



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AID - ECHO

ECHO AID STRATEGY 2005

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1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid - ECHO is responsible for providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of conflicts or disasters, both natural and man-made, in third countries. Its mandate is to save and preserve life, reduce or prevent suffering and safeguard the integrity and dignity of third country populations affected by humanitarian crises. The decisions and actions taken by the service are determined solely by the assessment of humanitarian needs and are not guided by or subject to political considerations other than the affirmation of the European Union's solidarity with people in need.

As a global player and a reference donor, DG ECHO considers that it has a special responsibility in the implementation of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles and Implementation Plan. In this respect, ECHO's mission is primarily guided by the following principles:

- the design and implementation of Community Humanitarian Aid according to the principles of International Humanitarian Law, namely impartiality, neutrality, and non-discrimination. These principles are the main vehicles for preserving the humanitarian space and the security of humanitarian action in the face of the increasingly complex nature and dynamics of crises and conflicts.
- the constant search for quality in the definition of its aid strategy, the financing of operations and the management of funds so as to ensure the greatest efficiency and effectiveness possible.

DG ECHO implements its mission by funding the co-ordinated delivery of Community humanitarian assistance and protection through partner humanitarian organisations (NGOs and international organisations). Its assistance also aims at facilitating, together with other aid instruments, the subsequent return of populations to self-sufficiency wherever and whenever possible, and to permit the phasing out of ECHO funding in good conditions. In that perspective, the service is actively engaged in implementing the linkage between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) and in developing stronger co-operation with other Commission services or other donors. Based on its experience in addressing disasters, ECHO also works at promoting disaster preparedness - as part of an overall Commission Disaster Prevention and Preparedness approach - in order to reduce both vulnerability and exposure of people to risks and disasters as well as to reduce the economic costs of such disasters. Finally, with a view to the effective discharge of its mandate, DG ECHO may support - where appropriate and necessary - capacity building measures of its implementing partners.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document establishes the geographic as well as thematic priorities for ECHO's work programme for the year ahead on the basis of a comprehensive consultation of

humanitarian actors and stakeholders. Building on the work carried out in 2004, it is a further commitment of the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid-ECHO to live up to the objectives and standards set out in the Good Donorship Principles in Stockholm in June 2003.

Following a strictly needs based approach to the provision of humanitarian aid, priority areas for interventions were identified for 2005: Africa (Horn, Great Lakes, West Africa and Southern Africa), Asia (Middle East, South East Asia) and the Northern Caucasus (Chechnya). As a direct expression of a needs-based approach, ECHO will continue to pay particular attention to forgotten crises, i.e. high need areas that do not attract sufficient donor interest. The following most forgotten crises have been identified for the year ahead: Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Indonesia, Tajikistan, Russian Federation (Chechnya), Sahrawi refugees (Algeria), Somalia and Uganda,

The Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid-ECHO will continue to address cross-cutting issues. Progress has been achieved for LRRD, DPP and children related activities during the last years. However, they are not yet self sustaining and still need a continuous investment from ECHO's side. Other, newer issues, like water and HIV/AIDS will require additional conceptual clarification at the level of methodologies used for objective setting and reporting activities.

The Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid has critically evaluated the first results of the thematic funding approach that was piloted on a more systematic basis last year. As a result, ECHO will operate a clear distinction of thematic and programmatic funding in its future financing decisions.

A key theme for 2005 will be the efforts to improve the overall security of humanitarian workers operating in increasingly insecure humanitarian environments, whether for ECHO personnel or implementing partners. Furthermore, in view of the numerous institutional and operational challenges for the rapid delivery of quality humanitarian aid, ECHO will further build up its operational and analytical response capacity through appropriate organisational measures at field level.

Finally, ECHO will closely monitor and represent its position with regard to the institutional debates surrounding the new Constitutional treaty and the Commission's proposal for the new Community financial perspectives 2007 – 2013. Its effort in this respect will be guided by the need to preserve the humanitarian space.

3. INTRODUCTION

Half of our humanitarian aid worldwide is provided by European Union donors, i.e. Member States and the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid –ECHO. As a global player ECHO considers that it is uniquely placed and thus has a special responsibility to effectively implement the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles and Implementation Plan ('hereafter Good Donorship Principles')¹ agreed in Stockholm in June 2003. This strategy, building on the work carried out in 2004, is therefore a further commitment and work programme to live up to the objectives and standards set out in the Good Donorship Principles.

Challenges to humanitarian principles and the humanitarian space may come in many forms. ECHO critically followed the debates around the concept of 'integrated missions', whereby all relevant UN resources are harnessed towards consolidating peace and supporting the re-establishment of stable and legitimate government with viable institutions. While agreeing with the general objective pursued through this approach, ECHO has voiced concerns about some of the models used or foreseen. It is important that these models develop in such a way as not to threaten the humanitarian space. They should respect the humanitarian component of the mission in order not to affect the independence and neutrality of humanitarian assistance and risk being perceived as part of the broader political agenda. In 2005 ECHO will carefully monitor any further developments in this field. It will push for integrated missions to be designed and implemented in such a way as to preserve the specific nature, objectives, principles and modus operandi of humanitarian action.

The blurring of the roles between humanitarian and military actors continues to pre-occupy the humanitarian world with the consequent security risks and jeopardising of the humanitarian principles. DG ECHO will continue to promote the UN guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in humanitarian operations² and ensure that they are brought to the attention of the relevant actors, particularly in the context of the development of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Europe has become more active in disaster response during the last few years, with both the European Union and individual Member States becoming actively and directly engaged in disaster and relief work. Better understanding of different mandates and responsibilities as well as good co-ordination is the key to put scarce resources to the most efficient use for the victims of humanitarian disasters. In 2004 several advances at the right direction were made. Internal co-operation between the Commission services concerned (ECHO-DG Environment-DG RELEX) has been strengthened. The European Commission has signed an "exchange of letters" with UN OCHA concerning co-ordination between the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (the so called 'MIC') and the UNDAC system in order to ensure coherent response to disasters. In 2005 ECHO will do its part to ensure the

1 <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/lib.nsf>

2 <http://ochaonline.un.org/webpage.asp?MenuID=5111&Page=774>

full implementation of the co-ordination mechanisms agreed, including the provision of specific guidelines to its headquarter staff as well as field personnel.

The European Council's agreement on the Constitutional Treaty of 18 June 2004, stipulates in its Article III-321 that humanitarian aid operations shall be concluded in compliance with the principles of international law and with the principles of impartiality, neutrality and non-discrimination. ECHO will closely follow the ratification process and eventually any debate related to the implementation of the new Treaty as this process may directly impact on the principles governing humanitarian aid and the humanitarian space. Furthermore, as concerns in particular Article III-321(5) ECHO will start to prepare possible proposals for a framework to implement the concept of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aids Corps. Such a framework should aim to make use of the capacities of ECHO's partners.

The Directorate General for Humanitarian affairs will continue to participate and invest in the follow-up to the Commission's proposal for the new Community financial perspectives 2007 – 2013. The Commission proposed to maintain a single humanitarian aid instrument which will regroup all activities linked to humanitarian aid, including the ones that at present are covered by other instruments, like food aid and a part of the assistance to uprooted people. The Commission's proposal is to fix the Community humanitarian aid budget at an average of 910 M€ per year over the period.

In keeping with its commitment to the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, DG ECHO will contribute to bringing about an improvement of the Consolidated Appeals process (CAPS)³, participation in the CAPS "Kickoff" programme, the Montreux CAPS Retreat and related events.

4. GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND OUTLOOK FOR 2005

Despite positive trends in some areas, the overall humanitarian situation globally leaves little ground for optimism as the challenges mount.

A slight decrease in the number of highly violent conflicts from 39 in 2002 to 35 in 2003⁴ is mirrored by a steady descent of refugee figures over the past two years, from 10.6 million in 2002 to 9.67 million at the end of 2003⁵. However, when refugees become returnees, as experience shows, they also need humanitarian assistance, at least in the initial phase following their return. Estimates of IDPs

³ <http://ochaonline.un.org/cap2005/index.htm>

⁴ Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict Research (HIK). http://www.hiik.de/en/barometer2003/Conflict_Barometer_2003.pdf. In the first half of 2004 the number of highly violent crises further decreased to 28.

⁵ UNHCR: Refugees by Numbers (2004 edition) <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/basics/>

were also slightly lower, although they continued at the 25 million mark in 2003⁶. It is important to note that although some three million people were able to return to their homes, a similar number of people were newly displaced, the majority by civil wars or inter-communal violence in Africa. In summary, these figures do not allow to conclude that humanitarian needs have diminished. A total of 651 natural disasters were reported in 2003⁷. According to the IFRC's World Disasters Report 2004⁸ the death toll caused by natural and technological disasters reached nearly 77 000 and was thus three times higher than in 2003.

While the year-to-year data above already give an indication of the magnitude of the humanitarian situation world-wide, they may be of limited use when talking about long-term trends. Individual large-scale disasters, such as the earthquake in Bam (Iran) in 2003 result in statistical peaks which drive up the casualty tolls enormously in an otherwise relatively calm year. To identify medium- to long-term trends, therefore, the analysis needs to look at long-term data. Research programmes and organizations studying these phenomena conclude that there has been a continuous rise in the number of conflicts⁹ and natural disasters¹⁰ over the past 50 years, alongside a significant and continuing increase in world population, particularly in developing countries.

The IFRC's World Disasters Report 2004 shows that over the past decade the number of disaster-related deaths dropped whereas the number of affected people climbed. Although the number of disasters increased over the past decade, the death toll decreased from over 75 000 per year (1994 -1998) to 59 000 per year (1999 – 2003). During the same period, the number of people affected by disaster increased by 40 % from an annual average of 213 million (1994-1998) to an annual average of 303 million (1999-2003).

With respect to refugee and IDP figures, it would be premature to assume that the current decrease already indicates a long-term trend, in particular since it is impossible to establish reliable time-series for IDP figures as they have been unavailable until recently. The reasons for these trends are not clear and it is impossible to say with certainty whether they will continue or for how long.

What is certain, however, is that the earth's population is rapidly increasing and so is the number of people living in extreme poverty. The world population multiplied

⁶ Global IDP Project: Internal Displacement - A Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2003 found at http://www.idpproject.org/press/2004/Global_Overview.pdf

⁷ Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. Data from EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database - www.em-dat.net - Université Catholique de Louvain - Brussels - Belgium

⁸ IFRC World Disasters Report 2004: <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/wdr2004/>

⁹ HIIK: Conflict Barometer 2003 p. 3

¹⁰ <http://www.em-dat.net/disasters/trends.htm>

by two and a half times from 1950 to 2000 reaching 6.1 billion and is expected to continue growing to reach 9.3 billion in 2050¹¹. In the least-developed countries it is estimated that the population will have doubled by 2030. It is almost inevitable that this increase in population will result in an intensified competition for scarce resources and thus an increased potential for conflict. How this future conflict will be managed is yet to be seen but it is likely that much of it will be violent in nature. Humanitarian concern focuses on the fact that 90% of the victims of conflicts are civilians¹². With the current predominance of internal wars, this pattern of targeting civilian populations is unlikely to change in the near future.

The effects of climate change will also, no doubt, have a noticeable impact on natural disaster aspects of humanitarian assistance. The UN Environment Programme expects that the global rise in temperature will result in a rise in the number of extreme weather events. Precipitation is expected to increase in temperate regions and in South East Asia. Meanwhile, Central Asia, the Mediterranean region, the Sahel and many other regions in Africa, are expected to receive considerably less rain. This, coupled to an increased evaporation in these regions will lead to drier conditions, with a higher probability of drought¹³. Rapid urban growth is one of the main factors contributing to increased vulnerability to natural hazards in many parts of the world. The accelerated and often uncontrolled growth of cities has contributed to the ecological transformation of their immediate surroundings intensifying pressure on scarce land resources and impacting negatively on public health. Shanty towns and illegal urbanisations often expand in hazard-prone areas exposed to earthquakes, flooding or land-slides.

While the very nature of complex emergencies has always involved working in high-risk environments, a worrying recent trend is characterized by an increase in the number of direct attacks against aid workers in recent years. Events like the tragic bombing of the UN and ICRC compounds in Baghdad in 2003 and the killing of 5 MSF members in Afghanistan in June 2004 highlight the scale of the problem facing the humanitarian community. Humanitarian agencies and organisations place the highest value on their ability to gain safe, unimpeded and sustained access to “humanitarian space.

In view of the above trends the strategy will thus have to bridge the widening gap between increasing humanitarian needs on the one hand and its increasingly challenged response capacities on the other.

¹¹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: Population, Environment and Development 2001

¹² Ahlstrum, Christer, Casualties of Conflict: Report for the world campaign for the protection of victims of war, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala, 1991, pp. 8, 19.

¹³ UNEP: http://www.unep.org/themes/climatechange/PDF/ipcc_wgii_guide-E.pdf

5. GENERAL PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES AND MAIN OBJECTIVES FOR 2005

ECHO defines thematic as well as geographic priorities for humanitarian actions for the year ahead on the basis of a comprehensive consultation of humanitarian actors and stakeholders. With regard to substance, ECHO's needs based approach will remain at the centre of its humanitarian actions. In addition, ECHO will give specific attention to a number of cross-cutting issues that have underpinned its activities in the last years. Thus, as part of a quality humanitarian aid approach, ECHO will continue to address the cross-cutting issues of LRRD, DPP and children related activities. Progress has been achieved on these issues during the last years. However, they are not yet self sustaining and still need a continuous investment from ECHO's side. Other, newer issues, such as water and HIV/AIDS require a more conceptual clarification at the level of methodologies used for objective setting and reporting activities.

- **Needs based approach: Identify and intervene in the areas of greatest humanitarian needs and pay specific attention to “forgotten crises” and “forgotten needs”.**

Since 2001, ECHO has established and refined its approach to target the areas of greatest humanitarian needs as well as forgotten crises and forgotten humanitarian needs.

ECHO's global humanitarian needs assessment ('GNA') and forgotten crises assessment have been further developed for the 2005 planning exercise. For the first time since their adoption the calculations have been undertaken by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) on the basis of an administrative agreement between JRC and ECHO. Making use of JRCs resources allows ECHO to profit from state-of-the-art-technology and research methods, such as time series analysis, through which evolution of needs over time and trends can be identified.

The identification of priority areas of highest needs was based on a parallel exercise: bottom-up assessments undertaken by ECHO's geographical units and its field experts were contrasted with the results of GNA, ranking more than 130 countries and territories in a list of relative needs on the basis of aggregated humanitarian indicators (poverty, refugees, mortality, disaster proneness). Based on this exercise priority areas for intervention were identified in Africa (Horn, Great Lakes, West Africa and Southern Africa), Asia (Middle East, South East Asia) and the Northern Caucasus (Chechnya).

Identification of forgotten crises likewise is the result of combining field assessments with relevant statistical data (relative humanitarian needs, degree of media attention, and level of donor interest). Accordingly, in 2005, ECHO will pay specific attention to the following most-forgotten crises: Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Indonesia, Tajikistan, Russian Federation (Chechnya), Sahrawi refugees (Algeria), Somalia and Uganda,

- **Commit itself to address appropriately cross-cutting issues**

LRRD and Disaster Preparedness

Children, water and HIV/AIDS

Since 2001 **LRRD and DPP** have become a “standard feature” of ECHO’s approach to ensure the delivery of quality humanitarian aid and they have been instrumental in establishing its aid strategies since then. In terms of LRRD, ECHO intends to complete its withdrawal from Angola and phase down operations in Tajikistan, Sri Lanka and Cambodia. Where ECHO is confronted with a contiguous situation, such as in Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, it will closely co-ordinate its response with other Commission services and longer-term donors. In the LRRD context, ECHO welcomes the “4 R” approach (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) advocated by UNHCR, highlighting the necessity to concentrate on the links between refugee needs and on how development assistance can promote durable solutions for refugees. From a global perspective it may also be argued that the linkage of humanitarian aid and development aid is one of the many necessary elements to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The final success of the linkage strategies will eventually depend on the appropriate follow-up from other Commission services and their implementation of country-specific recommendations agreed in 2003 by the LRRD/DPP Interservice Group.

ECHO’s strategy on disaster preparedness will be implemented through the DIPECHO programme, with Action Plans being planned for South America, South Asia, Central Asia and the Caribbean as well as the mainstreaming of disaster-preparedness activities into humanitarian relief operations. As an indicative figure, ECHO would aim to spend 5% of its annual budget on disaster preparedness activities, as suggested by the European Parliament in the Carlotti Report.¹⁴

Children: Children are a particularly vulnerable group in humanitarian crises. According to UNICEF more than 10 million children die each year under the age of five from causes which could be prevented. Humanitarian disasters in particular may affect children in many ways: children may become sick or die from malnutrition or because of communicable diseases. They may also lose their parents or be forcefully recruited as child soldiers. In line with its objective to promote the mainstreaming of child related activities, ECHO in 2004 adopted internal policy guidelines clarifying the guiding principles for its action in favour of children as well as the main sectors of intervention. These guidelines were prepared by in-depth consultations, including on field level, and widely discussed with and distributed to Member States and partners. ECHO also developed a new reporting mechanism to better gauge the overall effect of its funding for child-related activities at a qualitative and quantitative level. ECHO in 2005 will fully roll out the application

¹⁴ Adopted by the European Parliament on 14 January 2004 (A5-0433/2002)

of the guidelines and the new reporting mechanism. It will undertake a stocktaking and lessons learned exercise of its policy on children at the end of the year.

Water: At the beginning of 2000 one-sixth (1.1 billion people) of the world's population was without access to improved water supply and two-fifths (2.4 billion people) lacked access to improved sanitation. The majority of these people live in Asia and Africa, where less than one-half of all Asians have access to improved sanitation and two out of five Africans lack improved water supply¹⁵. Children who live in unsanitary conditions or who drink dirty water are sick more often and more seriously; many die before the age of five from water- and sanitation-related diseases, including diarrhoea, cholera and malaria. Disasters may affect the normal water supply and sanitation facilities of a population or cause the displacement of large numbers of people to temporary settlements in overcrowded conditions. People affected by disasters are generally much more susceptible to illness and death from disease, which are related to a large extent to inadequate sanitation, inadequate water supplies and poor hygiene. Irrespective of the type of disaster, natural or man-made, the provision of potable water in situations of humanitarian crisis is always of paramount concern. A regular supply of drinking water is one of the most basic humanitarian needs, and during humanitarian crises it becomes a daily factor of survival. Water was added to ECHO's horizontal objectives in 2003. The Aid Strategy for 2004 set out a timetable whereby a process of methodological clarification would be undertaken, with a view to mainstreaming water related activities during 2005. After preparatory work in 2004 including an evaluation of water-related activities, ECHO aims to finalise guidelines and reporting methodologies 2005 to better gauge the impact of various water-related activities during humanitarian aid operations.

HIV/AIDS: According to UNAIDS¹⁶, some 37.8 million people were living with HIV in 2003. In that year 2.9 million people were killed by the disease and an estimated 4.8 million people became newly infected with HIV, more than in any previous year. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to close to two-thirds of all people living with HIV - some 25 million. In this region high levels of new HIV infections are persisting and are matched by high levels of AIDS mortality¹⁷. During humanitarian crises displacement creates additional vulnerabilities to HIV infection. It seems that migration, for whatever reasons, always tends to increase the risks of HIV transmission. Conflict-related displacement also leads to increased poverty, dependency and powerlessness¹⁸. Situations of violent conflict result in sexual

¹⁵ UNICEF/WHO: Global water supply and sanitation assessment 2000 report, see http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/globalassess/en/

¹⁶ UNAIDS: 2004 report on the global AIDS epidemic, see <http://www.unaids.org/bangkok2004/report.html>

¹⁷ UNAIDS : AIDS epidemic update, December 2003, see <http://www.unaids.org/Unaid/EN/Resources/Publications/corporate+publications/aids+epidemic+update+december+2003.asp>

¹⁸ ODI HPG Report 16: HIV/AIDS and humanitarian action, April 2004, see <http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgreport16.pdf>

violence, low awareness about HIV and the breakdown of vital services in health and education, all factors that increase the spread of HIV/AIDS. In such situations children, being a particular focus of ECHO, are particularly at risk and HIV/AIDS and conflict are combining to threaten the lives of young people, especially girls. Many children have also lost their parents to warfare or to AIDS and are living without protection and assistance¹⁹. ECHO will continue to mainstream HIV/AIDS issues into humanitarian activities. Guidelines on HIV/AIDS will be drafted during 2005 in order to define ECHO's policy as a humanitarian donor with regard to this global pandemic. ECHO's response to the issue of HIV/AIDS however, must be limited to and pertinent to its emergency mandate and type of response which is short-term in nature.

6. GEOGRAPHICAL AND THEMATIC PRIORITIES IN 2005

The 2005 strategy will focus on the following regional priorities:

Sub-Saharan Africa:

In the **West Africa** region humanitarian assistance must to be able to respond promptly to the continuing waves of internal and cross-border population movements. In **Coastal West Africa** ECHO is planning to continue its support to vulnerable people by providing integrated humanitarian assistance to **Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea**. ECHO will also provide strong support to the regional repatriation and reintegration process of Liberian refugees and IDPs to their place of origin. This repatriation coordinated by UNHCR involves the planned move of nearly 320.000 refugees spread in several countries of the region and 260.000 IDPs (both spontaneous and organized return) between October 2004 and April 2006. A regional approach in the form of a Global Plan for Coastal West Africa will be taken for 2005 in order to keep the maximum flexibility to respond to the evolving needs in the region. ECHO assistance will concentrate on repatriation, reinstallation and on the provision of basic needs in health, nutrition as well as on water and sanitation sectors for the most vulnerable people. Protection activities and support to the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance will also play an important role in the 2005 regional Global Plan.

In **Liberia**, ECHO's response will be to improve access to basic services in areas of massive return and/or previously inaccessible to humanitarian aid, to support the return and reintegration process of refugees, IDPs and ex-combatants to their place of origin and to continue to assist those vulnerable people still living in the camps. In the **Ivory Coast**, the situation remains very volatile. The country is still divided between government forces and the "forces nouvelles" (former rebels). Public services are unavailable in large parts of the country. ECHO will support integrated emergency assistance to vulnerable populations in the Northern and Western part of the country. In **Guinea**, ECHO intends to continue its support to the refugee camps

¹⁹ Save the Children Fund : HIV and Conflict : a double emergency, see http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/temp/scuk/cache/cmsattach/212_hivconflict.pdf

in Nzérékoré which require emergency aid until the Liberian refugees are repatriated. Leoneans have all been repatriated to their country; however there are still 7000 Ivorians to be assisted in Guinean camps. In **Sierra Leone** the humanitarian situation has continued to improve further though public services, particularly in the health sector, are extremely weak. However, the successful implementation of an LRRD strategy will allow ECHO to phase out its financial assistance by the end of 2004.

As a result of the ongoing conflict in Darfur, close to 200.000 Sudanese have fled their country to seek refuge in neighbouring **Chad** with the majority being settled in 10 camps located from North to South along the border with Sudan at a distance of 60km from the frontier. ECHO plans to continue its support to these Sudanese refugees with a focus on health, water, sanitation and nutrition sectors. It will also support UNHCR's coordination activities. Other UN agencies having specific mandates will also be supported (UNICEF for emergency education and child protection and WFP for food distributions.) If the situation in Darfur improves and repatriation takes place, ECHO's funds will be refocused to support this process. If, however, the situation worsens in Darfur and further refugees arrive in Chad, support will be provided to assist their humanitarian needs.

Among the countries being assisted in the **Horn of Africa** ECHO's main focus will remain on **Sudan** and especially on the humanitarian needs generated by the crisis in Darfur. In addition, humanitarian needs in much of the rest of Sudan persist following 20 years of civil war and the frequent occurrence of natural disasters. Regardless of the successful results of the North-South peace negotiations, humanitarian needs on the ground are expected to remain high and therefore ECHO will maintain its commitment in 2005 in order to respond to the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable parts of the population. The implementation of a multi-sectoral approach (health, nutrition, water and sanitation, food security, protection) focusing on ECHO's core mandate will be the main objective next year. Resumption of formal co-operation between the country and the EU following the North-South peace agreement should lead to improved implementation of the LRRD policy. Finally, whenever possible, a number of relevant crosscutting sectors such as child protection, gender issues and HIV/AIDS will be reinforced.

Operations for the forgotten crises in **Somalia** and **Uganda** will be maintained in 2005 and possibly increased where there are improvements in capacity and access to needs. In Somalia there will be a greater focus on core mandate needs (main sectors: health, nutrition, water and sanitation) as other Commission services increasingly address vulnerability in line with LRRD/DPP. In Uganda the expanded range of sectors will be maintained (health, nutrition, water, sanitation, protection (including child protection), essential relief items, shelter, and food security. Where acute core mandate needs arise in Ethiopia and Eritrea, these will be addressed by emergency responses coordinated with other Commission services to encourage the application of LRRD and DPP measures. In Kenya, following ECHO's return to provide drought relief in 2004, ECHO will continue to work closely with other Commission services to ensure the establishment of an effective local disaster mitigation capacity as a key component in the achievement of the ongoing Commission DPP and LRRD policy.

Despite tensions and sporadic clashes, the wider peace process has continued to hold in the **Great Lakes region** of Central Africa. Unfortunately, the humanitarian situation still remains devastating in several parts of the region and will require continued intervention.

In **Burundi** the road to political stability has been further frustrated by the continued failure of some parties to join the democratic process. The potential costs of this persistent failure were tragically revealed in August when 160 people were massacred in an ethnically inspired attack in a refugee camp. Latent unresolved issues in neighbouring countries have also led to a persistent influx of refugees across the borders. These together with a persistent IDP problem will remain the main focus of humanitarian attention. ECHO's programme will emphasize protection measures and the setting-up of an integrated multi-sector rapid response capacity for emergencies in the sectors of health, nutrition, watsan and relief items

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, despite difficult political conditions, the timetable for the demobilisation process and national elections is maintained. Freedom of movement of people and goods has greatly improved. Some parts of the country have even enjoyed a minor peace dividend but many, particularly in the East, continue to endure deplorable conditions. Not only will these areas require assistance in 2005 but also some of those areas where gains have been made will need on-going nurturing until their recovery is secure. Support will continue to be directed to the health, food and nutrition, IDPs and refugees as well as to protection and co-ordination activities.

In the **United Republic of Tanzania** there are still over 400.000 refugees (approximately two thirds Burundian and one third Congolese) living in 13 camps in the north-western part of the country, who are almost entirely dependent on humanitarian aid for survival. In 2005 ECHO will continue to meet their essential protection, care and maintenance needs, also aiming to support further repatriation to Burundi, whenever this is feasible on a voluntary and dignified basis. ECHO will maintain contingency awareness of refugee influxes, given that the Congolese caseload is currently increasing.

In the **Republic of Congo (Brazzaville)** and the Central African Republic, ECHO will gradually hand over its assistance programmes to post-crisis rehabilitation actions to be undertaken by the 9th EDF. However, ECHO will continue to monitor the situation closely, as the political situation in both countries is still volatile.

In recent years, the **Southern Africa region** has been affected by both natural disasters and man-made crises. As a result of more favourable agricultural conditions the region is gradually recovering from the food shortage caused mainly by the drought that affected it during the past two years (2002-2003). Therefore, humanitarian assistance is no longer programmed for **Zambia and Malawi**. In Malawi, ECHO has been working closely with the Commission's long-term services to ensure a continued response to chronic malnutrition and HIV/AIDS in 2005. The overall situation in **Lesotho and Swaziland** is also improving. However, there are still pockets of extreme vulnerability. ECHO will continue to provide support to vulnerable groups, mainly orphans and children with special needs.

The rehabilitation process in **Angola** initiated after the signature of the peace process in 2002 continues. The resettlement of war-affected populations, internally displaced population and refugees is expected to be concluded during the first months of 2005. Over the past two years, ECHO's strategy has focused on the implementation of a sound LRRD process with primary health, food security and education being the main sectors. ECHO's phasing out is nearly concluded. Consequently, no humanitarian assistance is programmed for Angola in 2005.

In contrast, the situation in **Zimbabwe** continues to be of major concern. The humanitarian situation is worrying due to a combination of factors, including the continued economic decline, major policy constraints (e.g. land reform process) and bad governance, insufficient expenditure for social services and the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is difficult to predict the evolution of the crisis ahead of the Presidential elections scheduled for March 2005 and of the security situation, which may impact on the access granted to ECHO's partners, especially in the politically sensitive rural areas. ECHO remains committed to provide humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe in 2005 to assist the most vulnerable people.

Finally, the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic are another overriding concern in the region. Death and sickness are crippling society and profoundly undermining recovery prospects. ECHO is already contributing to the fight against HIV/AIDS. ECHO will continue to mainstream HIV/AIDS in all projects funded in Southern Africa. In addition, populations affected or infected by HIV/AIDS will continue to be considered as a priority beneficiary group.

In **Madagascar**, following ECHO's emergency response to Cyclone Gafilo in 2004, ECHO is working with other Commission services in pursuit of disaster preparedness in 2005.

As for the ACP countries in the **Caribbean** (Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica and Haiti) ECHO expects to wind up the emergency programmes it is currently funding to address the effects of the disasters brought about by a series of hurricanes during the second half of 2004. Furthermore, at least a partial exit is planned for **Haiti** where the emergency programmes funded by ECHO in response to the socio-economic crisis should give way to rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts for which much support has been pledged by the international community. However, ECHO remains alert to the particular vulnerability of the region to natural disasters and will remain an active partner in case of need.

Mediterranean and Middle East Countries

ECHO is most concerned about recent developments in the **Middle East** which do not give hope for any improvement in the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people. The conflict will continue to create large humanitarian needs in particular

due to continued problems of access and mobility, increased destruction of infrastructure and demolition of houses and the lack of economic development.

The Road Map has been virtually suspended. Violations of international humanitarian law and human rights continue. Incursions of the Israeli Defense Forces into **West Bank** and **Gaza** create major damage and casualties, thus disrupting social and economic life in the territories. The Palestinian Authority does not demonstrate the capacity to establish order and guarantee security. The ongoing construction of the so-called “security barrier” in the West Bank and around East Jerusalem, partially deviating from the 1949 armistice line, continues to generate additional humanitarian needs and will, according to the UN, eventually cut off some 680.000 people from services, health, education and livelihoods. Finally, the continued construction and expansion of settlements further inhibit normal developments in the territories. In sum, there is little hope that 2005 will bring any improvement to the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where 60% of nearly 3.5 million people live below the poverty line and unemployment affects some 50% of the population. Scarcity of water increases, whilst quality deteriorates. 40% of the population is food insecure, with growing chronic malnutrition and iron deficiency anaemia, especially among children. The possible negative humanitarian impact of an eventual disengagement of Israel from the Gaza Strip will have to be considered. Operations will aim at ensuring a minimum level of water supply, providing food commodities and taking measures to reduce the impact of malnutrition. Mobile health services will be maintained and psycho-social support will be provided to vulnerable people. Temporary job opportunities will be created, and assistance granted to victims of home demolitions. Co-ordination will be further promoted and ICRC protection activities will be supported.

The conflict in the Middle East continues to make its impact felt on neighbouring countries, in particular on Palestinian refugees living in **Lebanon, Jordan and Syria**.

In **Lebanon**, some 445.000 Palestinian refugees, representing nearly 13% of the total population, are excluded from Lebanese society, their civil rights and mobility to work abroad are restricted and they are banned from working in 72 trades and professions. Operations will focus on water and sanitation, as well as on improving the quality of more affordable hospitalisation services. Temporary job opportunities will be promoted. Psychosocial support will be provided to vulnerable people, and activities will be supported in order to strengthen the protection of Palestinian refugees.

In **Jordan and Syria**, the situation of Palestinian refugees is less unfavourable. They are better integrated in the Syrian and Jordanian societies. In Jordan, 34.5% of the population is represented by more than 1.7 million Palestinian UNRWA registered refugees, 18% of whom live in 10 camps. There are also 3 unofficial gatherings. In Syria, 29% of the more than 400.000 Palestinian refugees (2.6% of total population) live in 10 camps. However, more than 46.000 and 30.000 individuals in Jordan and Syria respectively, are considered as being special

hardship cases. Operations will focus on rehabilitating the shelters where they live in appalling conditions.

Humanitarian needs of the **Sahrawi refugees** do require continuous support from the international community and from ECHO in particular. Steps already taken to reinforce the monitoring of funded operations will continue and different solutions to the problem of transporting humanitarian goods to the refugee camps will be studied. In addition to classical humanitarian aid, ECHO will try to promote pilot projects for auto-production.

Humanitarian needs in **Yemen** continue to be insufficiently covered by the international community. These needs can therefore be considered as “forgotten”. This is particularly true for the water and health sector in remote areas, the main target of ECHO’s strategy in 2005.

Newly Independent States (NIS) and Mongolia

In the NIS ECHO will continue to respond to the huge humanitarian needs caused by the Chechnya conflict. Humanitarian needs are likely to remain high as the civilian population keeps on being the main victim of the conflict characterised by widespread violations of human rights and humanitarian law. In Chechnya, health care and water supplies are barely functioning and many people face severe problems in obtaining food. Outside Chechnya, the situation of IDPs in Ingushetia and Daghestan remains precarious, with little attention from the international community.

As the conflict risks spilling over to the whole **Northern Caucasus** region, ECHO might have to respond to new humanitarian needs deriving from a potential renewed conflict between North Ossetia and Ingushetia over the disputed Prigorodny district or from a general deterioration of the situation.

Depending on the conditions of access and security, ECHO will try to meet the basic needs of IDPs and the most vulnerable population in **Chechnya** as well as in the neighbouring republics, **Ingushetia** and **Dagestan**. Operations will include food, medical care (with a focus on mother and child healthcare and support to children’s hospitals in Chechnya), shelter, water and sanitation, protection, mine awareness activities and psycho-social projects. The scope of the assistance will depend on the way the conflict and thus humanitarian needs develop. In order to improve the monitoring of its assistance, ECHO continues to hope to be able to strengthen its presence in the region by opening an office in Nazran.

ECHO will continue to provide assistance to vulnerable groups in **Georgia**, in particular in Western Georgia/Abkhazia. As the international community has pledged increased assistance for rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, ECHO will focus its assistance on vulnerable groups affected by the continuing conflict over Abkhazia. ECHO has phased out of **Armenia** in 2004 and is no longer present in **Azerbaijan** but, in view of difficult conditions for many refugees there, it will continue to monitor the situation.

ECHO will further reduce its assistance to **Tajikistan**. 2005 will be the second year of a three-year phasing-out plan, now that the immediate impact of drought and war has diminished. As other programmes of support and assistance become more active, in particular TACIS and the Food Security Programme, ECHO will design its operations in line with the Commission's LRRD policy in such a way that its relief activities will be progressively linked to new reconstruction and development initiatives. It is important that close co-ordination of all stakeholders continues. Humanitarian funding will target the food, health and water and sanitation sectors with probably a stronger emphasis on water and sanitation activities thus allowing for concrete LRRD opportunities.

In 2004, ECHO has continued its support to **Mongolia**, focusing on disaster-preparedness programmes aiming at improving the food security of the most vulnerable herders. Depending on their results, ECHO intends to continue to provide support in 2005.

A third Action Plan for **Central Asia** is planned to be adopted in the course of the second half of 2005 under the **DIPECHO** programme with a main focus on Tajikistan. It will put emphasis on reducing the impact of natural disasters by strengthening the relevant local, physical and human resources in high-risk areas.

Asia and Latin America

The most important theatre of humanitarian operations in Asia will continue to be **Afghanistan**. However, ECHO's involvement there will be considerably scaled down in 2005, on account of the increasing amount of long-term development aid going into the country. Livelihood support and water and sanitation will be the main sectors of intervention, supporting the sustainability of the return process, along with protection activities, both for returnees and detainees in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees remaining in **Pakistan** and **Iran**.

The second most important area of activity in Asia will be **North Korea**, where there are enormous humanitarian needs but a serious lack of donor attention, despite the country's high political profile. Projects will continue to be centred on the sectors of health, water and sanitation and child nutrition, especially in the areas more remote from Pyongyang such as the North East. Though government restrictions on humanitarian agencies had been relaxed somewhat in recent years, there has been a certain hardening of the government's position recently, with an invitation to agencies with "low input" to leave the country and a desire to reduce international monitoring to "the lowest possible level". At present it is too early to assess all the implications of this.

Forgotten crises will continue to play an important role in defining ECHO's humanitarian strategy in Asia. Top of this list is **Burma/Myanmar**, where ECHO plans to intensify its interventions. However, substantial restrictions are still placed on NGOs by the government and it remains impossible to gain access to large tracts of the country, especially in the border areas with Thailand and China, the

homelands for most of the very vulnerable ethnic minorities. Activities here will be focused on health, nutrition and protection, and assistance will likewise continue to be given to Burmese refugees in the camps at the border in **Thailand**.

The second forgotten crisis in Asia is **Nepal**, where the humanitarian situation has drastically worsened over the past year and where there are relatively few donors. Access has proved difficult in the areas controlled by the Maoist rebels, but where possible, healthcare and protection activities will target populations affected by the conflict. Food aid will continue to be given to the Bhutanese refugees stranded in the camps on the border, since they have no other means of sustenance, and ECHO is actively cooperating with other donors in order to promote return or find definitive resettlement options for the remaining refugees.

Thirdly, in **Indonesia**, ECHO will be maintaining its efforts in 2005 to help victims of the internal conflicts in the provinces of Aceh, Papua and Central Sulawesi. Once again, access is highly restricted in the areas where government and separatist groups are fighting in Aceh and Papua. ECHO's aid will be geared to assisting and protecting civilian victims of the conflict and to facilitating the return of IDPs to their homes or their resettlement and integration in their new places.

Although the appalling security situation in **Iraq** does not allow proper needs assessments to be carried out, it seems that the most pressing humanitarian needs have been covered. However, the existence of pockets of humanitarian need can not be ruled out. If the security situation improves, the rehabilitation of basic social infrastructure will be covered by reconstruction programmes. ECHO is not planning any new initiative for Iraq in 2005, but will continue to monitor the situation in order to be able to respond if a new humanitarian crisis emerges. In **South Asia**, ECHO aims to continue the process of progressive withdrawal from **Sri Lanka**, as development aid becomes more significant, always assuming that the peace initiative continues to make progress. Activities will be aimed at helping IDPs to return to their homes in former conflict areas and assisting people living in "welfare centres". In **India** support will be given to the Tamil refugees living in Tamil Nadu, especially if the process of repatriation to Sri Lanka gets under way. ECHO will continue to support activities for the protection of victims of the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir and for providing them with psychological support and will respond to major natural disasters where the need requires it. In **Bangladesh** ECHO will intervene, as it did in the summer of 2004, if there are very serious and widespread floods or other natural catastrophes, and protection and relief activities may be implemented for the Chittagong hill tribes if the conflict in this area worsens.

In **South-East Asia** ECHO will continue the process of gradual phase-out from **Cambodia**, with a progressive handover to longer term development instruments. In **Laos**, ECHO intends to maintain its strategy of support for relief activities and basic community services at village level, especially in very vulnerable communities where humanitarian needs persist. Special attention will be given to the LRRD process, so that ECHO's activities can be complemented by other long term support such as Food Security and ECHO can scale down whenever the long term instruments are ready to take over. In the **Philippines**, aid will be targeted at the basic humanitarian needs of IDPs, returnees and host populations in the conflict-

affected areas of Central Mindanao, as well as facilitating the demobilisation of child soldiers. ECHO will intervene in **East Timor** to prevent a deterioration of the health and malnutrition situation and in **Vietnam and China** in response to any major natural disaster, especially floods.

In **Latin America**, the main sphere of operation will continue to be **Colombia**, where the 40 year-old conflict shows no sign of abating. ECHO will continue its focus in the rural areas, where state institutions are largely absent, assisting IDPs to survive and become established in their new situations during the first 12 months after their displacement. In the immediate post-displacement period aid will be concentrated on food and non-food items, moving progressively to encompass shelter, water and sanitation, healthcare and psycho-social support.

In other countries of **South and Central American** operations will only take place in response to serious natural disasters where local capacity is unable to cope, such as the cold wave in Peru in the winter of 2004.

For the **DIPECHO** programme, the fourth Action Plans will be implemented in Central America and South East Asia and new Action Plans will be launched for the Andean Community in South America, for South Asia and for the Caribbean. The accent will be on tackling specific needs in the fields of preparedness and small-scale mitigation, in particular those identified through evaluations of previous Action Plans, together with a priority for the establishment of links with risk reduction activities.

7. PRIORITIES RELATED TO PARTNERS

2004 has been the first full year of implementing ECHO's new legal and financial framework with its different families of partners. During this year ECHO carefully analysed the first lessons learned in terms of applying contractual frameworks that focus on assessing the performance of humanitarian aid operations by requiring partners to define clear objectives and indicators for their humanitarian operations. With a view to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), ECHO in 2005 will use inter alia its Grant Facility to finance tools that will help partners to improve their presentation of proposals and reporting by identifying the most relevant indicators by sector of operation. ECHO will also continue its annual assessment of partners' performance within the terms of the Framework Partnership Agreement. The Directorate General will also carry on its assistance for the implementation of the new FPA by providing follow-up training to partners throughout 2005. ECHO will develop a strategy in order to start preparations for a specific Framework Partnership Agreement with specialised agencies of Member States. In particular, this should allow ECHO to capitalise on the Red Cross movement's special capacities in primary emergency (natural disasters) and logistics (procurements centres).

ECHO will continue its two-year cycle of auditing partners' systems of internal control as well as supporting documents of completed projects. This will allow updating the review of the adequacy of partners' financial systems. ECHO will

focus on the follow up by partners of the recommendations issued by previous audits. Furthermore, as the EC/UN Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA) has been in operation for over a year, ECHO's emphasis will shift to ensuring that its UN partners have complied with the agreement's verification clause and in particular with article 53(1) requirements of the Financial Regulation relating to the project and programme funds made available to the UN family.

8. OTHER HORIZONTAL ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

Thematic and programmatic funding: In 2004 ECHO implemented the thematic funding approach on a more systematic scale. ECHO provided support to several humanitarian organisations with special mandates, including UNHCR (refugee protection activities), ICRC (protection activities), OCHA (humanitarian information systems), WHO (reinforcement of the response capacity to health emergencies), WFP (needs assessment methodologies) and UNICEF (child protection activities and emergency preparedness). ECHO has critically evaluated the first results achieved so far and has drawn the conclusion that a further clarification of the approach in this area is necessary. In 2005 ECHO will operate a clear distinction between thematic and programmatic funding in its financing decisions. Whereas thematic funding will be tightly focused on start-up activities of an innovative nature that provide a value added to humanitarian response capacities (e.g. introduction of a new information system), programmatic funding will be used to cover agencies' global core mandates covered by their global appeals (e.g. ICRC protection).

Evaluation: In 2005 ECHO's evaluation programme will consolidate its work of recent years by launching a meta-evaluation of its work to identify what lessons can be learnt from completed evaluations and the follow-up given to them. ECHO will also host a meeting of Member State officials and others concerned with evaluation on evaluation issues relating to NGO partners, specifically the promotion of the use of evaluation methods by NGOs. ECHO will further host a meeting of 'ALNAP', the leading association concerned with the evaluation of humanitarian aid. The ECHO evaluation manual will also be reviewed and updated in line with recent developments in the evaluation of humanitarian aid. In respect of the evaluation function's core activities, a particular emphasis will be given to thematic issues, particularly to the updating or restating of existing policies e.g. forcibly displaced people. ECHO will continue to evaluate its major partners and the follow-up given to previous evaluations of partners. ECHO's operations will be evaluated in accordance with the practices established by the service and the needs of the operational units.

Information and communication strategy: During 2005, ECHO will continue to implement its Information Strategy which was comprehensively updated in January 2004. The focus will remain on communicating the values, principles and concrete achievements of EU humanitarian aid and the need to preserve the dignity of populations in extreme humanitarian situations. In line with ECHO's strategic

guidelines, particular attention will be paid to the themes of children and water. There will also be increased emphasis on communication activities in the new member states of the EU.

The communication strategy continues to be guided by four essential elements, namely: the targeting of information multipliers such as EU opinion leaders, young people and the media; the promotion of basic key messages; encouraging a wider information reflex through the active promotion of humanitarian principles and values; and the rigorous application of cost-efficiency criteria so as to maximise the use of available resources.

Security of relief workers: A key theme for 2005 will be the efforts to improve the overall security of humanitarian workers operating in increasingly insecure humanitarian environments, whether for ECHO personnel or implementing partners. ECHO will pursue its efforts to strengthen and improve its internal security management system (procedures and conditions) for headquarters and field staff. It will continue to contribute to improving coordination and collaboration on security issues with humanitarian partners, including the dissemination of the results of ECHO's recently commissioned review of "Standards and practices for the security of humanitarian personnel and advocacy for humanitarian space"²⁰. It will, where appropriate, provide support for specific security-related projects and studies with the aim of developing tools to improve the overall security of humanitarian action.

Regional support offices: In view of the numerous institutional and operational challenges for the rapid delivery of quality humanitarian aid, ECHO will further build up its operational and analytical response capacity at field level. This will be done by putting into operation appropriate organisational measures for ECHO's Regional support offices. The structure of Regional support offices will be harmonised by regrouping their activities around three basic "pillars", namely "operations", "management" and "communication".

9. CONCLUSION

Pursuing a principled approach to humanitarian aid has become the trademark of the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid-ECHO. It can defend the principles and values of humanitarian assistance – neutrality, impartiality and independence – only if it meets the highest standards for humanitarian donors. Humanitarian principles are challenged every day – in the field and through new policy agendas. This calls for an appropriate response from the humanitarian community. It is ECHO's ambition that its aid strategy 2005 will become a reference point for such a response.

²⁰ http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/security_review_en.htm