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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: European Court of Auditors' Special Report 15/2025: 'EU humanitarian aid under remote management can save lives, but there are weaknesses in the approach'
- Council conclusions (20 November 2025)

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 15/2025: 'EU humanitarian aid under remote management can save lives, but there are weaknesses in the approach', as approved at the 4134th meeting of the Council on 20 November 2025.

Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 15/2025: 'EU humanitarian aid under remote management – Can save lives, but there are weaknesses in the approach'

1. The Council takes note of European Court of Auditors' Special Report 15/2025: 'EU humanitarian aid under remote management can save lives, but there are weaknesses in the approach', issued in June 2025, which for the period 2019 to 2023 assessed the Commission's remote management approach to the delivery of humanitarian aid in hard-to-access areas while adequately mitigating the risks involved.
2. The Council welcomes the report's wide scope covering the humanitarian aid project's lifecycle, the findings in the report, inclusion of three country examples of Syria, Ukraine and Somalia, the Commission's reply and annex on best practices in the sector. The Council notes with appreciation that, thanks to the application of the remote management approach, the Commission fulfils its mandate to provide humanitarian assistance to save and preserve life and prevent and alleviate human suffering, even in the most difficult contexts.
3. The Council underlines that humanitarian response should be anchored in a needs-based approach, paying attention to the different challenges, risks and actors involved in each humanitarian situation. Working with local actors can ensure an efficient response to local needs and that the most vulnerable within society are reached. The Council notes that Commission policy during the period assessed is to use the remote management approach as a last resort and to revert to direct implementation by its humanitarian partners as soon as possible. The Council recognises that the use of remote management arrangements in complex and conflict affected settings comes with elevated risk, and underlines the importance of adopting appropriate and effective measures to mitigate such risks.

4. While welcoming the contribution of local partners in implementing humanitarian aid, the Council underlines the importance of pairing remote management with sustained capacity-building support, strengthened supervision mechanisms, and clear safeguarding measures, so that support to local actors ensures access to humanitarian aid in hard-to-reach areas, preserving the quality, accountability and protection of beneficiaries. The Council underlines the importance of risk-sharing with partners in line with the IASC Risk Sharing Framework, to which the European Commission has contributed.
5. The Council notes that the Commission's unique presence in the field through its extensive network of field offices staffed with humanitarian experts provides key advantages in informing its decision-making and ensures proper monitoring of funded actions. The Council stresses the importance in maintaining a robust network of field offices to effectively oversee remote management arrangements. The Council welcomes the efforts made by the Commission in gaining access to populations in need in hard-to-reach areas as exemplified in the countries assessed by the Court of Auditors.
6. The Council welcomes the four recommendations made by the Court of Auditors on:
 - **improving the remote management approach and guidance where the Commission is requested before end 2026 to:**
 - a) define remote management and situations of partial remote management better in its guidance;
 - b) better embed the risks linked to the remote management approach in its risk register and update its control strategy to ensure that controls specifically address the risks linked to remote management; and
 - c) redesign its remote management templates and embed them in its IT systems.

- **strengthening the certification process for NGO partners, where the Commission is requested before end 2026 to:**
 - a) assess the partners’ capacity to identify, select, assess and monitor their local implementing partners to ensure adequate oversight;
 - b) obtain from the partner’s independent auditor reasonable assurance on the technical and administrative capacity of the family headquarters, when NGO partners use family headquarters as implementing partners.

 - **verifying information provided by partners in their remote management reporting management where the Commission is requested before end 2025 to:**
 - a) assess the criteria for approving funding for remotely managed action on the basis of sufficient information;
 - b) on a sample basis, verify the accuracy of the information reported by partners;
 - c) provide feedback to partners on their monitoring returns and update reporting templates and guidance where repeated shortcomings are identified.

 - **reporting on remote management to stakeholders, the Commission is requested before end 2025 to:**
 - a) make its reporting to stakeholders (annual and ad-hoc reporting to the Council and Parliament) more transparent by including information on the scope, funding and results of remote management.
7. While welcoming these recommendations, the Council stresses the importance of simplifying reporting and not adding excessive burden on humanitarian partners involved.
8. Further, the Council asks the Commission to review its delivery of cash assistance, including the net value reaching beneficiaries (taking into account exchange costs, informal intermediaries and market constraints), and to include efficiency metrics in project appraisal and monitoring for large cash programmes.

9. The Council welcomes the fact that the Commission has accepted and committed to implementation of all recommendations, within a timeframe as outlined by the Court of Auditors. The Council welcomes regular progress updates with a first report to the Council in December 2025.

 10. The Council invites the Commission to initiate a joint reflection in Team Europe on the harmonisation of EU donors' practices and procedures regarding the localisation of aid, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Court of Auditors' recommendations, but also to build on the ongoing work on the humanitarian reset.
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