Preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit: challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance

2015/2051(INI) - 18/11/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Development adopted the report by Enrique GUERRERO SALOM (S&D, ES) on preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS): challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance.

Members recalled that the number of people in need **has more than doubled since 2004 to over 100 million in 2015.** They also noted that:

- 250 million people are affected by humanitarian crises;
- the number of forcibly displaced persons has reached its highest point since World War II at nearly 60 million;
- over half of the world's refugees are children;
- economic losses from natural disasters are likely to increase dramatically from the USD 300 billion currently lost annually.

In view of this, Members felt it was time to **pass from global consultations to global action**. They called on Member States to support the WHS and to reach **firm Council conclusions, with specific commitments and priority areas for action,** while pursuing better coordination with emerging donors, based on **politically non-biased aid** as well as on humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Members stressed that today's enormous humanitarian challenges require a more inclusive and truly global humanitarian system while ensuring **people-centred and human rights-based protection responses.**

They emphasised that, in order to be meaningful, the WHS outcome document should include a **five-year roadmap for concrete political commitments undertaken**, linking the post-2015 development agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21).

Members called for a global, comprehensive and **long-term solution for the masses of people fleeing conflict regions**, noting that Europe's role and credibility on the global humanitarian scene is also at stake in the response in the EU to the current crisis.

Objectives of the summit: Members considered that the WHS should mainly:

- commit to a systematic, and participatory approach, for affected people to take part in the whole cycle of humanitarian action;
- work towards the institutionalisation, better monitoring and evaluation of the UN Accountability to Affected Populations framework;
- **reflect on the vital need for UN reform** towards an inclusive, transparent and effective coordination system, with a more inclusive and operative Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda;

- increase complementarity between humanitarian and development aid in order to address effectiveness and the humanitarian financing gaps.

For its part, the EU should, as the world's largest humanitarian aid donor, show leadership in the WHS by calling for more flexible methods for delivering humanitarian aid, as well as for effective tools for **preventing crises.**

Serving the needs of people in conflict: Members called on the EU to place protection at the heart of humanitarian action. It urged a stronger commitment to a human rights-based approach in humanitarian action. They called for the WHS to put in place **a comprehensive agreement on practical ways to reinforce the respect and compliance of international human rights law** (IHRL) and refugee law. They underlined that migrants must be offered the same level of protection of their rights as guaranteed to all other groups in times of crises.

Calling for a wide, participatory code of conduct among current and new donors, such as those reflected in the GHD principles, Members asked the Union and all international actors to improve, in refugee camps, techniques for providing humanitarian assistance, particularly by improving hygiene and distribution of drinking water.

They urged that the **provision of humanitarian aid follow international humanitarian law** and that EU humanitarian aid not be subject to restrictions imposed by other partner donors.

The report condemned the continued use of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls as a war weapon in humanitarian emergencies. All staff involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including police and military forces, should receive adequate gender-sensitive training.

Depoliticisation of humanitarian assistance: Members stressed that it is imperative to differentiate the humanitarian response from foreign, political, security and **counter-terrorism considerations.** They insisted that counter-terrorism measures should neither undermine nor obstruct humanitarian efforts, and invites the WHS to address this issue in an appropriate way

Humanitarian effectiveness: the committee condemned the consistent thwarting of attempts to deliver humanitarian aid and any action that violates the principles guarding against "non-assistance to persons in danger." It was deeply concerned about the recurrent attacks on both humanitarian workers and infrastructures, including hospitals. More work is needed to improve their safety. Members felt that there must be a **clear distinction between civilian humanitarian and military actors,** and that the civil humanitarian response must be prioritised.

Given the alarming number of children who are denied education and the huge potential of education to increase people's resilience, Members called on the Council to **endorse the Commission's proposal to dedicate 4 % of the EU humanitarian aid budget to this purpose**. At the same time, they called for the establishment of a **global fund for humanitarian assistance** (GFHA) that supports the participation of non-DAC donors and brings together all existing international financial mechanisms, domestic resources and pooled funds (UN emergency response funds, CERF funds, trust funds, etc.). They urged governments, donors and their enabling environments to simplify administrative requirements for implementing partners. They also called on the WHS to establish a new deal for engagement with fragile states and protracted crisis with sustainable programmes.

Reducing vulnerability: the report underlined that an international response should build on existing **local** or national initiatives and partnerships rather than create parallel efforts. It stressed the need for a **new global model for complementarity** on which to base cooperation between humanitarian and development actors, starting with joint analyses and programming. Such a model should include:

- entry strategies for development actors allowing them to build bridges in the field,
- crisis modifiers in development programmes, and,
- exit strategies for humanitarian responses;
- accountable and flexible multiannual funding mechanism for responding to protracted crises.

Members called on the Commission to present an initiative to link humanitarian aid, development cooperation and resilience in a more systematic way, so as to enable the EU to be more flexible and effective in responding to growing needs.

Managing risk: Members stresses the importance of disaster risk reduction for resilience in four priority areas:

1) understanding disaster risks;

2) strengthening risk governance to manage disaster risk;

3) investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, contingency plans and early warning systems; and

4) enhance disaster preparedness for effective response, and to "build back better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

They underlined that disaster preparedness, risk reduction and resilience should **systematically be incorporated** into the response plans to be provided by local, regional and national administrations, industry and civil society.

They also called on the WHS to give strong emphasis to the issue of **climate change** and humanitarian action.

Transformation through innovation: Members believed that public-private and cross-sectorial partnerships could be a means to complement the public response to growing humanitarian needs. They acknowledges that while only a small proportion of humanitarian assistance is currently **cash-based**, the use of cash-based assistance has significant potential as an innovative, dignifying, safe, gender sensitive, flexible and cost-efficient modality to cover the emergency basic needs of the most vulnerable. They called on the EU and its Member States to promote the common principles and the **use of unconditional cash assistance.**

Members emphasised the role of new technologies and innovative digital tools in the organisation and delivery of the humanitarian aid, particularly in remote areas and disaster zones. They highlighted that Africa, and especially sub-Saharan Africa, is currently undergoing a mobile digital revolution with a surge in mobile subscriptions (and mobile internet use), makings such tools crucial for putting in place early warning systems and for providing **speedy information on health matters, danger areas and aid contacts.**

The EU was also asked to explore and encourage partnerships with start-ups, and with insurance and technology companies, with a view to developing tools for **preparedness and deployment in emergencies.**

Lastly, Members emphasised the need to ensure predictable and **timely funding for humanitarian aid through the EU budget.**