis in West Africa.

¹ Chemical, biological, radiological and/or nuclear accidents or attacks

² LLRD = Linking Relief Recovery Development

³ ST 15099/07: The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid: The humanitarian challenge

In this regard, the merging in 2010 of the Commission’s Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Departments into one Directorate-General (DG ECHO) was a crucial step to strengthen the cooperation between the two sides and to promote operational synergies, with the aim of building up a more effective European disaster response. The new EU civil protection legislation, which was adopted in 2013⁴, has provisions on joint prevention, preparedness and response measures between Member States and the Commission. It also created the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which is part of DG ECHO. Operational 24/7, the ERCC manages a “voluntary pool” of civil protection assets that Member States decide to make available for rapid deployment under a European response to emergencies inside or outside the EU. Primary responsibility for civil protection lies with the Member States, but the EU has a strong coordination and support role. The ERCC can also play a key role in the coordination between humanitarian aid and civil protection actors at EU level. These measures ensure predictability and high-quality assistance by the European Union.

There are differences between humanitarian and civil protection actors in their respective approaches to crisis response and each side is operating under their respective frameworks. In terms of humanitarian aid, the EU and Member States share competencies. The EU and its Member States are the largest humanitarian donor and also a reference donor. In the field of civil protection, the EU fulfils a coordination and support role, while the primary responsibility for civil protection lies with the Member States. By pooling European resources and expertise, the European humanitarian aid and crisis response manages the long-term effects of disasters as well as implementing prevention and preparedness missions.

The objectives of this Presidency report are to make civil protection and humanitarian aid actors more aware of their mutual strengths and mandates and to formulate recommendations that would ensure better cooperation and coordination between both sides in the future. This paper is also intended to inform the discussions at EU level.

⁴ Decision 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism

II. Recommendations

Workshop participants provided numerous observations and suggestions, which can be grouped into three thematic sessions: A) preparedness, B) institutional communication and coordination, and C) cooperation in the field.

A. Preparedness

The preparedness phase is crucial to enhance readiness for natural or man-made disasters. Learning from experience, building capacities, foreseeing probable needs in the event of a disaster and elaborating standard response plans that can be adapted to a specific situation contribute to a more effective response.

Cooperation between humanitarian aid and civil protection should not be considered as synonymous with merging both communities into one relief capacity. There is a need for two-way cooperation, which means respecting each other's differences, raising awareness and fostering mutual understanding at all levels (headquarters and the field) and building on each other's experiences and know-how.

Better communication between the two communities and the public

1. Overcoming communication barriers is a prerequisite for good coordination and cooperation. The different actors should use a common language and the same technical terms. The creation of an international (bi)annual forum (e.g. conferences, summits) bringing together civil protection and humanitarian aid experts from around the world, could be considered. Its aim would be to offer an opportunity to learn from past missions, discuss operational procedures, as well as exchange information on new technologies, needs and available capacities.
2. Making the necessary preparations to promote the use of different types of media, including social media, to speed up the information exchange and communicate more easily with the population in 'normal' times and in crisis times. The use of new communication technologies to exchange information with local communities should be further explored.

Drawing lessons from past experience

3. Learning from past experience and exchanging best practices is important for improving the quality of the joint response. Specific lessons-learned workshops that focus on the operational modalities of both sides could be organised more systematically. Implementation of the outcome and recommendations from these workshops should be monitored.

Fostering effectiveness through training and innovation

4. In order to make the response more effective, joint exercises are important as they allow both sides to familiarise themselves with each other's operational approach and to create synergies. Joint small-scale and table-top exercises could be organised at various levels to foster the interoperability of civil protection and humanitarian aid actors.
5. Joint training courses are crucial to explain the relevance of humanitarian principles and each other's mandates and operational cultures with the aim of preparing experts from both communities for international response missions. Therefore, including courses on the humanitarian system and its principles in the European civil protection training programme is to be further encouraged. Where possible, the systematic participation of humanitarian actors in these courses should be ensured, and vice versa. As a result, the number of "multiple-trained" experts in the UN and EU system could be increased.
6. Cooperation between humanitarian and civil protection actors can further be strengthened through the promotion of innovation and new technologies. National and EU authorities should facilitate sharing the existing innovative solutions, and also fund and support the development of new ones, including through research projects which link humanitarian research with private partners working for the civil protection authorities
7. In order to focus more on localising the response, local actors from third countries could be invited to European training courses, on the one hand, and qualified trainers could be sent to third countries to support the capacity building of local actors, on the other hand.

Preparing the response

8. The opportunities afforded by the new civil protection legislation to help strengthen preparedness further, for instance through prevention/preparedness missions, should be explored.

9. The European Emergency Response Capacity (EERC/Voluntary Pool) will bring more predictability to the civil protection assistance available in major emergencies. This will include the list of capacities that can be rapidly deployed in third countries. On this basis, gaps in European response could be filled by developing or identifying new and highly specialized resources (e.g. CBRN teams, vaccination and sanitation teams, medical evacuation, field hospitals, etc.) that would be available upon request to complement humanitarian missions in preparedness, response and early recovery.
10. A joint expert group could be set up to identify the needs and available capacities of both communities, make standards mutually compatible and examine how existing tools and sources could be used to facilitate joint planning. A common expert exchange programme could improve knowledge transfer and networking across the two communities.
11. The feasibility of joint expert advisory missions through the ERCC for prevention/preparedness in risk-prone countries could be assessed by both sides.
12. Pooling the resources and available units of both communities into a joint standby partner system at EU level, as in the voluntary pool of civil protection assets, should be considered, to increase the predictability, reliability and visibility of EU response. Such a joint standby partner system could be linked through a modular and interoperable system to the ERCC. Experts, resources and joint relief teams including civil protection and humanitarian actors would be kept on standby for joint missions around the world.
13. Elaborating standard response plans, based on predefined scenarios, defining coordination mechanisms, roles and responsibilities, and improving readiness and efficiency by reducing time, effort and predictability of the European response.

B. Communication and coordination between the institutional structures of civil protection and humanitarian aid

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cluster system, which has been in place since 2005, is composed of groups of humanitarian organisations (UN and non-UN) working in the main sectors of humanitarian action. Its main objective is to improve coordination between these actors and to establish partnerships between international humanitarian actors, national and local authorities and civil society. Experience has shown that international civil protection actors are not always involved in cluster meetings although, at least during the early stage in the aftermath of a disaster, they have similar terms of reference to those of the humanitarian community, even if civil protection assistance is usually delivered at the request of the government of the affected country.

Council Conclusions⁵ adopted under the Italian Presidency invited the EU Member States to foster the effective exchange of information and coordination within and between Member States and the Union, by enhancing communication between the ERCC and the national humanitarian aid authorities. In addition, it was recommended to make full use of the EU online information systems for civil protection⁶ and humanitarian aid⁷ in order to foster coherence in the European response to humanitarian crises.

Coordination with/within the IASC Cluster system

14. The global cluster leads should invite civil protection actors to get fully involved in the relevant clusters. The global cluster leads should inform the HCT (Humanitarian Country Team) about available civil protection capacities and partnerships with local civil protection authorities so that they know what can be requested in the case of an emergency.
15. In order to strengthen the collaboration between the UN and the civil protection units in preparedness and response missions and to integrate the civil protection teams more effectively into the cluster system, it was proposed to establish civil protection focal points within the cluster support cells which can be deployed if needed. As the civil protection teams are the natural partners of LEMA (Local Emergency Management Authority), a civil protection focal point can serve
 - as an EU liaison officer within the UN system and
 - as liaison officer between the EU, the UN and the local civil protection authorities.

⁵ ST 15831/14: Council conclusions on cooperation between humanitarian aid and civil protection authorities: building a new partnership for disaster management

⁶ Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS)

⁷ European Emergency and Disaster Response Information System (EDRIS)

Coordination at EU, UN and Member State level

16. The cross-sectoral role of the ERCC should be further strengthened at EU level as an operational emergency coordination platform.
17. To ensure regular feedback and exchange between the operational level and the management/administrative level in the light of the experience gained with the Ebola Task Force meetings, the Commission should regularly organise coordination meetings at the ERCC during the critical phase of a multi-sectoral emergency. These coordination meetings should respect the respective roles of Member States and the UN. The ERCC could play a more active role in coordinating humanitarian operations with the Member States, namely by upstream coordination of financial contributions (before financial allocations are made).
18. The added value of including experts with humanitarian knowledge/background to the EUCPT should be further explored.
19. To maximise on synergies and complementarities it is necessary to ensure a good internal coordination between civil protection and humanitarian authorities within the Member States. Coordination could in particular be improved by establishing a humanitarian (or cross-sectoral) focal point in the Member States that should be available at all times during a joint emergency response for information exchange. This humanitarian focal point would be linked with a country's own national civil protection focal points.⁸

Exchange of information for a more coordinated decision-making

20. It is important to foster communication between the civil protection and humanitarian aid communities by exchanging real-time information such as crisis situation updates, so as to inform response operations and contributions (financial and in-kind). Linking existing EU and UN platforms⁹ more effectively and ensuring real-time updates are necessary steps to avoid duplication during crisis coordination and to move closer to upstream coordination.
21. Improving the user-friendliness of the communication platforms used by EU Member States and institutions and harmonising the data format with the one used by the UN would help to speed up the decision-making process.
22. In addition, national institutions step up resources to ensure more timely updating of their information on these communication platforms.

⁸ This idea was already mentioned in the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2010) 600 final), *Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of Civil protection and humanitarian assistance*, p. 13.

⁹ A few examples of platforms: CECIS, EDRIS; INFORM, vOSOCC, reliefweb, LogIK, FTS

23. During crises involving civil protection and humanitarian actors, an open platform, following the example of the Open-CECIS used during the Ebola crisis, would enable the different actors involved (both EU and non-EU, NGOs and others) to share operational information in realtime (deployed and available capacities, in-kind donations, financial contributions, etc.). Such an open platform should not duplicate existing platforms (such as CECIS, EDRIS or IPCR). An in-depth analysis of the business case and information flow requirements would need to be conducted for that purpose before launching any new initiative.

C. Practical cooperation between civil protection and humanitarian organisations in the field

Humanitarian organisations have specific expertise that can also be highly valuable for the civil protection community and vice-versa. However, too often these communities work in parallel to each other without necessarily creating synergies. While they may have the same goal, there can be substantial differences in terms of procedures, organisational structures, values and motives of interventions. While civil protection agencies in the Member States are governmental entities, often with close ties to national political authorities, they are bound by humanitarian principles when contributing to humanitarian response outside the EU.¹⁰ Despite the existing differences between the two communities, they can work more closely together to benefit those in need.

Localising response

24. Localising response by strengthening local and national actors is a crucial element to increase preparedness capacities, mitigate risks and adapt the response to the needs of local communities. Therefore, localising response should be taken into account at all stages of the crisis response cycle to adapt the international relief efforts to the needs of the local affected community.

Interoperability on the ground

25. Building on the respective strengths of both communities, the interoperability and complementarity between the two actors should be encouraged. A flexible modular response tailored to the regional, national and international needs makes the response more flexible, predictable and more effective.

¹⁰ The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, points 58-60; see also the Council Decision on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (1313/2013), notably Article 26(3).

26. A large number of standards, codes of conduct and guidelines exist in the civil protection and the international humanitarian communities. As only a few practitioners are aware of each other's guidelines, it would be important to ensure mutual knowledge throughout both communities.
27. Where necessary, standard operational procedures as well as a common operational methodology, accepted by both actors, could be elaborated.
28. Experts from both communities would welcome an update of existing operational guidelines such as the *UNDAC Team / EUCPT field Cooperation Guidelines* in order to reflect the evolution of both systems.
29. Several sets of standards exist for civil protection modules and the humanitarian actors. Adopting them and adapting them to international operational as well as technical standards (e.g. SPHERE project)¹¹ would facilitate the interoperability between the modules and capacities in the field, while taking into account the potentially different civil protection needs within the European context.
30. Under the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the relief approach should always be needs-based so as to help the most vulnerable people in a particular emergency and use resources efficiently. General awareness of the concepts and tools for needs assessment (MIRA, INAC)¹² is rather limited. A consensus on a joint cross-sectoral and comparable needs assessment methodology would be an asset. As the TRIPLEX 2013 Evaluation report states: "the applicability of the MIRA for EUCPT's can be examined."¹³ Another possibility could be "to build an EU assessment team which covers a larger territorial scope, and, if necessary, plugs gaps in UN capacity."¹⁴ In general, the cooperation between the EU and the UN should be strengthened in the response stage, including the good practice of joint missions with UNDAC (integrating EU experts into UNDAC teams and integrating UNDAC members into EUCP Teams).
31. The humanitarian response is based on respect for the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. During missions outside the EU, all actors must be aware and abide by principled humanitarian action.

¹¹ The Sphere Project is a programme of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and InterAction with VOICE and ICVA. The project was launched in 1997 to develop a set of universal minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian assistance. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of assistance provided to people affected by disasters, and to enhance the accountability of the humanitarian system in disaster response. The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response are the product of the collective experience of many people and agencies. They should not therefore be seen as representing the views of any one agency (from: The Sphere Project. Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, 2004, p.2).

¹² INAC = ECHO's Initial Needs Assessment Checklist; MIRA = Multi Cluster / Sector Initial Rapid Assessment

¹³ TRIPLEX Evaluation Report, May 2014, p. 20

¹⁴ See also COM(2010) 600 final, p. 9

32. Joint mission teams including representatives of both communities could be deployed rapidly for field missions in the case of an emergency. These joint mission teams could for instance operate on a purely national level but they could also be deployed under the umbrella of the EU and the UN.

From response to recovery

33. Civil protection teams are “first responders” that are deployed for short-term missions whereas humanitarian actors are usually engaged for a longer period of time. The handover in the field when the civil protection mission comes to an end is a critical process. Existing guidelines mention the handover briefly without saying how actors should proceed in practice, in particular when partners have a different background. Scenarios on a smooth handover could usefully be included into these guidelines or SOPs, which should be updated accordingly. Exit strategies should be considered in the early stages (even before the deployment, at preparedness stage).
34. Civil protection actors are routinely asked to prolong their missions in order to guarantee continuity in the crisis response. As civil protection teams comprise many volunteers, prolonging their missions is challenging. Defining special types of emergencies, disasters and crises for which a prolongation of the civil protection missions would be necessary as well as defining how civil protection actors could prolong their missions (e.g. by shifts, rotation system between Member States), could guarantee a seamless transition towards the recovery and the strengthening of the resilience of the affected population.

III. Conclusion

Based on the experts' deliberations and recommendations at our workshop set out above, the Luxembourg Presidency concludes that mutual understanding and awareness-raising of each other's mandates, ways of thinking and operating modes are key elements in ensuring fruitful coordination and cooperation between civil protection and humanitarian aid actors. There is a shared understanding that existing instruments should not be merged but that the aim should be to build on mutual complementarities.

Communication problems or misunderstandings as well as missing operational frameworks and administrative setups can result in both communities working in parallel instead of creating synergies. Emphasis should therefore be placed on improved and standardised information systems, common fora, joint trainings and exercises as well as operational guidelines where needed, all aimed at building the understanding of respective *modi operandi* and developing a culture of cooperation while overcoming 'language' barriers.

Existing platforms providing opportunities for real-time information exchange should be further promoted. Efforts, however, need to be increased in order to move closer to well-informed decision-making and upstream coordination.

Throughout the workshop, participants advocated further localising response by strengthening the capacities of local first responders. Resilience building in the preparation phase as a joint effort by both communities can thus be considered a crucial element in order to mitigate risks in a sustainable manner.

Furthermore, the IASC cluster meetings could be the most appropriate forum to bring both communities together and to strengthen cooperation between them. It is in this light that several recommendations suggest embedding civil protection representatives in the cluster system at different levels so as to institutionalise increased communication and coordination.

Besides the last point, it must be stressed that, as a general principle, the above recommendations should apply equally to the two communities and in a two-way logic.