



Council of the
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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: COHAFA common messages on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine

Delegations will find in Annex the COHAFA common messages on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine agreed by the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid on 25 July 2022.

COHAFA COMMON MESSAGES ON THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN UKRAINE

- The EU and its Member States strongly condemn Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The significant intensification of the fighting and armed violence is exacerbating existing humanitarian needs stemming from years of conflict as well as the COVID-19 pandemic and causing widespread human suffering, civilian casualties, damage to civilian infrastructure, the deprivation of civilians' access to education and essential health services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, and large-scale displacement.
- The EU and its Member States strongly condemn the indiscriminate and deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure by the Russian Federation. Under no circumstances can civilians and those not taking an active part in the conflict be the legitimate targets. The EU and its Member States call on the Russian Federation to grant access to humanitarian assistance to reach people in need as well to allow fleeing civilians' safe passage. The violations of International Humanitarian Law and likely war crimes must be investigated and their perpetrators, as well as the responsible government officials and military leaders, must be held accountable.
- We are particularly worried about women and children and vulnerable people, including persons with disabilities and the elderly, in particular those who are forced to flee their homes, resulting in situations that exacerbate inequality and vulnerability, and who are subject to an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, including trafficking. Particular attention should be paid to the situation of elderly people and people with disabilities who might face additional difficulties in moving away from danger.
- The EU and its Member States strongly condemn any form of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, abuse and harassment and are particularly concerned about a staggering number of reports of allegedly sexual violence perpetrated, in particular, by the Russian armed forces. Multiple forms of gender-based violence are being reported, with an additional threat for women, girls and boys on the move, at border crossing points, in transit/collective centers and in bomb shelters.
- Rape and other forms of sexual violence are strictly prohibited under International Humanitarian Law and can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity in line with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1820 and 2008. We stress that all perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence must be held accountable and we call on all parties to the armed conflict to take specific measures to protect women, girls and boys from gender-based violence and all forms of violence.
- The EU and its Member States underline the importance of UN agencies, international and local partners to ensure the prevention and eradication of sexual and gender based violence and ensure that survivors of violence have access to specialized health, psychosocial, legal and other support services, as well as ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services and supplies.

- The EU and its Member States reaffirm the United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/2 on the humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine, adopted on 24 March 2022.
- The EU and its Member States are scaling up their humanitarian support to the people in need affected by the conflict in Ukraine, wherever they are located. Humanitarian assistance must immediately reach those, who need it most, in a timely manner. Humanitarian assistance has to be provided in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. All parties to the conflict must respect the delivery of humanitarian assistance according to these principles. Humanitarian assistance must never be politicised or instrumentalised as this would only undermine efforts to provide assistance and protection to those in need.
- The EU and its Member States will promote empowerment of local leadership and increased localization of aid in line with the interests and needs of the local population and capacities of local actors, in accordance with Grand Bargain priorities.
- People placed in situations that exacerbate inequalities and vulnerabilities including women, girls, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly, must receive protection. Accordingly, the EU and its Member States call for the integration of a gender-responsive, age-sensitive and disability-inclusive approach in all humanitarian support, shaping with the local civil society organization to meet the rights and specific needs of these categories.
- Millions of children in Ukraine require humanitarian assistance, and are in need of safety, stability, protection, mental health care and psychosocial support. Separated and unaccompanied children, are amongst the most vulnerable. According to Ukraine's human rights ombudswoman, more than 210 000 children were forcibly transferred. Therefore, efforts to reduce the risk of trafficking in Ukraine and along its borders need to be intensified. Special attention must be paid to children in institutional care, such as the children with disabilities and orphans, who are directly exposed to atrocities.
- The EU and its Member States are concerned about the children's exposure to conflict-related traumas, leading to the risk of school dropout and negative coping mechanisms. We recognize the importance of providing tools and systems to ensure the access to quality education and we support the humanitarian organizations active in this field.
- The EU and its Member States recognise the increasing mental health and psychosocial needs of war-affected as well as of first responders and welcome that mental health and psychosocial support is included in international appeals, and call on all donors to reflect this in their funding and activities.
- The EU and its Member States underline the growing concern about the need to provide shelter for the significant number of internally displaced persons, returnees and other war-affected people all over Ukraine. Ensuring a sufficient number of rapidly available winterized shelters ahead of the coming winter is of particular concern and a priority for the EU and its Member States.
- Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected in line with the International Humanitarian Law. The EU and its Member States urge for the need to fully respect the International Humanitarian Law. The EU and its Member States urgently call for full safe and unhindered humanitarian access and assistance to all persons in need, wherever they are.

Safe passages through humanitarian corridors must be granted to civilians fleeing areas of violence to destinations of their own choosing. Humanitarian partners, including their convoys, must be granted a sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to conflict areas in order to reach people in need. Humanitarian relief personnel and health workers must not be targeted, they must be protected and be able to operate safely.

- The EU and its Member States fully support the revised UN flash appeal for Ukraine and the Regional Refugee Response Plan. The EU and its Member States urge all donors to continue contributing generously to these appeals and ensure their funding is flexible. The EU and its Member States acknowledge the importance of ensuring that funding for Ukraine is not at the expense of other humanitarian crises, which still require our full support. The EU and its Member States are particularly concerned about the severe impacts of global food security caused by the Russian war of aggression, adding to the already severe situation. The EU and its Member States commend the brave efforts undertaken by humanitarian organizations to deliver assistance and encourage all actors, including civil protection authorities, to coordinate their efforts.
- The EU and its Member States commend the efforts undertaken by the Government of Ukraine and others to facilitate humanitarian operations, ensuring free movement of humanitarian relief personnel and convoys as well as facilitating the import of relief items, and offer support to further improve the timely and effective delivery of assistance. The EU and its Member States stress the need to exempt humanitarian personnel from military conscription. The EU and its Member States call for close coordination in line with the guiding principles of humanitarian emergency assistance as set out in the United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/182, between the government and humanitarian partners. The EU and its Member States take note of the need to facilitate the obtainment of visa for humanitarian staff, and encourage all neighboring countries to coordinate their efforts to ensure unhindered access and full working capacity for humanitarian organizations.
- The EU and its Member States highly appreciate the efforts undertaken by the government and civil society of Moldova to facilitate humanitarian assistance to refugees from Ukraine, and encourage all donors to enhance their support for these efforts alongside resilience building in Moldova, including within the Moldova Support Platform launched by Germany, France and Romania at the Moldova Support Conference in Berlin on 5 April.
- The EU and its Member States support the efforts to ensure that sanctions regimes applicable to individuals and entities applied in the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine include humanitarian exceptions, in order to maintain an uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid to people in need. The EU and its Member States recall that humanitarian exceptions were recently introduced in two sanctions packages in order to facilitate humanitarian activities in Ukraine.