

Brussels, 22 January 2025
(OR. en)

5614/25

COHAFA 8
DEVGEN 14
CSDP/PSDC 56
ALIM 1
PROCIV 7
COJUR 5
FIN 94
SAN 24
COEST 65
MAMA 21
COAFR 23
ACP 12
RELEX 85

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU
Work Programme
Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA)
1 January – 30 June 2025

On behalf of the Presidency, delegations will find in annex the work programme of the Polish Presidency for the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) from 1 January to 30 June 2025.

POLISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU

WORK PROGRAMME

WORKING PARTY ON HUMANITARIAN AID AND FOOD AID (COHAFA)

1 JANUARY – 30 JUNE 2025

1. The current humanitarian situation presents serious and complex challenges with a growing number of conflicts, climate-induced disasters, economic shocks and other global challenges affecting populations all around the world with varying degrees of intensity. The scale, severity and suddenness of humanitarian crises is growing, while resources for humanitarian action are failing to keep the pace, hindering the ability to deliver assistance when needed.
2. Addressing the humanitarian and global consequences of the unjustified and illegal Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the dramatic escalation of violence in the Middle East, *inter alia*, requires close collaboration between donors and stakeholders to provide assistance where needed and to all those in need. Neglected and protracted humanitarian crises add to the complexity of the challenges posed, with emergency assistance needs as yet unmet.
3. As pointed out in the 2025 Global Humanitarian Overview, in 2025, the UN system's appeals amount to seek USD 47 billion to assist nearly 190 million people across 72 countries that represent almost 62 per cent of people in need. This requires intensive work by humanitarians to prioritise assistance and protection for the people and places who need it most.
4. The EU needs to further engage in addressing humanitarian challenges while exploring new solutions. The Polish Presidency will make efforts to offer new perspectives that may help to reinforce efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian assistance mechanisms, taking into account discussions already carried out under previous COHAFA Presidencies. In this context, the Polish Presidency will further strengthen exchanges with emerging and potential donors.

5. As 2025 will see the new European Commission, this work programme will also be further informed by the expectations for the EU's leadership when it comes to humanitarian assistance.
6. The COHAFA Working Party's humanitarian agenda will also be developed and taken forward in the framework of the priorities of the Trio of Presidencies – Poland, Denmark and Cyprus – during the period of January 2025 – June 2026.
7. With growing humanitarian needs in mind, the Polish Presidency will focus on supporting partner countries by building their resilience at the national and local levels. Building strong state institutions, boosting the capacities of partner countries and enhancing the resilience of local populations, communities, civil society and individuals to various pressures and shocks are crucial in the context of preparedness, adaptation and policy transformation. Discussions will take place under the lens of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They will also cover scaling up disaster preparedness and anticipatory action (AA), as these elements are also important in the context of fragility and conflict-affected situations.
8. Among other important themes, the Polish Presidency will focus on the protection of civilians (including those belonging to the most vulnerable groups: women, children, young people, older people and people with disabilities) as well as of humanitarian workers.
9. The Polish Presidency will pay attention to the issues of humanitarian diplomacy (including humanitarian access, international humanitarian law (IHL), protection of civilians), localisation and humanitarian funding.
10. The Polish Presidency will also give due attention to the contribution that a more strategic approach to humanitarian supply chain can make to increasing effectiveness, efficiency and cost-savings in the humanitarian system and to supporting equitable and sustained access to essential supplies and services to people in need.

11. The 4th edition of the European Humanitarian Forum (EHF), co-hosted by the European Commission and Poland, will also be an opportunity to explore solutions to humanitarian challenges and highlight European engagements. The Forum will provide visibility to EU humanitarian action and the role of the Commission and EU Member States, as well as leaving room for partners to enrich the content. This will underpin the Forum's objective to address humanitarian challenges from a European perspective in a Team Europe spirit with an international audience. In this context, it is worth to note that Polish Presidency priorities in COHAFA intend to be well aligned with EHF's thematic strands – humanitarian diplomacy and integrated approach to fragility.

I. PRIORITIES

1. BUILDING RESILIENCE

12. Acting in the spirit of a holistic approach to humanitarian, development and peace issues, the Polish Presidency will prioritise supporting partner countries at national, regional and community level in building resilience to emerging crises, including by supporting and prioritising, where relevant, locally-led humanitarian action.
13. Bearing in mind the 2017 Council conclusions on the strategic approach to resilience in the EU's external action¹, the Polish Presidency will strive to emphasise the importance of the triple nexus, the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including financial institutions and the private sector, and the use of a variety of financial instruments to support partner countries in building strong and accountable institutions, ensuring respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and good governance, and improving communities' resilience and preparedness.
14. In the context of humanitarian action, building resilience is crucial to helping communities adapt to, prevent and effectively respond to challenges, including in fragile and conflict situations.

¹ ST 14191/17

15. As AA has great importance for both the humanitarian and the development aspects of building long-term resilience, the Polish Presidency will offer an opportunity for discussion to break down these silos. A critical component of this dialogue will be exploring how shock responsive social protection systems can complement AA by providing timely, predictable and scalable support to vulnerable populations before shocks escalate into crises area. The aim will be to show how cooperation between humanitarian and development actors can contribute to prevention and reduce the risk of disaster, poverty and fragility. Within those discussions, the Polish Presidency will also aim to raise the issue of the shortage of funding for AA and advocate for innovative and sustainable financing mechanism to ensure these measures are effectively implemented.
16. Therefore, the Polish Presidency's discussions around building resilience will focus on, among other issues, health, food security and localisation, while also taking into account the root causes of local populations' vulnerabilities.
17. The aim of the Polish Presidency will be to present and adopt Council conclusions on building resilience. While the Working Party on Development Cooperation and International Partnerships (CODEV-PI) will remain the lead working party on these Council conclusions, COHAFA will also contribute significantly to the related discussions.

2. PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AND HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY

18. The protection of civilians – particularly women, children, older people and people with disabilities, as well as humanitarian and health workers – plays a key role in humanitarian action and in conflict situations.
19. The Polish Presidency will emphasise the urgent need to improve protection mechanisms, by focusing more on humanitarian diplomacy to safeguard compliance with IHL and humanitarian space, improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action and engaging new emerging donors.

20. In this context, special attention will be paid to access to healthcare and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).
21. The Polish Presidency will also raise the issue of the impact of mine contamination on civilian populations and its global consequences.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL PRIORITIES

22. The Polish Presidency will remain committed to addressing the most serious humanitarian crises and their global impact.
23. As the consequences of Russia's aggression affect not only Ukraine and its neighbouring countries but also many countries around the world, especially developing countries. The Polish Presidency will maintain the call for continued, multifaceted and multi-layered humanitarian support for Ukraine.
24. The Polish Presidency will also remain engaged on the humanitarian situation in the Middle East and in Africa, being aware that the current conflicts (e.g. the Sahel, the DRC and the Sudan) are having devastating humanitarian consequences for civilians, also at regional level. In this context, the Polish Presidency will underline importance of compliance with IHL, stepping up on humanitarian diplomacy and the issue of accountability.
25. Under the Polish Presidency, COHAFA discussions will also include perspectives regarding the neglected and protracted crises that receive insufficient international attention and funding.

4. THE 4TH EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM

26. The 4th edition of the EHF, co-hosted by the European Commission and Poland, will take place on 19-20 May in Brussels.

27. The Polish Presidency will work with the European Commission to make the EHF a diverse, comprehensive, multi-stakeholder platform for exchanging views and experiences, sharing best practices and suggesting new solutions, regarding a variety of humanitarian crises around the world.

II. WORKING METHODS

28. The Polish Presidency will maintain the established practice of inviting various humanitarian experts to brief COHAFA, as well as organising joint meetings with other working groups if needed. The Polish Presidency may invite representatives from third countries in order to enhance coordination and donor outreach to address the humanitarian funding gap.
29. Common messages will be updated when appropriate.
30. Acting in the spirit of the nexus approach, the Polish Presidency will invite directors responsible for development and humanitarian affairs to an informal meeting. An informal joint COHAFA – CODEV-PI meeting is also planned.
31. Taking into account Member States' suggestions, the COHAFA meetings will mostly start in the afternoon on the first day and finish in the morning on the second day. The meetings may be accompanied by side events.
32. Given the unpredictable nature of crises, the Polish Presidency may amend its programme as necessary.

III. COHAFA CALENDAR

- 21-22 January 2025 (Tuesday-Wednesday), Brussels – COHAFA meeting
- 25-26 February 2025 (Tuesday-Wednesday), Brussels – COHAFA meeting
- 6-7 March 2025 (Thursday-Friday), Warsaw – Informal COHAFA – CODEV-PI meeting
- 24 April 2025 (Thursday), poss. online – COHAFA meeting
- 13 May 2025 (Tuesday), poss. online – COHAFA meeting
- 18-19 June 2025 (Wednesday-Thursday), Brussels – COHAFA meeting

OTHER MEETINGS

- 10-11 February 2025, Warsaw – Informal meeting of EU Development Ministers
- 18 February 2025, Brussels – Presentation of the Presidency programme to the European Parliament Committee on Development (DEVE)
- 12 March 2025, Brussels – Informal exchange on financial instruments and the future MFF (CODEV-PI leading)
- 8-9 April 2025, Warsaw – Informal humanitarian & development DGs meeting
- 19-20 May 2025, Brussels – European Humanitarian Forum
- 26 May 2025, Brussels – FAC Development

IV. PROVISIONAL CALENDAR OF MAIN HUMANITARIAN EVENTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2025)

January

- 28 January – humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Ukraine

February

- 3-11 February – WHO Executive Board
- 4-7 February – UNICEF Executive Board
- 17-21 February – WFP Executive Board
- 24-25 February – Fourth Riyadh Humanitarian Forum (including side events as a follow-up to the 2023 EU-GCC Summit to showcase European Commission’s cooperation on humanitarian affairs)
- date tbc – WHO Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response

March

- 13 March – Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting on Sudan
- 17-28 March – 2025 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks

April

- 2-3 April – Global Disability Summit
- 15 April – Event to mark the second anniversary of the conflict in Sudan

May

- 27 May – 1 June – WHO World Health Assembly
- date tbc – Protection of Civilians Week

June

- 10-13 June – UNICEF Executive Board
- 18-20 June – UN ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment
- 23-27 June – WFP Executive Board
- date tbc – Second High-Level Dialogue on EU-LAC Integrated Disaster Risk Management and presentation of the 1st annual report on the implementation of the EU-LAC MoU on Disaster Risk Management
- date tbc – 2025 Global Protection Conference
- date tbc – IOM Standing Committee on Projects and Finance

Events with no specific date at this stage:

- Brussels IX Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region” (Senior Officials Meeting and Conference + possibly associated events, e.g. Day of Dialogue)

V. POLISH COHAFA TEAM

COHAFA Chair: Ms Joanna LALAK

COHAFA Deputy Chair: Mr Przemysław CZYŻ

Polish COHAFA delegate: Ms Zuzanna BURSKA

Polish Presidency Liaison Officer to EHF: Ms Katarzyna SŁONIEWICZ
