Humanitarian aid and ECHO. Annual reports 2000 and 2001

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The Commission has presented its 2003 annual report on the Humanitarian Aid Office – ECHO.

Following its needs-based approach to humanitarian crises ECHO adapted its funding patterns to the global evolution of humanitarian needs. The main beneficiaries of ECHO aid were populations in Africa (EUR 225 million), followed by Asia/Latin America (EUR 224. 2 million). Important funding was also provided to the Occupied Palestinian Territories given the deterioration of the humanitarian conditions. As for the Newly Independent States, the

humanitarian situation of the Chechen population had not improved. Funding levels thus remained high (EUR 26 million). Low funding levels for operations in Europe (EUR 7.7 million) reflected, as foreseen, the phase-out in the Balkans. Applying it to the 2003 budget allocation, 64 % (EUR 347.6 million) of ECHO's budgetwas spent in areas of highest needs, as compared with 49% in 2002.

ECHO's annual aid strategy 2003 underlined its continued focus on forgotten crises where there is little interest from public opinion and other donors. Forgotten crises identified included Western Sahara, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar/Burma, Angola, Burundi, Northern Korea, Philippines, Northern Caucasus (Chechnya), Thailand, Uganda and Yemen. The total support allocated to those crises was EUR 119 million, roughly 20 % of the budget (+ 4% compared to 2002).

ECHO was a key player promoting the adoption of the "Principles and Good Practices of Humanitarian Donorship" by the world´s leading humanitarian donors and organisations (Stockholm, June 2003). While maintaining a broad dialogue with the humanitarian NGOs on crucial humanitarian issues, ECHO demonstrated its commitment to close donor co-ordination by participating in the UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and supporting International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Appeals. In 2003 ECHO chaired the annual meeting of the principal donors of ICRC and hosted the launch of the UN CAP in Brussels. It should be notes that the draft Constitutional Treaty provided for a specific provision on humanitarian aid. It became part of the European Council's agreement on the Constitutional Treaty of June 2004, reaffirming that humanitarian aid operations shall comply with international law and the principles of impartiality, neutrality and non-discrimination.

For ECHO, the best way to preserve the "humanitarian space" is full implementation of the Good Donorship Principles, continuous commitment to high quality assistance and a transparent dialogue with other key players.