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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 17 October 2022.

COHAFA COMMON MESSAGES ON THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN UKRAINE

1. The EU and its Member States strongly condemn Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused 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.
2. 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 targets. Civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and other educational facilities, should be preserved. Attacks on civilians are prohibited under international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes. All perpetrators must be held accountable.
3. The EU and its Member States reaffirm the United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/2 on the humanitarian consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, adopted on 24 March 2022.
4. The EU and its Member States urge for the need to fully respect and adhere to International Humanitarian Law and call for full safe and unhindered humanitarian access and assistance to all persons in need, wherever they are. Humanitarian partners, including their convoys, must be granted sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas in order to reach all people in need. Humanitarian relief personnel and health workers must not be targeted, they must be protected and be able to operate safely and independently. The violations of International Humanitarian Law and war crimes must be investigated and their perpetrators, as well as the responsible government officials and military leaders, must be held accountable.

5. In view of the upcoming winter, the EU and its Member States are scaling up their humanitarian support to the people in need affected by Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. Humanitarian assistance must immediately reach those who need it most, including in newly liberated areas. 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.
6. The EU and its Member States support the efforts to ensure that sanctions regimes applicable to individuals and entities applied in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine include humanitarian exceptions, in order to maintain an uninterrupted delivery of principled humanitarian aid to people in need in Ukraine. The EU and its Member States shall continue to review the impacts of sanctions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
7. The EU and its Member States urge all donors to ensure their humanitarian funding is used exclusively for alleviating the humanitarian needs, that the funding is predictable, flexible and unearmarked, when appropriate and possible, and that cash-based assistance is used where appropriate.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. The EU and its Member States also call for consistency, complementarity and coordination between humanitarian, development and peace actors and their activities while fully respecting the humanitarian mandate and principles.

11. 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 to those most in need. The EU and its Member States note the need expressed by humanitarian organisations to facilitate visa procedures for international humanitarian personnel, including through engagement with the Government of Ukraine.
12. 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 2022.
13. The EU and its Member States fully support the targeted humanitarian response based on the severity of needs and vulnerability. The most severe and acute humanitarian situation are currently reported in areas close to the frontlines of the war and in the non-government controlled areas. Humanitarian assistance should seek to address the needs of people also in these areas. This will require a strengthened presence of humanitarian actors and staff, as well as increased coordination and coherent approach to coordination with Ukrainian authorities in Eastern and Southern Ukraine.
14. The EU and its Member States 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.
15. People placed in situations that exacerbate inequalities and vulnerabilities including women, girls, children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly, must receive adequate 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, that should be shaped in cooperation with the local civil society organizations to meet the rights and specific needs of these persons.

16. 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 and supplies, as well as ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services.
17. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are strictly prohibited under International Humanitarian Law and can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity according to the Statute of the International Criminal Court and as recognised by the 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 take specific measures to protect women, girls and boys from all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.
18. 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. Reportedly 240 000 children were forcibly taken to Russia, and there have been credible allegations of forced transfers of unaccompanied children to Russian occupied territory or to the Russian Federation itself. In addition, 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 children with disabilities and orphans, who are directly exposed to atrocities.
19. 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. Given that the stressors of war can significantly impact children's development, it is essential that humanitarian aid be tailored to their needs, as well as directed at maintaining the provision of education, especially to internally displaced children and youth.

20. The EU and its Member States recognize the increasing mental health and psychosocial needs of war-affected people as well as of first responders. We welcome the inclusion of mental health and psychosocial support in international appeals and call on all donors to reflect this in their funding and activities.
21. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has created a critical situation in the health sector in Ukraine, which is facing increasing amount of people in need of medical attention, including people with war injuries, lack of medical staff, damaged medical infrastructure and medical supply shortages. The EU and its Member States recognize that support for treatment and rehabilitation of war victims and persons with disabilities, as well as support for Ukrainian medical authorities and institutions should be one of the main priorities of the international humanitarian community.
22. 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.
23. The EU and its Member States express concern about the enduring landmine contamination that pose a major threat to human security, notably restricting relief aid delivery and preventing people from returning to a safe home. In this context, children face a higher risk of becoming victims of landmines and unexploded ordnance.
24. The EU and its member states call to support a resumption of the economic activities, especially in the agricultural sector in Ukraine. Strengthening export capacity of Ukraine can diminish the global impacts of food crisis. It has to go hand in hand with demining, promotion of SMEs and support to relevant logistics and infrastructure. For this reason, it is important to plan activities related to demining and mine-victims assistance and we call on all donors to reflect this in their funding.

25. The EU and its Member States acknowledge the importance of post conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. Emergency assistance should be complemented by activities and funding in this regard, as situation permits.
26. The EU and its Member States remain committed to needs-based humanitarian assistance. We will continue to assist Ukraine as well as in other humanitarian crises.
27. The EU and its Member States are particularly concerned about the severe impacts on global food security and nutrition caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, adding to the already severe situation. Russia's systematic and deliberate targeting and destruction of Ukraine's agricultural production infrastructure, grain looting and the prevention of exports are unacceptable.
28. The EU and its Member States strongly condemn Russia's deliberate actions causing hunger and severe food and energy insecurity. The EU and its Member States support all efforts and solutions that would resolve the current food crisis including the continued export of grain from Ukraine.
29. The EU and its Member States will continue to counter the false Russian narrative that attempt to tarnish the EU's credibility and humanitarian efforts meant to relieve the suffering of Ukrainian civilians as well as to support partner countries to manage the cascading effects of the Russian aggression. As deliberate and targeted disinformation, misinformation and hate speech can impede humanitarian work, we stress the importance of effective international coordination to deliver true and correct information to all.
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