



Council of the  
European Union

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(OR. en)

14399/19

COHAFA 98  
DEVGEN 209  
ALIM 13  
ONU 130  
FAO 52  
MAMA 168  
MOG 92  
COEST 258  
COASI 153  
PROCIV 93  
RELEX 1084

#### **OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Outcome of proceedings of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid held on 21-22 October 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 21-22 October 2019.

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The UK delegation did not attend this meeting.

### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted as set out in CM 4227/19 REV 1.

### **2. Inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action** *(incl. an informal exchange of views with UNICEF and World Vision Finland)*

As part of an informal exchange of views, Meritxell Relaño, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) of UNICEF briefed on the new normative basis for inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. She outlined the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and other key developments. Ms Relaño also provided a list of recommended actions for the international community for disability-inclusive humanitarian response.

Miikka Niskanen, Head of Humanitarian Aid and Grants as well as Disability Inclusion Advisor with World Vision Finland, gave a presentation on disability-inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and livelihoods projects benefitting refugees and their host communities in Kenya, Uganda, Iraq and Rwanda. Mr Niskanen highlighted the important aspects of empowering persons with disabilities to participate in project planning and monitoring and in community decision-making, and of reducing stigma and discrimination.

The Presidency and UNICEF encouraged those Member States that have not yet done so, to endorse the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action launched in 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit.

### **3. European Solidarity Corps**

The Chair of the Youth Working Party, which is in the lead on this file, briefed COHAFA about the progress made under the trilogue negotiations with the European Parliament.

#### **4. Council conclusions on humanitarian assistance and international humanitarian law**

Delegations discussed the latest draft and provided further comments on the text in coordination with their COJUR counterparts. The final text is to be adopted at the Foreign Affairs Council / Development on 25 November 2019.

#### **5. World Food Programme Executive Board Second Regular Session (*Rome, 22-26 November*)**

The group supported the Commission's proposal to prepare five EU statements for the forthcoming session of the WFP Executive Board. The German delegation noted however that in their view, in line with their stance taken during previous discussions, there should be a maximum number of four EU statements per WFP Executive Board meeting.

#### **6. Palestine<sup>1</sup> (West Bank and East Jerusalem) (*incl. informal exchanges of views with UNRWA and NRC*)<sup>2</sup>**

As part of an informal exchange of views, Gwyn Lewis, Director of West Bank Operations for UNRWA, briefed the group on the Agency's operational environment, with a focus on restrictions and challenges in East Jerusalem and protection challenges in the West Bank. She also touched on the impact of UNRWA's financial situation has had on service delivery. Despite efforts to reduce costs, the funding cuts pose a major threat to the agency's protection work and create stress and insecurity among Palestinians with a view to the future. Several Member States expressed their continued, and in some cases increased, financial commitment to UNRWA and reiterated their political commitment to the Agency's work and purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

<sup>2</sup> MaMa delegates were invited to join COHAFA on this item.

Joining the informal exchange of views by video link, Kate O'Rourke, Palestine Country Director for Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), updated the group on the challenges faced by NGOs operating in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In view of increasing impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and growing impediments to the operations of NGOs, she urged the EU and Member States to provide political support for defending the humanitarian space and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need, and to ensure that counter-terrorism measures are not contrary to States' obligations under IHL.

Following the informal exchange of views, the discussion continued formally, in closed format. The EEAS briefed on relevant political efforts at UN level, including the renewal of the UNRWA mandate. The Commission briefed on the number of demolitions and seizures of Palestinian property in the West Bank in the first six months of the year, which had increased considerably compared with the same period in 2017 and 2018. More than ten percent of the demolished or seized structures had been funded by the EU or an EU Member State.

## **7. Syria**

The Commission updated on the latest developments in north-eastern Syria, where more than 150,000 people have been displaced. The ceasefire is not holding and civilian casualties have been reported. INGOs have withdrawn most of their expat staff from the country, with national staff continuing the delivery of assistance. The Commission also informed about advocacy needs identified during consultations with humanitarian partners. These concern the respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, with a particular emphasis on the protection of civilians as well as humanitarian and medical workers, the protection of medical missions, deconfliction, the protection of civilian infrastructure, the continuation of international support, the vulnerabilities of persons with perceived affiliations to IS, including foreign fighters, and the need for returns to be voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable.

## **8. AOB**

### **a) Debriefing on the hearing of Commissioner-designate Lenarčič**

The Commission debriefed on this hearing at the European Parliament's Development Committee on 2 October 2019, at which the Slovene Commission candidate for the crisis management portfolio had been given the support by MEPs.

b) Debriefing on the UN General Assembly High-Level Week

The Commission debriefed on issues related to humanitarian assistance during the UNGA High-Level Week.

c) Debriefing on UNICEF Executive Board and UNHCR ExCom meetings

The Commission debriefed on these meetings, including on the EU statements made.

d) Mozambique

The Portuguese delegation debriefed on a recent donor mission to the country in the aftermath of cyclones Idai and Kenneth.

e) Chad

The Commission explained why DG ECHO had authorised an advance payment on humanitarian projects in Chad despite a 1% tax currently levied on humanitarian assistance by the Government of Chad.

f) International Conference on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Crisis Situations  
(Amsterdam, 7-8 October)

The Dutch delegation debriefed on this event, whose goal was to show that psycho-social support was not a luxury but a necessity, and needed to be included in the humanitarian response by default.

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