New orientations for the EU’s humanitarian action

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The Committee on Development adopted an own-initiative report by Norbert NEUSER (S&D, DE) on new orientations for the EU’s humanitarian action.

Humanitarian needs are at an all-time high, with **238 million people in need of assistance in 2021**, mainly due to conflict, but also to systemic factors such as climate change, natural disasters, environmental degradation, global population growth, food insecurity, limited water resources and failed governance. The COVID-19 outbreak has further exacerbated the global humanitarian crisis.

The report sets out how the EU and its Member States can respond to the challenge, working with their various humanitarian partners and other donors. It proposes a series of initiatives grouped into two main areas:

Addressing the growing needs and reducing the funding gap

While welcoming the Commission's communication on EU humanitarian action, Members recalled that EU humanitarian aid must always be provided solely on the basis of well-defined and pre-assessed needs, fully in line with the humanitarian principles of **humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence**, and pay particular attention to the difficulties faced by vulnerable groups. They welcomed the Commission's initiative of integrating education in emergencies.

Concerned about the sharp increase in the humanitarian funding gap, Members called on the Commission to **provide a robust annual budget** for EU humanitarian aid to ensure timely, predictable and flexible funding for humanitarian aid from the start of each financial year, and to keep a ring-fenced envelope within the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve for humanitarian crises outside the EU. Member States are urged to lead by example and allocate a fixed share of their gross national incomes to humanitarian aid.

The Commission and the European External Action Service are asked to develop a **long-term strategy for working with third countries**, in particular emerging donors, to increase the number of donor countries contributing to humanitarian aid on a voluntary basis. Members called for the establishment of an **EU coordination mechanism** to ensure a coherent EU approach to international humanitarian law.

The report also called on the Commission and the Member States to: (i) closely monitor **violations of international humanitarian law** and include violations of international humanitarian law as a criterion for listing individuals or entities under the relevant EU sanctions regimes and (ii) prosecute and sanction those who use starvation as a weapon of war in order to combat widespread violations of the right to food during conflicts.

Supporting a more enabling environment for humanitarian aid

Members stressed the importance of **supporting local actors** and urged the Commission to develop an ambitious localisation policy (especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic) that promotes transparency, making use of partners’ expertise and experience, and outlining how to provide more and better support for local respondents to strengthen their capacities, enable them to make use of all the instruments available and ensure their involvement in decision-making processes.

The report highlighted the challenges posed by **climate change** and called on the Commission to provide the necessary resources for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction through, *inter alia*, the Neighbourhood Instrument, development cooperation and international cooperation, in the framework of an approach based on the triple nexus of humanitarian aid, development and peace involving indigenous peoples and local communities.

The Commission and the European External Action Service are invited to adopt a communication developing a **clear policy on a humanitarian-development-peace nexus** in order to address the root causes of fragility and conflict, drawing in particular on the practical experience of non-governmental organisations.

Members called for more concrete **gender mainstreaming** in future humanitarian action. They called on the EU to implement the Nansen Initiative programme on **cross-border displaced persons** in the context of disasters and climate change and to place particular emphasis on **food** as a basic right for all.

Lastly, Members insisted that the first European Humanitarian Forum in January 2022 should be inclusive and accessible, involve humanitarian implementing partners and seek to increase the visibility of EU humanitarian aid.