



Council of the  
European Union

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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency  
To: Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid

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Subject: Work programme of the Portuguese Presidency for the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) - 1 January - 30 June 2021

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Delegations will find attached the work programme of the Portuguese Presidency for the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) for the period 1 January - 30 June 2021.

## Work Programme of the Portuguese Presidency for the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA)

1 January – 30 June 2021

The Portuguese Presidency will continue to pursue the common priorities of the Trio programme of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. In the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), Portugal will focus on enhancing coordination, engagement and information sharing in responding to current and future challenges in the humanitarian context, in the true spirit of *Team Europe* approach. As a token of the EU support to rules-based multilateralism, considerations on further supporting the UN's central coordinating role in emergencies (man-made and natural disasters) will remain a key feature.

In accordance with the above, our three main priorities will be the following themes; wherever possible we will strive to create strong synergies between them:

- a) Operationalising the humanitarian-development-peace nexus
- b) The impact of climate change on humanitarian action
- c) Inclusion and protection of the most vulnerable

In addition, within a cross-cutting perspective, we will address the following topics:

1. Humanitarian aid in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond
2. International humanitarian law and humanitarian principles
3. Food assistance and food and nutrition security

## APPROACH

The Portuguese Presidency will continue the efforts made by previous presidencies to strengthen the strategic role of COHAFA at operational level, reinforcing the WP's commitment to humanitarian and food assistance, while paying attention to humanitarian crises and emergencies worldwide.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on humanitarian action will be a constant feature of the Working Group's agenda, as well as the operationalisation of the *Team Europe* approach.

Moreover, the Portuguese Presidency will endeavour to place the emphasis on concrete contexts, addressing emerging, forgotten and protracted crises in a balanced manner. Our geographical focus will include Africa, the LAC region and the Middle East.

### A. OPERATIONALISING THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS

During the Portuguese Presidency, and as a contribution to COHAFA's discussions, we will provide input on the implementation of coherent and coordinated action between humanitarian, development and peace operations (HDP nexus).

In line with the recent methodological documents on how to operationalise the triple nexus, drawing from concrete cases and lessons learned in the field, we intend to contribute to a more effective implementation of the triple nexus approach.

By sharing best practices and lessons learned, we aim to enable a better understanding around the operationalisation of the triple nexus and the best way to bring peace actors on board, along with the humanitarian and development communities, by addressing both a vertical perspective (between funding institutions and the field) and a field perspective (between institutional representatives and implementers on the ground).

COHAFA will invite CODEV to jointly discuss ways to enhance the work on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

## **B. THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

The Portuguese Presidency will invite the COHAFA WP to discuss options in the remit of the EU and Member States to better integrate resilience and disaster risk reduction (DRR) into humanitarian action (with specific attention to disaster-prone contexts), while addressing the impacts of climate change and disasters on the most vulnerable populations, whose resilience is often already eroded by conflict, in many cases resulting in short-term or even protracted displacement.

In line with the EU Green Deal and international agendas such as the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Portugal will direct further attention to the importance of investing in preparedness and adaptation measures in order to respond more effectively to climate, environmental and biological hazards. Portugal's focus will be on promoting sustainable and durable solutions while also developing inclusive and climate-aware policies in order to build community resilience.

In this connection, all necessary measures must be taken to reduce the climate and environmental footprint of humanitarian aid. As major donors of humanitarian assistance, the European Union has a critical role to play in making change happen.

We will strive to reach a common understanding and promote complementarities between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the programming and implementation of humanitarian action.

## **C. INCLUSION AND PROTECTION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE**

The Portuguese Presidency will place a special emphasis on the protection and promotion of inclusive policies and humanitarian activities focusing on the most vulnerable groups – particularly women, the elderly, children and young people, internally displaced people, refugees and disabled people. Moreover, we will address the protection of the most vulnerable population groups, which are deeply affected by conflicts and emergencies.

Under this priority, the Portuguese Presidency will tackle the following topics:

1. Gender equality and gender-based violence

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by conflict and disasters. In crisis contexts, pre-existing gender inequalities are intensified, exposing women and girls to heightened risks of gender-based violence, limiting their access to crucial life-saving services, and influencing their food and livelihood security. Therefore, the Portuguese Presidency intends to direct more attention to the importance of including women as active actors within the humanitarian response and assistance rather than perceiving them as passive recipients of aid.

2. Education in Emergencies

Following the Council conclusions on education in emergencies and protracted crises (November 2018) and the commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum (December 2019), the Portuguese Presidency will seek to place emphasis on the provision of all levels of education in emergency contexts, putting this issue higher on the humanitarian agenda.

Education in emergencies can provide protection to children and young people, enhance resilience and build a stronger foundation to consolidate peace and prevent a relapse into conflict. This issue will also be addressed at COHAFA's informal meeting in June, with a particular emphasis on tertiary education for forcibly displaced and refugee students caught in crises and in need of international protection, in order to present innovative initiatives that deliver more, better and faster learning opportunities to young people.

Furthermore, during the Portuguese Presidency, the European Court of Auditors will present its Special Report: "To assess the effectiveness of EU actions in providing children with access to safe, inclusive and quality education in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises." The COHAFA WP will take the outcomes of the analysis of this document into account in the preparation of Council conclusions.

## CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

### 1. HUMANITARIAN AID IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

The publication by the European Commission of a *Communication on the EU's humanitarian aid in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond* will present an opportunity for the Member States to discuss the theme, with a view to reflecting on lessons learned and ways forward in relation to the impacts of the pandemic on the humanitarian sector. The preparation of Council conclusions will be considered.

When addressing the direct and secondary impact of COVID-19 in humanitarian contexts, the role of the EU's humanitarian assistance for global health priorities is an essential aspect to discuss, taking into account the prominent importance of preparedness and the response to epidemics, beyond COVID-19. The Global Health Summit of 21 May 2021 in Rome, organised under the G20 Italian Presidency, will be an occasion to reaffirm the need to tackle epidemics and health threats which disproportionately affect the most fragile settings.

### 2. INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW, HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

The Portuguese Presidency will highlight the importance of compliance with IHL, of respecting and safeguarding humanitarian principles, and ensuring humanitarian access in conflict situations. This will also include ensuring the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, as well as the safety and security of humanitarian and medical personnel.

In addition, special focus will be given to respecting the 'do no harm' principle, with a view to mitigating the potential negative impacts of humanitarian interventions on conflict situations.

### **3. FOOD ASSISTANCE AND FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY**

The Presidency will continue to reinforce the role of COHAFA regarding the provision of food assistance in an humanitarian context. We will highlight the importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition all around the world and we will continue to follow up on this issue, including in connection with the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021.

We will retain the established coordination procedure for the preparation of statements on behalf of the EU and its Member States for the WFP Executive Board.

#### **WORKING METHODS**

To enhance the debate and knowledge around some agenda items and thematic priorities, the Presidency will invite experts, civil society and international organisations to attend the meetings. Joint meetings with other Working Parties may be planned.

#### **INDICATIVE CALENDAR OF WP MEETINGS**

| <b>Month</b>    | <b>Day</b>                 |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| <b>January</b>  | 14 – Morning and afternoon |
| <b>February</b> | 11 – Morning and afternoon |
| <b>March</b>    | 11 – Morning and afternoon |
| <b>April</b>    | 15-16 (Format tbc)         |
| <b>May</b>      | 06-07 (Format tbc)         |
| <b>June</b>     | 14-15 (Format tbc)         |

#### **SPECIAL EVENTS AND MEETINGS**

| <b>Event</b>                                  | <b>Date</b>           |
|---|-----------------------|
| <b>Informal COHAFA-CODEV meeting (Lisbon)</b> | 3-4 June (Format tbc) |

## INDICATIVE CALENDAR OF MAJOR EVENTS

| <b>Date</b>              | <b>Event</b>   |
|--------------------------|--|
| <i>11 January</i>        | <b>One Planet Summit</b>   |
| <i>18-26 January</i>     | <b>WHO Executive Board</b>   |
| <i>20 January</i>        | <b>Good Humanitarian Donorship High-Level Meeting</b>  |
| <i>25 - 26 January</i>   | <b>Climate Adaptation Summit 2021</b>  |
| <i>26-29 January</i>     | <b>World Economic Forum Annual Meeting</b>   |
| <i>End January (tbc)</i> | <b>EU/HLP on internal displacement - event on solutions</b>  |
| <i>9-12 February</i>     | <b>UNICEF Executive Board</b>  |
| <i>18-26 February</i>    | <b>WFP Executive Board</b>   |
| <i>7-9 April</i>         | <b>UNHCR Standing Committee</b>  |
| <i>19 April – 7 May</i>  | <b>Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW)</b>  |
| <i>May (date tbd)</i>    | <b>Protection of Civilians Week</b>  |
| <i>3 May</i>             | <b>5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Security Council Resolution 2286:<br/>Healthcare and Armed Conflict</b> |
| <i>21 May</i>            | <b>Global Health Summit (Rome)</b>   |
| <i>29 May – 1 June</i>   | <b>World Health Assembly</b>   |
| <i>1-4 June</i>          | <b>UNICEF Executive Board</b>  |
| <i>21-25 June</i>        | <b>WFP Executive Board</b>   |
| <i>23-25 June</i>        | <b>ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS)</b>   |
| <i>June</i>              | <b>5<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Grand Bargain</b>  |
| <i>29 June – 1 July</i>  | <b>Standing Committee UNHCR</b>  |
| <i>June (date tbd)</i>   | <b>High-Level Meeting of the OCHA Donor Support Group</b>  |
| <i>June (tbc)</i>        | <b>Good Humanitarian Donorship High-Level Meeting</b>  |

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