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**Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid - ECHO**

**Operational Strategy 2008**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Year after year, humanitarian crises create a level of human distress to which the European Union and its citizens cannot remain indifferent. Responding to its founding principles such as solidarity, respect for human dignity and tolerance, the European Union plays a prime role in the task of assistance, both through actions undertaken by its Member States as well as through the implementation of the Community's humanitarian aid. Above all, the European Commission has committed itself to relieving human suffering by providing unconditional aid to the populations affected by disasters, both natural and man-made. Today it is one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid.

The Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) is the service charged with the implementation of the European Commission's humanitarian aid. Its mandate defined in the Council Regulation of 20 June 1996<sup>1</sup>, gives it the task of providing the response to humanitarian crises. Concretely, its prime role is to 'save and preserve life' in situations both of sudden emergency as well as of longer term duration.

Over the years, DG ECHO has built up a well established reputation in the humanitarian scene, not only for having become one of the principle donors of humanitarian aid but also for the objectivity and coherence of its approach. This is because the provision of humanitarian aid is done solely as a response to the real needs of the affected populations according to the international humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, impartiality, and neutrality. DG ECHO supports a multilateral approach and initiatives which encourage the principles and good practices in humanitarian actions, e.g. the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.

The humanitarian service of the European Commission must continually maintain a watch to ensure the effectiveness, speed and quality of the aid provided. The examination of the humanitarian service of the European Commission by its peers in the OECD/DAC finalised in 2007 clearly recognised the efforts of DG ECHO to achieve this. In addition, and for the third time since its creation, the European Commission's humanitarian aid was the subject of an external global evaluation in 2006. Following up on this evaluation, the year 2007 has been marked by a willingness to examine its place on the European and world scene, on its means of implementation and on relations with its partners and other humanitarian actors.

With the adoption on 13 June 2007 of the Communication 'Towards a European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid', the European Commission has, for the first time since the adoption of the regulation on humanitarian aid in 1996, started a reflection and in depth discussion on humanitarian aid at the European level. This debate should provide answers both to questions of principle and to the challenges facing humanitarian actors. The discussion aims to establish a document outlining a political orientation for humanitarian aid: a 'consensus on humanitarian aid', common throughout the European Union.

With this Consensus, the European Commission is attempting to develop a common political source for values, objectives and principles to which the Member States represented in the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission can subscribe with the aim of reinforcing the coherence of the collective European humanitarian response. The European

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<sup>1</sup> Council Regulation (EC) no 1257/96 of 20 June 1996, as modified by Regulation (EC) no 1882/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 September 2003 (OJ L 284 of 31.10.2003, p1)

Consensus on Humanitarian Aid is scheduled to be signed by the three Institutions in December 2007. At the time of writing this text, negotiations between the three Institutions on the Consensus are ongoing.

It is moreover important to note that the Community's humanitarian aid aims to keep a synergy between the actors and those of other European Commission's services. In this context, close attention will be paid to the coordination between humanitarian aid and other community instruments, such as the geographic and thematic programmes<sup>2</sup>. In the wider field of the links between emergency, rehabilitation and development (LRRD), the need for effective links between the different instruments must be considered not only to ensure a continuity of action towards the transition to development but also to better take into account rehabilitation and development aspects when deciding on the humanitarian response.

## 2. OVERALL SITUATION AND OUTLOOK FOR 2008

At the time of writing this paper<sup>3</sup>, and in contrast to previous years, 2007 has seen no major new crisis, whether they be natural disasters or complex emergencies.

Nevertheless, natural disasters, continuing the development begun some years ago, are, as a result of climate change, continuing to increase both in frequency and severity, affecting more often and more severely already vulnerable populations. In 2007 medium level natural disasters increased in number, creating serious damage: examples are the earthquake in Peru; flooding in Africa, India and Bangladesh; cyclone Felix in Nicaragua and Hurricane Dean in the Caribbean. DG ECHO had to move speedily to help thousands of suffering people, many of whom were already affected by complex emergencies<sup>4</sup>.

It is at a time of natural disasters that insufficiencies in the local response capacity to respond often become evident. It is important to seek to reduce the risks linked to natural disasters on an ongoing and long-term basis. Within the confines of its humanitarian mandate, DG ECHO has played a very active role in natural disaster preparedness, in particular through its DIPECHO programme, which began in 1996 and through which more than 120 million € has been invested in the six regions of the world most at risk. Continuing this commitment, the European Commission will seek to further reinforce during 2008 the prior preparation of the different actors to respond to disasters.

During 2007 certain complex emergencies already existing in 2006 got worse. One example is Sudan, where the situation remains very worrying: violence and extortion towards the civilian population continue and have again forced many to flee elsewhere in the country or to take refuge in neighbouring countries. Floods affecting the north of Sudan, including Darfur, in July 2007 have compounded the situation. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the fighting and tensions in the east of the country restarted during the summer of 2007, particularly in the north and the southern part of Kivu, causing there as well numerous population movements and new humanitarian needs. Somalia is also faced with both natural disasters and violence, forcing many to leave their homes.

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<sup>2</sup> E.g. the Stability Instrument, the ACP–EU Facility for natural disasters, the Peace Facility for Africa etc.

<sup>3</sup> October 2007

<sup>4</sup> Among the countries already suffering a complex emergency one could cite: Colombia; Nepal; Somalia; Sri Lanka and Sudan.

As far as uprooted people are concerned, the year has seen an increase in the number both of refugees as well as internally displaced.

Thus the total number of refugees reached 14.3 million<sup>5</sup> at the end of 2006, compared to about 13 million a year earlier, an increase of 9%. This is largely due to the fact that 1.2 million Iraqis took refuge in Jordan and Syria<sup>6</sup> during 2006. More notably, in the ongoing crisis of the Palestinian refugees, there are now more than 4.4 million<sup>7</sup>, a number which has increased by more than 100,000. To this must be added the situation of those who took refuge in Lebanon and who have now suffered a deterioration of their living situation following the fighting which has taken place in and around their camps.

With regard to internally displaced people (IDPs), after the small decrease noted during 2005<sup>8</sup>, the number has also increased during the year, reaching a total of 24.5 million at the end of 2006. Sudan, Colombia, Iraq, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo are the countries where the number having fled their homes is the greatest<sup>9</sup>. While the situation of those forced to move within their country is always very difficult, it is particularly so when authorities are hesitant about accepting external humanitarian aid and where the populations concerned are difficult to reach and live in deplorable conditions.

In 2008 the humanitarian actors must meet certain important challenges. The ever more systematic non-respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in armed conflicts is at the heart of current preoccupations. This severely limits the humanitarian space, making certain humanitarian actions sometimes partially or totally impossible. Humanitarian actors are more and more often seen as targets (e.g. Afghanistan; Central African Republic; Darfur). During 2006, 85 humanitarian workers were killed around the globe<sup>10</sup>. This deterioration of the security conditions has a direct negative impact on the access to the victims. The respect for the humanitarian space will remain a major issue for all humanitarian actors. The European Commission will therefore continue to advocate the reestablishment of the integrity of the humanitarian space during 2008.

### 3. GENERAL PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES

In order to programme its actions in favour of the populations in greatest humanitarian need, DG ECHO identifies these needs on the basis of a two-pronged approach. The first approach is the evaluation of the needs undertaken in the field by experts and geographical units of the European Commission's humanitarian service, as well as the ex ante evaluation of independent specialised evaluators. The second is a global evaluation undertaken on the basis of national indicators designed to identify those countries which ought to be priority beneficiaries of DG ECHO assistance. This is done both on the basis of their degree of vulnerability and existence of a crisis (Global Needs Assessment – GNA) and on the basis of the forgotten nature of the crisis (Forgotten Crises Assessment – FCA).

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<sup>5</sup> The figure includes Palestinian refugees.

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR "2006 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons", Geneva, June 2007

<sup>7</sup> UNRWA, Publications – Statistics, 31.12.2006, <http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> The figure decreased to 23.7 Million.

<sup>9</sup> IDMC, NRC "Internal Displacement – Global overview of Trends and Developments 2006", Geneva, April 07

<sup>10</sup> Reuters AlertNet, Peter Apps "Once seen neutral, aid workers fight perceived bias", <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L31849991.htm>

The identification of priority countries by GNA is done on the basis of two complementary indices. The crisis index evaluates the nearness in time of a severe incident – a war or a natural disaster – or the weighting of a population of refugees or internally displaced on the total population of the country in question. The vulnerability index seeks to measure the national capacity to absorb and reduce the effects of a crisis. It is made up of different measurements, going from the Human Development Index (HDI) to the mortality rate of children under 5.

For 2008, of the 41 countries currently experiencing a crisis as defined by the evaluation, 15 have been defined as extremely vulnerable<sup>11</sup>. Of these 15 countries, 11 are in Africa, with the others being Afghanistan; Chechnya (Russian Federation); East Timor and Yemen.

As far as the identification of forgotten crises is concerned, the FCA notes the countries with a positive crisis index (existence of a crisis), and then takes into account the vulnerability index, media coverage, humanitarian and development aid per capita, as well as the evaluations of the geographic units of DG ECHO. The European Commission will remain particularly vigilant with regard to the following forgotten crises in 2008:

- the crisis caused by the conflict in Myanmar/ Burma: the populations that are internally displaced or refugees in neighbouring countries
- the population affected by the conflict in Abkhazia (Georgia)
- the populations affected by the different conflicts in India: Kashmir; Naxalites; North East India
- the populations affected by food insecurity in the region of Nusa Tenggara Timur in Indonesia
- the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal
- the crisis in Haiti
- the populations affected by the conflict in Chechnya ( Russian Federation )
- the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria
- the populations affected by the conflict in Colombia.

#### **4. GEOGRAPHICAL PRIORITIES FOR 2008**

##### **4.1 Africa, Caribbean and Pacific**

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<sup>11</sup> Their number has therefore decreased since the evaluation for 2007, since the number of countries both in crisis and extremely vulnerable was then 24.

The 2008 DG ECHO's strategy for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries includes 13 country programmes<sup>12</sup> and 2 regional programmes<sup>13</sup>.

#### *4.1.1. Horn of Africa*

DG ECHO will continue to work and strengthen cooperation with the Commission Delegations through its regional and national support offices in the framework of LRRD in order to ensure coherence and complementarities between humanitarian interventions and development programmes. In particular, in the areas of managing chronic food and health crises, with their multiple causes, DG ECHO will work in close cooperation with the other Commission services, donors and national authorities in order to put into effect lasting response strategies. In this context, DG ECHO's role is to respond with individual actions in different areas, including food aid and health, which fit in with long-term development programmes. Concrete examples of the method of approach are the Regional Drought Initiative in the Horn of Africa and the Global Plan for the Sahel.

#### Sudan

The evolution of the peace process in Darfur remains unpredictable, and the political and security equilibrium in Southern Sudan and the transitional areas are precarious. The deployment of UNAMID is expected to improve security, and it is essential that it also preserves the humanitarian space. DG ECHO's engagement will remain considerable in order to contribute assisting more than 4 million affected people and in particular 2.2 million IDPs in Darfur. In Southern Sudan, the humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will continue assisting the return and reintegration of refugees, and improving access to basic services and protection, with a focus on health, nutrition and food security in the return areas and in the communities facing extreme survival challenges. In the North and transitional areas, the reintegration of possible returnees, as well as IDPs in camps, will be assisted. At country level, response to the frequent natural disasters and outbreaks of epidemics will be reinforced. Support to air transport, logistics, security and coordination will be strengthened, particularly in the South where more partners have established a permanent presence. Cross-cutting issues, such as the environment, child protection, gender and HIV/AIDS will receive special attention.

#### Regional Drought Initiative (RDI)

Given the situation of chronic and structural emergency, a new approach will be followed to address the drought related needs within a medium-long term perspective to be developed in the framework of a RDI, with focus on water and sanitation and livelihood support in large, abandoned, dry and poorly serviced regions where vulnerable populations live. A mid-term evaluation of the 2006/2007 drought preparedness programme recommended a wider, more strategic approach, calling for an increase in geographical scope, funding, sectors of intervention and implementation periods. LRRD such as the DP/DMI<sup>14</sup> continuum in Kenya is

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<sup>12</sup> Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Complementarity is sought with other Commission programmes through these programmes. The Regional B envelopes of EDF IX for emergency and humanitarian aid well illustrates the desire to meet unforeseeable needs on the basis of a regional solidarity.

<sup>13</sup> Horn of Africa and Sahel.

<sup>14</sup> Disaster Preparedness/Disaster Management Initiative.

recommended and should be intensified in the follow-up programme. DG ECHO should fill gaps in service provision and thus take the lead in initiating projects which can then be absorbed by longer-term funding from government and/or development actors.

### Eritrea

The unresolved border dispute with Ethiopia has led to a steady decline in many sectors, causing poverty. This, coupled with recurrent severe droughts in a structural food deficit country - where 40% of the population are semi nomadic pastoralists- desertification, poor infrastructure and insecurity along the border with Ethiopia, is responsible for the deteriorating humanitarian situation. The Government's food security policy resulted in all in-country food aid being monetised, including resources from WFP. WFP has decided to suspend its operations as long as the dispute remains unresolved. From a humanitarian point of view, the health and nutritional status of vulnerable populations are the main source of concern. Restrictions imposed by the government on humanitarian agencies, especially NGOs, negatively impacts on the limited in-country capacity to address the extensive identified needs. Against this background, the strategy for 2008 aims at transferring water and sanitation and livestock projects to the RDI, whereas key health and nutrition needs will continue to be addressed by the country programme. Support will be provided to nutrition, health and protection activities, as well as to operations in favour of IDPs. Considering the current government's food aid policy, it does not seem possible, at this stage, to allocate a contribution to that sector.

### Ethiopia

The overall political situation remains fragile, the conflict with neighbouring Eritrea unsolved. Growing inflation erodes the purchasing power of large segments of the population. Violence is significant in the volatile Somali Regional State. Food security has improved in 2007, despite the existence of some chronically food insecure areas. However, over 2 million people might still be in need of emergency food assistance due to the possible impact of flooding, localized agricultural production failure, and other shocks. A deterioration of the health situation is expected as a result of drought and floods, as well as an increase in malnutrition in pastoral, refugee and IDPs areas, and epidemic outbreaks. Severe malnutrition has been reported in refugee areas in the south and in resettlement areas of the Oromya Region. There is a possible risk of an increased number of refugees due to conflict in neighbouring countries. Relevant water and sanitation and livestock projects will be transferred to the RDI, whereas others sectors will continue to be addressed by the country programme (primary health care and epidemics, protection, refugees and IDPs, climatic hazards) or by the provision of food aid, including for food security and nutrition purposes. Restriction of access to certain areas (e.g. Somali region), lack of security, regional conflict and bureaucratic impediments represent the main challenge to the humanitarian community.

### Kenya

Kenya is affected by shocks from recurrent natural disasters: drought, floods, landslides and ensuing outbreaks of epidemics, especially in the North Eastern provinces where some of the worst humanitarian indicators in all Africa are found and basic services such as health, water and education are lacking. DG ECHO plans to phase out of its country programme for Kenya, although it will remain engaged through the proposed RDI. Kenya is also faced with a

considerable caseload of Somali refugees on its Eastern borders and Sudanese refugees in the North West towards whom DG ECHO's engagement will remain significant.

### Somalia

For the past 16 years, Somalia has seen open-ended conflict and instability with overwhelming humanitarian needs aggravated by worsening cyclical droughts, floods and epidemic outbreaks. Since the end of 2006, South Somalia has experienced a scale of renewed fighting which has come on the heels of a series of shocks: a severe drought, floods, outbreaks of Rift Valley fever and cholera as well as crop failures. An estimated 40 percent of the population live in dire poverty. A third of the population has access to safe water and a quarter has improved sanitation facilities. In 2008, some water and sanitation and food security programmes will be covered under the RDI, whereas the country programme will include health, support to IDPs, shelter, protection and some rural activities. It is also envisaged to provide food aid. Although humanitarian operators remain engaged in Somalia, access might remain difficult and risky for them in many areas.

### Uganda

In the Northern Uganda region of Acholi, the Juba peace talks and the overall security improvements have prompted an initial return process of the original 1.5 million IDPs and resulted in substantially improved access to land. However, IDPs in Acholil remain extremely cautious and only a minority have already returned to their original villages. Humanitarian needs in Acholi are likely to change in nature, but less so in scope. It is anticipated that humanitarian and transition needs will coexist for at least the next 18-24 months with a progressive increase of the latter as return movements intensify and LRRD continues to gain momentum. Health, protection, rehabilitation of basic social infrastructure, as well as enhanced food security will be the focus. Karamoja - where the general security situation has improved but continues to fluctuate depending on season and livelihood options - continues to be faced with recurrent and increasingly severe droughts, failing crop production, and reducing options for livestock maintenance, all issues negatively impacting upon both human and animal health. Malnutrition rates continue year after year to be above emergency thresholds. In Karamoja, relevant water and sanitation and livestock projects will continue under the RDI. A substantial country programme will be maintained. LRRD will be strengthened through complementarities with the Karamoja Development Programme and the Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme (NUREP) funded under the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF.

#### *4.1.2. Great Lakes, Central Africa, Indian Ocean*

### Burundi

The somewhat unsteady and indecisive beginning of the newly elected government has prevented the country from fully benefiting from the peace dividend. There have also been unforeseeable setbacks due to mainly poor harvests as a result of floods. However, there is an increasing presence of development donors and private investment. In the framework of the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF, a number of projects due to start in the beginning of 2008 will potentially ensure the LRRD process in the health, food security and rural development sectors in particular. Against this background, DG ECHO will pursue its gradual disengagement from the health, nutrition and water and sanitation sectors, whilst continuing its support in areas of high refugee and IDP repatriation, particularly where development donors have yet to reach critical

mass, as well as in the Congolese refugee camps. Sectors of intervention will continue to be in health, water and sanitation and emergency food security.

### The United Republic of Tanzania

Tanzania continues to host one of the largest refugee populations in Africa, a burden that is not being alleviated as quickly as one might have expected. For various reasons, which include genuine concerns for their own safety in DRC and Burundi, but also due to issues of an economic nature, refugees are not returning home en masse. The Tanzanian government has formally expressed its wish to conclude the repatriation by the end of 2007, which is virtually impossible as over 270,000 remain and less than 2,000 are returning per month. DG ECHO will encourage UNHCR to promote voluntary repatriation but it is evident that in 2008 the agency will have to maintain contributions to the care and maintenance of the remaining refugees in the camps and continue to fund the repatriation exercises.

### Democratic Republic of Congo (including DG ECHO Flight)

The government democratically formed in 2007 is struggling to make progress on the socio-economic front. Ethnic tensions remain high in the East, which has led to persistent sources of conflict that have continued to prey on the local population. If unresolved this situation could re-ignite a sub-regional conflict. As it is, it is preventing a full transition from emergency to sustainable development. The overall trend remains one of improvement with an increasing deployment of rehabilitation and development programmes as well as private investments. The disbursement of 9th EDF funds continues in the sectors of health and infrastructure and allocations to the Eastern DRC rehabilitation programme have increased. Nevertheless the humanitarian needs are many. Sectors of intervention will continue to be health, water and sanitation, food security, protection and logistics. With respect to the latter, and taking into account the geographical characteristics of the country, its infrastructure as well as the need of air transportation, in the course of 2008 DG ECHO will keep its commitment to ECHO Flight.

### Central African Republic

The widespread insecurity in the north of the country due to the exactions of the defence and security forces, the activities of the rebel movement, the poachers and the highwaymen have worsened the humanitarian situation. Urgent assistance to the civilian population increased considerably during 2007, including from DG ECHO. The aid took into account both the needs of the population as well as, in the framework of LRRD, the development actions foreseen by the European Commission. The ongoing presence of FOMUC (Multilateral Force for Central Africa) during 2008 should help to improve the security situation in the regions where it is stationed, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid and the start up of development programmes. DG ECHO will remain present and will continue to closely monitor the humanitarian situation, modifying its actions according to the evolution of the situation and to the needs.

#### *4.1.3. Southern Africa*

### Zimbabwe

The government has persisted with policies that have led to a sharp economic downturn, galloping inflation and a scarcity of affordable essential commodities. Not only have essential

services deteriorated further (notably health and water and sanitation), but finding food has become increasingly difficult. Many people are leaving the country, especially skilled workers. Both chronic and acute malnutrition are increasing, with emergency thresholds in some areas. Due to the current general deterioration of the situation, compounded by severe drought, the challenge for 2008 will be considerable, and DG ECHO and its partners will have to assist a population experiencing '*retrograde development*'. Assistance, and food aid in particular, is likely to be highly politicised in a country where regular development programmes have been suspended and emergency humanitarian interventions are subject to government interference. Humanitarian needs for 2008 are now anticipated at levels at least matching those of last year in the fields of food security/food aid, health and water and sanitation. Humanitarian interventions for 2008 will be co-ordinated with other relevant EC programming in order to ensure complementarities.

#### 4.1.4. West Africa

##### Chad

The protection crisis affecting the Eastern part of the country, which hosts more than 230,000 Sudanese refugees and some 175,000 Chadian IDPs continue to suffer from widespread insecurity, especially in arid areas where competition for scarce natural resources exacerbates long-standing tensions and rivalries. Access to beneficiaries remains difficult in several areas. The situation is further complicated by the presence of some 48,000 refugees from the CAR in the South. In case the envisaged deployment of an European Union military force, complementary to a UN peacekeeping force, manages to increase security in the East whilst preserving the humanitarian space, it would be possible to envisage voluntary return programmes for IDPs, coupled with some rehabilitation and early recovery schemes. However, it is anticipated that this will last beyond the year 2008 and therefore DG ECHO's support of IDPs next year remains needed. The humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will also continue supporting Sudanese refugees in camps, as well as vulnerable host populations in displacement areas in the East and refugees from the CAR in the South. With regard to both the Sudanese refugees and the IDPs, DG ECHO will focus on protection, health, water and sanitation, food aid and food security, fuel and heating items, co-ordination, education in camps, and support to the humanitarian air service.

##### Sahel

DG ECHO's 2007 Sahel Global Plan<sup>15</sup> had a very significant impact in promoting an LRRD approach to dealing with acute vulnerability and malnutrition. By committing funds and mobilising partners to reduce the risk of a new crisis similar to the one of 2005, DG ECHO stimulated the adoption of a coordinated aid mechanism where the European Commission short and long term instruments worked together to achieve a sustained reduction in hunger and infant and maternal mortality (priority Millennium Development Goals). The results of the real-time evaluation are expected to widely confirm the success of the programme. For 2008 therefore, it is proposed to maintain the same three-pillar approach: a) Consolidation of the knowledge base (understanding the causes of acute vulnerability and malnutrition); b) Demonstrative effect of pilot projects (acute malnutrition was not inevitable and could be tackled at local community level with innovative feeding and health strategies); c) Advocacy for the mainstreaming of humanitarian concerns into development planning and resource

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<sup>15</sup> Including Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad.

allocation. However it is proposed to enlarge the geographical coverage of the programme to include the Sahel regions of neighbouring countries where an acute malnutrition had been reported, generating an increasing worry.

### Liberia

The European Commission formally pledged the continuation of humanitarian support to bridge transition towards development. The 10<sup>th</sup> EDF, once finalised, would include "LRRD in a post conflict and fragile State" as focal sector. The health sector has been identified as the most critical sector during the transitional period, and DG ECHO will remain committed in this sector at least until the end of 2008. Huge needs are still to be addressed in the water and sanitation sector, in both urban and rural areas where very few development programmes are being conducted. The assisted repatriation of Liberian refugees has come to an end in June 2007, and it is not foreseen to provide further assistance in this sector in 2008. With regard to food security/livelihood operations, in order to address the funding gap until the new FSTP (Food Security Thematic Programme) budget line produces tangible results, DG ECHO will maintain an allocation for integrated livelihoods interventions. The needs of the most vulnerable population still remain critical. Support to targeted groups such as mother and child will be maintained especially with regards to nutrition and health related issues, as well as the Humanitarian Air Service. Taking into account the current humanitarian needs, as well as the time needed for the development aid to be operational, DG ECHO will continue to keep its level of assistance.

### Mauritania - Senegal

The Mauritanian government has announced its intention to launch the voluntary repatriation of around 30,000 Mauritanian refugees who had stayed in Senegal after the border dispute between both countries in the 1990 crisis. The repatriation operation will be organised by UNHCR in cooperation with other UN agencies and NGOs. The first wave of repatriation is estimated to affect around 12,000 people. Logistics and needs in destination areas in Mauritania are being examined by specialised agencies. DG ECHO will contribute to the operation.

#### *4.1.5. Caribbean and Pacific*

DG ECHO will continue to monitor 22 Caribbean and 15 Pacific countries, responding when necessary with relief operations. According to a DG ECHO funded evaluation study, Haiti is considered as a forgotten crisis, with very worrying humanitarian indicators such as access to health, under-5 mortality and global acute malnutrition. This does not only reflect structural poverty, but also the cumulative impact of a complex emergency and repeated natural disasters, leaving people with minimal or no coping strategies. Funds will be allocated to Haiti in 2008 in order to provide food aid, as well as support in the sectors of health and water and sanitation.

## **4.2 Middle East and Mediterranean**

### Occupied Palestinian Territories

The humanitarian situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip further deteriorated in 2007 as a consequence of the financial crisis facing the Palestinian Authority (PA) following the majority obtained by Hamas in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections (January

2006). Increased Israeli security and access restrictions, a resumption of Israeli military operations and increasing intra-Palestinian fighting which culminated mid-June 2007 in the take-over by Hamas of the Gaza Strip and the appointment of a new government in Ramallah, recognised by the international community all contributed to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

A major humanitarian concern is the isolation of the Gaza Strip population as a result of the closure of Gaza crossings following the take-over by Hamas. The hampering of key imports (notably raw materials for the agricultural and industrial sectors) and exports result in further economic decline. As a result poverty levels have risen by 9 points from 79% (July 2006) to 88% (July 2007), bringing a growing dependency on humanitarian aid to an ever growing proportion of the population. In spite of the restart of international aid to the new Palestinian government, the situation of Palestinians in the West Bank remains critical, mainly as a consequence of the restriction of movement imposed on them and, for the affected population, the continued construction of the barrier.

In view of this and in spite of some positive political developments in the West Bank, the humanitarian outlook for the Occupied Palestinian Territories remains extremely bleak for 2008, especially for those Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip. The situation is highly volatile, making it very difficult to predict the evolution of humanitarian needs but DG ECHO will continue its humanitarian aid programme. While the 2007 budget covers the needs until mid-2008, the proposed amount for 2008 will cover the period from mid-2008 until end 2008, which means that the total amount of financing for 2008 represents a slight increase. The programme will continue to target the most vulnerable populations in the following sectors: household support through food and emergency employment, health, water and sanitation, psycho-social support, protection and co-ordination.

#### Lebanon, Jordan and Syria

Lebanon, Jordan and Syria host collectively some 2,675,000 Palestinian refugees. Those in Jordan (1,800,000) and Syria (430,000) are well integrated into society. In Lebanon (445,000), where they are discriminated against, 53% of them live in poor conditions in 12 official camps and a number of unofficial ones. The conflict which left the Nahr-el Bared refugee camp largely destroyed in the summer 2007 has further worsened the living conditions for some 30.000 Palestinian refugees who lost their homes and their belongings. Although the Lebanese government has declared its intention to reduce the current legal impediments for access to more than 70 types of jobs, it is unlikely that such measures will yield results in the short term. Humanitarian interventions in favour of the Palestinian refugees, largely funded from the 2007 budget, will therefore focus on Lebanon (shelter rehabilitation; health; water and sanitation; job opportunities and assistance to vulnerable groups such as children, elderly, disabled people), without excluding a possible intervention in the shelter sector in Jordan and Syria.

#### Iraq crisis

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq continues to get worse with the number of uprooted Iraqis, both inside and outside the country, on the rise. UNHCR and the Iraqi Red Crescent estimate the number of uprooted Iraqis, mid 2007, at 4.2 million, with the monthly rate of displacement climbing to more than 60,000 people compared to 50,000 previously. More than 2 million Iraqis are displaced inside Iraq.

The political and humanitarian situation in Iraq is extremely complex and violence is increasingly sectarian. Humanitarian needs are continuously rising: according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 70% of the population lacks access to potable water. The World Health Organization states that the health sector in Iraq is on the brink of complete collapse. 20% of children suffer from malnutrition, and hospitals are short of medical personnel. The unemployment rate is estimated at 70%. Against this background, the operational capacity of humanitarian actors is severely handicapped both by widespread insecurity and by a loss of local acceptance as major international organisations are associated with the occupying forces. DG ECHO and other donors committed to a neutral and impartial humanitarian response are therefore left with a limited number of actors able to provide a tangible principled humanitarian response in today's Iraq.

Most of the estimated ~ 2.2 million Iraqi refugees in the Middle East region live in Syria (1.4 million), Jordan (500,000 – 750,000), Lebanon (40,000), Egypt (100,000), in Iran (54,000) and Turkey (10,000). Whilst Syria had so far kept its borders open to Iraqis fleeing the violence in their country of origin, the Jordanian-Iraqi border is in the meantime practically closed for refugees from Iraq, and Syria announced in September 2007 that it would start requiring visas for Iraqis. Large parts of the recently arrived poorer Iraqis live in precarious conditions, a situation which is expected to worsen due to a gradual reduction of their savings and other coping mechanisms.

In view of the immense humanitarian needs in Iraq and in its neighbouring countries, DG ECHO plans, in 2008, to continue to provide an appropriate response to the humanitarian crisis, both in terms of basic services to the most vulnerable affected populations (health, water and sanitation, food, psycho-social support, basic food items) and in terms of protection and support to coordination. The level and modalities of humanitarian aid will, however, have to reflect the implementation and monitoring conditions resulting from the political constraints in the host countries and the security and access constraints inside Iraq.

### Yemen

Following years of response to consequences of conflicts and natural disasters in Yemen, DG ECHO implemented an exit strategy in 2007. However, in 2008, the expected continued influx of refugees from the Horn of Africa, which was the main funding target in 2007 and the protracted internal conflict in the North may both require further funding by the humanitarian aid service of the European Commission.

### Sahrawi refugees

The Sahrawi refugees, living since 1975 in camps in the desert region of Tindouf in Algeria, continue to be victims of one of the oldest and largely forgotten humanitarian crises. In spite of the resumption, in 2007, of direct negotiations –the first for 10 years- between the Polisario Front and Morocco, the perspective of a radical change in the situation of the refugees is unlikely in the short term. The refugees are largely dependent on international humanitarian aid for their survival. In 2008, the European Commission will therefore need to maintain its humanitarian aid to cover basic sectors such as food, health and nutrition, water and sanitation as well as provision of non food items. Sectoral coordination efforts in order to improve aid quality will continue in 2008. In addition, the dialogue with Commission partners and with the Sahrawi authorities will be maintained to improve, quality, targeting and project implementation and monitoring.

## 4.3 Caucasus, Europe and Central Asia

### Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan

The trend observed in 2006 with regard to the stabilisation of the situation in Chechnya has been confirmed in 2007: Chechnya has returned to a more or less peaceful life. The pockets of resistance which remain are limited to a few areas and target law-enforcement structures and personnel. In contrast, the security situation has further deteriorated in the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia and most humanitarian organisations have closed their offices there and relocated to Grozny, apart from the United Nations which have had to move to North Ossetia as they did not get the authorisation from Moscow to open offices in Chechnya and have had to close their offices in Ingushetia following a security incident.

The reconstruction process which started in 2006 gathered momentum in 2007, particularly after the designation of Ramzan Kadyrov as President of Chechnya in March. The result in Grozny is quite spectacular already, with most of the apartment buildings reconstructed or being so. This massive reconstruction effort focuses more on Grozny, where the level of destruction was the highest, but has also begun to reach other cities and districts in the republic.

As a result, the general socio-economic situation has started to improve and Chechnya is now engaged on the path to recovery. Based on these positive developments, DG ECHO had already adapted its humanitarian aid response last year, with a decrease in funding and a phasing out from several sectors. This orientation will be pursued and reinforced in 2008, with a further decrease. However, due to the extent of destructions caused by two wars which left the republic shattered and the population exhausted, dire humanitarian needs remain for the most vulnerable households which justify the continued provision of humanitarian assistance focusing on: protection, shelter rehabilitation for returning people and food security/income-generating programmes. As part of DG ECHO's exit strategy income-generation programmes are the most adapted response in a context of transition between relief assistance and rehabilitation as they provide a positive and sustainable impact on beneficiaries' livelihood and self sufficiency. People displaced in Ingushetia and Dagestan will also be covered by this assistance.

Clearly, the implementation of this strategy will be conditioned on the evolution of the situation. Access to beneficiaries in Chechnya has been very good until the summer and security has noticeably improved, which should allow DG ECHO to normally monitor its programmes, but the situation will have to be closely followed as legislative and presidential elections are scheduled for December 2007 and March 2008 in Russia and new restrictions on the presence of international staff in Chechnya have recently been put in place.

### Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, the community humanitarian aid will continue its support, initiated in 2006, to some 2,200 Chechen refugees who are entirely dependent on external humanitarian aid as they do not hold refugee status and live in very precarious conditions in and around Baku, compounded by protection problems.

### Georgia

In Georgia, DG ECHO is gradually handing over its activities to other European Commission services which are focusing on rehabilitation and development programmes. DG ECHO has already phased out from Western Georgia successfully. However, humanitarian needs remain in Abkhazia due to the unresolved conflict with Tbilisi and the international isolation of the self-declared independent Republic. In 2008, the humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will continue implementing basic shelter rehabilitation and food security activities for the most vulnerable returnees funded with the 2007 budget. A limited contribution from the 2008 budget will be allocated to complement the European Commission rehabilitation programme funded under the European Neighbourhood Policy that should start early next year allowing DG ECHO to gradually phase out from this crisis.

### Moldova

In response to the severe drought which affected Moldova in 2007, DG ECHO funded a programme of emergency support for the most vulnerable farmers in order to help them survive the winter 2007-2008. The situation will be assessed again at the beginning of 2008 to determine if a follow-up decision needs to be taken in order to help the farmers get back the livestock they had to sell during the crisis.

### Central Asia

In 2007, the European Commission/DG ECHO completed its exit strategy in Tajikistan, which had begun in 2003. The Commission will however remain vigilant in Central Asia, a zone of chronic instability, and considering the recurrence of natural disasters, it will extend its presence in the region with the continuation of the DIPECHO programme.

## **4.4 Asia**

All parts of Asia as well as Latin America are highly prone to natural disasters, such as hurricanes, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides and floods, whilst at the same time having substantial populations with high levels of vulnerability. As in previous years, DG ECHO will act in response to these natural disasters wherever they exceed national and local coping capacities and will target the most vulnerable groups.

### *4.4.1 South and South-West Asia*

#### Afghanistan – Pakistan - Iran

In Afghanistan 5 million refugees (around 20% of the population) have returned since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, coming back to a country wrecked by 25 years of civil war. The original intention was that DG ECHO would phase out of the country as development and reconstruction aid came increasingly on stream. However, the security situation has drastically deteriorated making it impossible to operate reconstruction projects in many areas, and thereby creating new levels of humanitarian need and vulnerability. So DG ECHO is now looking to increase its level of involvement, in particular by supporting the increasing number of highly vulnerable refugees and displaced. The first priority will be to help them stay in the country, with key support being given to UNCHR's Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran refugee assistance and support programmes. In 2007, over 350,000 Afghans returned to their country and the stance of the Pakistani and Iranian governments leads to the expectation of still more refugees and IDPs returning in 2008. Many of these will return to very fragile areas and will have high levels of vulnerability. They will be assisted with shelter, water and sanitation and

food aid, with a particular focus on areas with high numbers of returnees which are not covered by rehabilitation and development assistance. The second priority will be protection, where ICRC is the key partner. Thirdly, the European Commission humanitarian service will focus on water and sanitation interventions in areas with extremely vulnerable local populations which have not received rehabilitation and development assistance. Fourthly, DG ECHO will continue to support the functioning of the Afghan NGO Security Office (ANSO) and humanitarian flights run by PACTEC. Security remains a serious concern for project implementation, with projects in the most dangerous areas for expatriate staff having to be increasingly monitored by local Afghan staff. The Community humanitarian aid service, in conjunction with the EU Delegation, is coordinating its aid with other donors.

### Sri Lanka

Since mid-2006 the return to civil war in Sri Lanka has created 184,000 new IDPs. This figure could rise as high as 500,000 by the end of 2008, with the intensification of the war and no prospect of an improvement of the situation. The country, already lacking the resources to find durable solutions for the previous caseload of 350,000 conflict-related IDPs, will be unable to deal with this new humanitarian crisis. The IDPs are therefore completely dependent on the humanitarian community. DG ECHO will continue to support them and aid them to return. The humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will also continue to support the Sri Lankan refugee population in Tamil Nadu, India, which now numbers 80,000. Although the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate in 2007 and there is the expectation of an increasing number of IDPs in 2008, DG ECHO's assistance is limited by continuing government restrictions on access to certain areas and on the activities of humanitarian agencies.

### Nepal

Nepal has two humanitarian crises. Although the cease-fire between the government and the Maoists has largely held, and elections are planned, the situation remains fragile. There are still around 200,000 IDPs in the country, even though the conflict is formally over. The Community humanitarian aid will maintain its intervention at the same level as in 2007 in this crisis, facilitating the return of IDPs and helping those who are unable to return to their places of origin. The focus will be on protection, health, water and sanitation and nutrition. DG ECHO will also continue to provide emergency food aid in the other crisis, to the 107,000 Bhutanese refugees stranded in camps next to the Indian border, while efforts to find a sustainable solution to this problem will be pursued in conjunction with other major donors. The US and other governments have announced plans to resettle up to 65,000 of these refugees in the coming 4-5 years, but intimidation by certain political factions within the camps is limiting the scope for resettlement.

### India

In India the needs of the people suffering from the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir and of the Naxalite rebellion are largely forgotten. Aid for Jammu and Kashmir will be maintained at the same level and will be mainly for protection and psycho-social support. DG ECHO will continue supporting communities affected by the Naxalite rebellion in the neglected state of Chhattisgarh and will continue to help here, mainly in the health and water and sanitation sectors.

### Bangladesh

In Bangladesh the projects in response to the serious 2007 monsoon floods will continue. The assistance given towards the end of 2007 to the 10,000 Rohingya refugees is likely to be sufficient to cover their needs through 2008.

#### *4.4.2. South-East and East Asia*

##### Burma/Myanmar - Thailand

Since its creation, DG ECHO has been involved in Burma/Myanmar which has been considered a forgotten crisis. However, considering the important attention given by media to the demonstrations in August and September 2007 as well as the fierce repression that followed, Burma/Myanmar might be considered no longer correspond to the defined criteria for a forgotten crisis. However, it is important to make a distinction between the political and the economic crisis, which receives a lot of sustained attention from international media and public opinion, and the humanitarian needs of displaced persons, refugees and stateless people, which still remain widely ignored.

A substantial financing decision is to be taken at the end of 2007 to cover the needs throughout 2008. DG ECHO will continue to provide protection and assistance to vulnerable groups, including the stateless population of Northern Rakhine State and IDPs in the Eastern states of Burma/Myanmar. This support will be provided despite the restrictions which the authorities continue to impose on humanitarian organisations and the access difficulties in large parts of the country, especially in the border zones with Thailand and China, where one finds the majority of the vulnerable ethnic minority groups. Support will focus on protection, health and water and sanitation; the Community humanitarian aid service will withdraw from the food aid sector by the end of 2008, with this being taken up by other Community instruments. The 150,000 Burmese refugees in the camps in Thailand will continue to benefit from food and medical aid, while efforts to find a sustainable solution to the Burmese refugee problem in Thailand will be pursued in conjunction with other major donors. Those who leave for resettlement in other countries are likely to be more than made up for by new arrivals in the camps who have fled from Burma/Myanmar.

DG ECHO also intends to support the 8,000 Lao Hmong people living in camps on the Eastern borders of Thailand, should a comprehensive strategy be agreed by the Lao and Thai governments.

##### Timor Leste

In Timor Leste DG ECHO will continue to provide assistance to people who remain displaced by the political and security crisis that started in 2006. As malnutrition rates and food insecurity remain very high all over the country, the most vulnerable communities whose situation has been worsened by the crisis will also be supported.

##### Indonesia

In Indonesia a timely aid is foreseen to assist the most vulnerable populations in the east of the country, victims of acute malnutrition, especially in the provinces of Nusa Tenggara Timur. The food insecurity situation has gradually worsened during the recent months to reach most worrying levels and the population's capacity to face those situations has been exhausted.

## North Korea

DG ECHO is maintaining its plan to phase out of North Korea, given the relative stability of the humanitarian situation, and plans to close its Pyongyang office in summer 2008, handing it over to DG AIDCO. However, with the risk of a relapse into famine and the occurrence of natural disasters such as the floods in the summer of 2007, the possibility of new interventions cannot be entirely ruled out.

## **4.5 Latin America**

### Colombia

Apart from its response to unforeseeable natural disasters and food crises, DG ECHO's only planned intervention in Latin America will be in Colombia. The internal conflict in the country shows no signs of diminishing and the prospects of peace negotiations remain rather poor, with demobilised paramilitaries now re-arming and forming new splinter groups. Each year there are more than 200,000 new IDPs in Colombia, but the nature of the conflict is such that it is impossible to predict where these will arise. Three and a half million people have been displaced over the past two decades, the second highest figure in the world. The conflict has created an increasing flow of people into Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama, with UNHCR indicating 50,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers and 450,000 'persons of concern' in these three countries. DG ECHO will take a regional financing decision at the same level as 2007, since the intensity of the conflict and the level of newly displaced and refugee populations has not significantly changed over the past year. Protection and assistance in Colombia will continue to be focused on those who are newly displaced, for a period of up to 12 months, with emergency aid during the first 3-6 months after displacement. It will be targeted towards areas where there is little or no government presence, especially more remote rural locations. Assistance will also continue to be provided to communities which are blocked or confined by armed groups or at risk because of the presence of armed personnel. Child protection and mine awareness will be important cross-cutting issues. In all activities emphasis will be placed on an exit or handover strategy, whether to other EC programmes or to government assistance, wherever the changing nature of the conflict permits it. In Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama DG ECHO will provide protection and assistance to refugees and persons of concern who have fled Colombia, with a special focus on the so-called 'invisible cases'.

## **5. HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**

If as foreseen the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid is adopted at the end of 2007, DG ECHO will be called upon to define a road map in 2008 identifying concrete actions to be put into practice. Following the adoption of this programme, DG ECHO will take the necessary initiatives to progressively put into practice the objectives of the consensus.

### **5.2 Humanitarian Food Aid**

Key objectives for DG ECHO in the field of Humanitarian Food Aid for 2008, globally, will include:

- Saving lives and relieving suffering through the provision of emergency food assistance to vulnerable populations affected by crises.
- Restoring and maintaining a stable nutritional status in crisis-affected populations, through the prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition.
- Protecting livelihoods threatened by crises, and assisting with the early, short-term recovery of crisis-affected livelihoods, in post-emergency contexts, so that food-security and nutritional stability can be re-established.
- Enhancing the effectiveness of aid-delivery in food aid and emergency food-security.

2008 will be a critical year for humanitarian food responses, worldwide. With no evidence that humanitarian needs will decline compared to 2007, increasing food-commodity and transportation prices combined with potentially slimmer contributions from the sector's traditional donors suggest that DG ECHO's foreseen food-aid budget will be all the more strategic and valuable. This will demand that DG ECHO focuses rigorously on the quality of the food assistance it provides, on its impact and how it is targeted.

To maintain flexibility and to adapt to unforeseen emergencies later in the year, the humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will again be launching two separate food aid decisions for 2008. The first will aim to respond to all foreseen needs in ongoing crises by supporting UN, Red Cross and NGO partners in the food, nutrition and emergency food security sectors. These resources will allow (i) maintaining food-aid pipelines in the pressured early months of the year (before other donor contributions get confirmed), taking into account commodity procurement lead-times, and (ii) the continuation of DG ECHO's assistance to the nutrition and food-security sectors until mid-2009. The second decision will help respond to any newly emerging crises or any ad-hoc pipeline breaks impacting on priority humanitarian food-aid operations later in the year.

For 2008, DG ECHO will continue to promote evidence-based decision-making in the management of humanitarian food assistance. A new Food Insecurity Needs Assessment Template, designed for internal use in humanitarian crises and based on consolidation of pre-existing data from established information systems, will be further refined to promote a more systematic, standardised analysis of needs and a better comparison of food insecurity and food-aid needs across different countries and regions. This will allow a more effective prioritisation and utilisation of the food aid budget. Recognising that food and nutrition crises often arise from multi-sectoral causes, the Community humanitarian aid service will manage its food-aid budget in close coordination with the humanitarian strategies in other sectors (e.g. health, water and sanitation) so that responses to food-insecurity and malnutrition are holistic and coherent. Field-based familiarity with the context, and close linkages with development actors, will ensure that DG ECHO's work in the food sector in 2008 avoids undermining development objectives, and pursues the "do no harm" principle. In the interaction with other Commission services it will also be of strategic importance to liaise closely with DG DEV and DG AIDCO on the new Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) so that, where appropriate, opportunities for transitioning emergency projects funded by DG ECHO into longer-term development programmes are optimally exploited under the objective of Linking Relief with Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD). In 2008 the Community humanitarian aid service will, more generally, step up its advocacy for, and active involvement in, LRRD to address more effectively many of the root causes of peoples' vulnerability to food crises (poverty, livelihood erosion, chronic food-insecurity).

The humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will continue to reinforce the relationship with its main partners in the emergency food-assistance sector. Recognising that WFP remains the largest food-aid partner, DG ECHO's partnership with WFP remains critical and will be enhanced, in 2008, through continued strategic planning and policy dialogue, as well as through continued support to related thematic programmes and projects.

At the same time, the role and relevance of other humanitarian agencies (including, but not restricted to, numerous NGOs, the Red Cross / Red Crescent Family, UNICEF, FAO etc) remains critical in the sector, not only as implementing partners to WFP in some areas, but also as DG ECHO's principal partners in the field of nutrition and emergency food-security / early recovery. Strategic dialogue with these agencies will remain essential through 2008.

DG ECHO will, in 2008, also continue to support initiatives aimed at increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian aid responses to food and nutrition crises, with an emphasis on strengthening the information systems and needs analyses on which decisions are based. These include the WFP's "Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity" (SENAC); UNICEF's "Revitalization of Nutrition Information Systems in the Horn of Africa" (NIPHORN) and the FAO's pilot roll out of "Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification" (IPC). The IPC pilot project is part of the wider IPC initiative supported by the other services of the European Commission.

DG ECHO will also actively follow and contribute to policy debates on changes to the Food Aid Convention, the follow-up to the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, and to other developments affecting the EU Institutions and the broader food-aid environment. To adapt to a changing global environment, to enshrine its pursuit of quality in humanitarian action, and to seek best-practice and maximum impact in the operations it supports, DG ECHO will work towards strengthening its own policy framework in the food-aid and emergency food-security sector.

### **5.3 Disaster Risk Reduction including Disaster preparedness**

The increasing awareness of the importance of preparedness, the considerable rise in the number and intensity of disasters over the last decades and in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 that calls for all governments and international organisations to prioritise and invest in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), DG ECHO has stepped up its funding for community-based disaster preparedness over the past years and is prepared to further refine its approach. Whilst remaining within the limits of its humanitarian mandate, DG ECHO can support a multitude of actions by making use of its proven strengths.

DG ECHO's contribution to DRR is channelled through its DIPECHO programme, drought preparedness initiatives and mainstreaming Disaster Preparedness measures in relief and advocacy.

The DIPECHO programme is implemented in six highly disaster prone regions. In 2008, the humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will launch DIPECHO Action Plans in Central America, Central Asia and South East Asia to continue its engagement in these regions. The forthcoming Action Plans will all incorporate recommendations from the evaluations carried out in 2006 and 2007 of previous DIPECHO programmes. Furthermore, the strategic orientations of the three Action Plans will also build on inputs from an extensive consultative process organised in the three regions with all relevant stakeholders.

The forthcoming Action Plan for Central America will be open to operations in the six countries of the region: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. In Central Asia the forthcoming Action Plan will be open to operations in the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as cross-border initiatives in remote border areas of Tajikistan/Afghanistan. Lastly, the geographic focus of the forthcoming Action Plan for South East Asia will remain on Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, the Philippines, Timor Leste and Vietnam.

In the other three regions, namely the Caribbean, South America and South Asia, implementation of the 59 projects funded under the Action Plans launched in 2007 will continue.

In addition, DG ECHO will also look into extending its disaster preparedness activities to South East Africa/ Indian Ocean (potentially Mozambique, Malawi, Madagascar and Comoros), a region that is also exposed to a combination of sudden-onset and slow-onset disasters.

Improving the coping capacities of communities at risk, increasing their awareness and resilience is at the heart of DG ECHO's disaster preparedness approach, in parallel with the strengthening of capacities of the public institutions responsible for protecting the population. Disaster preparedness activities are implemented through a wide variety of partners, including local organisations, which allows access to the most marginalized and vulnerable population.

In 2008, DG ECHO will continue its commitment to further mainstream disaster preparedness in relief operations. Experience has shown that the integration of disaster preparedness measures in disaster response is not only possible but effective because the affected population is more receptive to the necessity for preparedness. Such an integrated approach establishes a solid basis for a more effective post-disaster recovery. One example of this approach is the strengthening foreseen in 2008 of the innovative pilot action for preparation against drought in the Horn of Africa. This new initiative will be expanded and further integrated into the humanitarian actions in the region (see 4.1.1 - Horn of Africa).

As set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action, DRR is a matter of sustainable development. Development strategies and policies should therefore ensure mainstreaming of DRR measures if their investment is not to be wasted. By offering knowledge, accumulated experience and good practice in disaster preparedness activities, DG ECHO contributes to the establishment of a framework for sustainable development. Thus, in countries which are ready to take on disaster preparedness activities and replicate them at a larger scale, DG ECHO will channel its efforts towards an exit strategy.

Overall, it is in everybody's interest to engage in disaster risk reduction as any gain in this area reduces the impact of the disaster and thus saves lives and reduces the economic impact of the disaster. To this end, DG ECHO will continue to strengthen its advocacy role by liaising with other DRR stakeholders such as European Commission services, EU Member States, the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, development donors, local and national authorities as well as the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in its capacity as the UN's lead agency for DRR. While the European Commission has recently undertaken several initiatives to prepare for crises, they have either been linked to man-made crises or to increasing European capacity to react to a crisis by contributing to joint international needs evaluations. There are, therefore, very good reasons for DG ECHO to continue its commitment to reducing the risks of disaster. The Commission's inter-service group meets

regularly to ensure synergy and complementarities between the actions of DG ECHO and those of other programmes and instruments, such as the Stability Instrument (SI), the EU-ACP facility for natural disasters and actions undertaken within the 2008 Action Plan of the Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) particularly in preparing for the effects of drought.

In doing so, DG ECHO will continue to ensure that its operations directly link to other risk reduction activities in the context of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.

#### **5.4 Sectoral Policies**

The sectoral policies of the humanitarian aid service of the European Commission provide a framework for actions and priorities, while at the same time establishing lines of communication between headquarters, the field and the partners. They permit lessons to be drawn in defined areas from the experience acquired both by DG ECHO and the entire international community, thereby making the aid more effective.

During 2007 DG ECHO looked at different themes and sectors: children, health and cash (including vouchers). The work initiated in these three areas in 2007 will continue in 2008.

As far as DG ECHO's activities for children are concerned, an action framework was defined in 2007 for three particular areas: (i) separated or non-accompanied children. The tsunami, the Pakistan earthquake and numerous conflict situations in Africa show that much remains to be done in this area; (ii) the demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers, which has just been the object of a strong international political commitment with the adoption of the 'Paris Principles' and new guidelines; (iii) education in emergencies, a subject ever more discussed and to which the international community is giving increasing importance. As far as child soldiers are concerned, DG ECHO will, as far as possible, seek complementarities with the geographic and thematic programmes of the other Commission services, including the Stability Instrument.

As for the health sector, the recommendations of the external evaluation of 2007 will be taken into account. Going beyond the ad hoc approach which has prevailed up to now, key areas to be developed will be identified in order to strengthen the coordination of the actions of DG ECHO with those of other European Commission services as well as those of other interested actors in this field. Among these policies the revision of the guidelines for HIV/AIDS has been identified as a priority for 2008.

The last theme covers the 'non- traditional' methods of intervention such as cash – whether it is cash for work, or conditional/unconditional cash transfers - or vouchers for final beneficiaries. Such instruments seem more and more complementary to traditional modalities of aid delivery, such as the distribution of food aid, and in certain circumstances can be more effective. During 2007 DG ECHO therefore had recourse to an external evaluation and review in order to measure the efficiency and feasibility of the use of such instruments. Since their use is largely dependent on the specific context of the action, the necessary conditions for this type of assistance must be assessed carefully. In 2008 the humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will position itself vis-à-vis the recommendations of this evaluation and review.

In 2008 DG ECHO will also continue its reflection on other themes and sectors such as protection, gender, environment and possibly the role of the private sector in humanitarian aid.

### **5.5 Thematic Funding and Grant Facility**

'Thematic funding' was initiated in 2002, aiming at capacity building of the United Nations organisations and the Red Cross movement in order to make their response to humanitarian crises more efficient and better coordinated.

In view of the European Commission's political commitment to support the reform of the humanitarian system, DG ECHO oriented in 2007 its thematic funding towards supporting better coordination and the cluster approach. The implementation of the actions financed in 2007 will continue in 2008.

In 2008 the humanitarian aid service of the European Commission will undertake an evaluation of thematic funding. The results of this evaluation will subsequently feed into DG ECHO's reflection on its activities in the area of capacity building among its partners. This reflection will help orientate future funding.

In 2008 the 'grant facility' mechanism will aim to improve the quality of humanitarian aid by strengthening the response management capacity and the accountability of non- governmental organisations.

### **5.6 Evaluation**

Evaluations (ex ante; real time; intermediate and ex post) will essentially concentrate on supplying additional elements for decision making and operational strategy. Thematic evaluations (reviews) will help concentrate discussions on the sectoral policies.

Joint evaluations with the Member States or the UN, Red Cross or International NGO partners will also form part of the 2008 programme in order to improve cost-effectiveness.

### **5.7 Communication, Information and Visibility**

The broad objective of the Commission's communication work is to boost understanding in Europe and other countries of the concrete contribution made by humanitarian aid to the EU commitment of solidarity with third countries. The high profile and rapidly-moving environment of humanitarian aid means that media-oriented communication work must be central to the strategy.

The European Commission as the biggest humanitarian donor in the European Union has therefore to play a leading role in communicating the values that underlie European aid.

Within the EU, there is a high level of support for humanitarian action at European level, but most Europeans still have a limited knowledge of the subject. The Commission's/DG ECHO's communication strategy in 2008 will, therefore continue to focus on:

- Efforts to boost awareness of the European Commission's humanitarian role and to communicate key messages, notably through the media. Actions will be undertaken in the EU and in countries/regions where Commission funded aid operations are being

implemented (particularly where there is an identified need to strengthen the wider EU profile). The European Commission's Delegations and Representations have an important role to play in these efforts.

- Young Europeans. Effective communication with youth, who are generally receptive, can have longer term benefits. Communication actions targeting this group will therefore continue.
- High-impact activities. Priority will go to actions with a significant multiplier effect, especially where media coverage can be generated.
- Cooperation to disseminate broader European messages. Joint work with other services within the European Commission to highlight the 'bigger picture' of EU external action will be continued and developed.
- Developing a wider information reflex. The Commission recognises that messages can be effectively disseminated by involving staff more actively in communication actions, and will continue to encourage an information 'reflex' among its staff and partners, and to undertake activities that make use of their communication skills.