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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

**Annual Report on the European Union's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
Policies and their Implementation in 2011**

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1. INTRODUCTION

When disaster strikes, help is needed, and is needed fast. Helping the world's most vulnerable populations in crisis situations is a moral imperative for the international community and can make the difference between life and death. Responding to this imperative, the European Union and its 27 Member States is the world's leading humanitarian donor providing about half of global funding for emergency relief to victims of man-made and natural disasters. The EU also promotes respect for, and adherence to, international humanitarian law.

This annual report focuses on the European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection in 2011. The aim of these actions is saving and preserving life wherever people are in need of relief, and preventing and alleviating human suffering, whilst preserving the integrity and dignity of populations affected by natural or man-made disasters.

The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) was created in 1992 as an expression of European solidarity with people in need all around the world. In 2004, it became the Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid before integrating Civil Protection in 2010 to provide better coordination and disaster response within and outside the EU. Since its creation, the Commission, through ECHO has channelled around €14 billion from the EU budget to victims of conflict and disasters in over 140 countries around the globe. For the past five years, an average of €1 billion has been provided annually, helping nearly 150 million of the world's most vulnerable populations hit by natural disasters and man-made crises.

Humanitarian aid is one of the two main tools at the disposal of the European Union (EU) to provide relief assistance to people outside the EU faced with the immediate consequences of disasters.

The EU's humanitarian assistance is based on the principles of **humanity**, **neutrality**, **impartiality** and **independence**. Every decision taken by the Commission must be in accordance with these four principles which are at the heart of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. EU humanitarian aid is distributed without regard to any political agendas, and seeks without exception to help those in the greatest need, irrespective of their nationality, religion, gender, ethnic origin or political affiliation. This commitment to principled humanitarian aid is now also anchored in the Lisbon Treaty (Article 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

The other main tool is **Civil Protection**. Thirty-two countries, including all EU Member States, participate in a civil protection mechanism which provides assets such as search and rescue teams and equipment following a request from a country stricken by disaster. This mechanism is operated by the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) in ECHO.

The appointment of Kristalina Georgieva, in 2010, as the first European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response brought these tools together, strengthening the coherence of EU disaster response operations.

The European Union's humanitarian aid and civil protection policies demonstrate commitment to supporting those inside and outside the Union in need of assistance when they are at their most vulnerable. Such assistance contributes to fulfilling one of the strategic objectives of the EU's external action, as set out in Article 21 of the Treaty on the European Union.

At the same time, it receives wide support amongst the European public: a very recent Eurobarometer survey shows that public support for EU humanitarian aid and civil protection has further increased in recent years in spite of the economic crisis.

- Nine out of 10 citizens (88 %) believe that it is important for the European Union to continue funding humanitarian aid; this represents a rise of nine percentage points since the last survey in 2010. Almost the same number, 84 %, are in favour of maintaining humanitarian aid.
- There is also a firm endorsement (71 %) of the Commission's role in coordinating EU humanitarian aid, which is up 13 % points since 2010. A strong majority of respondents (88 %) also supports an initiative to involve young people in EU humanitarian operations as part of an EU voluntary aid corps.
- As far as civil protection is concerned, 82 % agree that coordinated EU action in dealing with disasters is more effective than actions taken by individual countries.
- The survey on civil protection reveals concern about the possibility of disasters in the EU. 75 % of those questioned said they were concerned about man-made disasters, such as oil spills and nuclear accidents. Floods and earthquakes came next with 67 %, while 64 % said that they were most concerned about terrorist attacks and 59 % were concerned about armed conflicts.
- 68 % of Europeans are aware that the EU funds humanitarian aid. Four out of ten (38 %) know about the EU's coordination of civil protection.
- About one third consider that they are well informed about EU humanitarian aid activities, a level which is up by 12 % compared to the previous survey. In the civil protection survey, 19 % feel that they are well informed about EU activities. In both surveys, respondents chose television and the internet as their preferred sources of information, followed by the press and radio.

2. THE GLOBAL CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH THE ASSISTANCE IS BEING DELIVERED

In 2011, there was **an increase in the global level of humanitarian crises, disasters and vulnerability**. The trend of rising needs outstripping available resources continues. The delivery of humanitarian aid and civil protection is therefore becoming increasingly complex and difficult. Due to the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, there are more sudden-onset humanitarian crises and, in particular, more major disasters, such as those which occurred in the Horn of Africa and in Japan.

In the course of 2011, according to statistics published by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED)¹ and UN Office for disaster reduction, UNISDR², there were 302 natural disasters of varying magnitudes, which killed almost 30 000 people and affected 206 million others worldwide. Some 106 million people were hit by floods and 60 million by drought, whereas 1.6 million were affected by earthquakes. Asia was by far the most affected region, with more than 45% of the disasters and 89% of the total number of victims occurring in that region. The consequences of disasters are devastating and varied: lives are lost, and housing, crops and livelihoods are destroyed.

Although we have mentioned only a few by name, the impact of these disasters has stretched the international humanitarian community to its limits. In 2011, the United Nations was obliged to launch the biggest consolidated funding appeal in its history (€5.7 billion) for humanitarian needs. There is an increasing mismatch between rising global humanitarian needs on the one hand, and the increasingly scarce financial resources available to respond to these needs, on the other hand, especially in the light of the economic and financial crisis that has hit many western donor countries. Together with chronic vulnerability in many parts of the world, this continues to have a direct bearing on the lives of millions of people in need of assistance.

It also means that donors have to redouble their efforts to respond to disasters in a more efficient and effective manner, by making even better use of their limited resources. For ECHO, this translates into identifying efficiency gains when working with its partners and into investing more into preparedness and resilience of vulnerable communities. At the same time, the synergies between humanitarian aid and civil protection need to be fully exploited. In addition, the EU as part of the **overall international humanitarian system** has a key role in encouraging other countries and regions to increase their participation in humanitarian preparedness and response, with a view to mobilising the growing resources of emerging economies for humanitarian action and disaster response more effectively.

Man-made humanitarian disasters are still caused for the most part by internal civil conflicts, with civilian populations being increasingly exposed to violence and suffering. This type of conflict is often marked by the disregard of the belligerents for international humanitarian law and principles, thereby shrinking the humanitarian space, i.e. the areas in which humanitarian relief can be provided neutrally and impartially without impediment. In this context, humanitarian access to people in need and the safety and protection of civilian populations and humanitarian workers have become more and more problematic. The overall situation and working environment has deteriorated in all these respects, particularly in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Afghanistan and North Korea.

In response to these challenges, there is a growing understanding within the international humanitarian community of the need to put further effort and emphasis **on preparedness and on resilience of vulnerable communities** to enable them to cope better with disasters, thereby reducing the devastating impact on affected populations and their livelihoods.

Also, the long-term impact on lives and livelihoods in the aftermath of major crises, such as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the Pakistan floods, provides an illustration of how crucial it is to adequately address longer-term rehabilitation and development needs, at the very earliest stages of a humanitarian response. Only if humanitarians and development actors work together hand in hand will there be a chance to reduce the devastating impact of recurring

¹ www.cred.be.

² www.unisdr.org.

disasters on the prospects for sustainable development. In this respect, work continued in 2011 on **Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)**, for example by Commission services jointly programming food security budgets in certain regions and close cooperation with the Instrument for Stability (short-term measures) on early recovery. Efforts made include the elaboration of a common methodology and its testing, intensification of the humanitarian and development actors' joint work and a number of innovative approaches in terms of practical implementation on the ground.

3. THE EU'S HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION ACTIVITIES IN 2011

Through the Commission (ECHO), the EU provided substantial needs-based EU humanitarian assistance and facilitated the provision of European in-kind civil protection assistance in 2011 for a total of €1 154 million, consisting of:

- Humanitarian assistance to approximately 117 million people³ in 91 non-EU countries, which represents an average cost of 10 Euros per beneficiary;
- Rapid response to 18 requests for assistance from the civil protection mechanism, within and outside the EU.

The initial humanitarian aid budget of €853 million was supplemented on several occasions in order to respond to new crises and natural disasters occurring during the year, i.e. the internal conflict in Libya, the post-electoral crisis in the Ivory Coast, the famine caused by the drought and complicated by conflict in the Horn of Africa, the conflict in Sudan around the independence of South Sudan and the flooding in Pakistan. In order to meet these additional needs, further funding was mobilised via transfers of funds from the EU's Emergency Aid Reserve, through the use of the 10th European Development Fund reserved for humanitarian aid in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, via EFTA⁴ contributions and by transfers from other budget lines within the EU budget's external aid heading (Heading 4).

Of the total EU funding provided in 2011, an estimated 42% was allocated to protracted crises, 38% was needed to respond to natural disasters and 20% was used for ad hoc crises and interventions.

Natural disasters continued to cause human suffering and severe damage throughout the world in 2011. In dealing with this type of disaster, the Commission has adopted a two-pronged strategy:

- rapid response, by providing humanitarian aid and by facilitating and coordinating the civil protection assistance provided by EU Member States to other States (EU or third countries) participating in the Civil Protection Mechanism on a voluntary basis upon activation of the Mechanism;
- disaster preparedness, by identifying those geographical areas and populations which are most vulnerable to natural disasters and for which specific programmes on disaster preparedness are established.

In 2011, the Commission provided humanitarian assistance to cope with the consequences of the following disasters:

³ Of which 105 million through humanitarian aid and food aid and 12 million through disaster preparedness activities.

⁴ European Free Trade Association.

- The triple disaster of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear explosion in Japan;
- Droughts in West Africa (Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad), in the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia) and in Central and South America (Paraguay, Bolivia, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala);
- Floods in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Peru;
- Cyclones/Hurricanes/Tropical storms in South East Asia (Cambodia, Laos PDR, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam), in Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua) and in the Caribbean (St Lucia);
- Epidemics in Cameroon.

3.1. Humanitarian Aid interventions

In 2011, a major humanitarian crisis developed in the **Horn of Africa**. A combination of high food prices, failed rainy seasons, an increase in population displacements (mainly due to the ongoing violent conflict in Somalia), and restricted humanitarian access, led to a rapid deterioration in the food security and nutritional status of vulnerable populations. The situation was further exacerbated by underlying poverty and reduced ability to cope. In the second half of 2011, more than 13 million people were affected by the crisis. The Commission responded by mobilising more than €181 million to assist the most vulnerable population groups in the region.

Beyond disaster response, the Commission is also striving to enhance disaster prevention and preparedness, both within the EU and beyond, especially in regions that are prone to natural disasters. **Disaster risk reduction** and adaptation to **climate change** were a clear focus for funding in 2011. ECHO launched new DIPECHO programmes in South Asia, South America, the Pacific and the Caribbean. It also mainstreamed risk reduction into overall aid operations.

As far as ‘**man-made crises**’ are concerned, political protests in **Libya** turned into a civil war, which ultimately required a NATO-led military air campaign to protect the civilian population. The conflict in Libya led to a major refugee crisis at the borders with Tunisia and Egypt, requiring EU assistance for the humanitarian response and the repatriation of people who had been working in Libya fleeing the conflict. The post-electoral crisis in the **Ivory Coast** continued, which also affected neighbouring countries. In **Iraq**, the security situation has been deteriorating since the parliamentary election on 7 March 2010; insurgents continued to target police and soldiers, as well as civilians, in mass explosions, in an effort to undermine confidence in the Iraqi security forces, as US troops were preparing to leave Iraq by the end of 2011.

In addition to these crises, the Commission continued to intervene in several **protracted and complex emergencies**. Examples include the following:

Sudan and South Sudan: the formal separation of Sudan into two countries was initially peaceful, when South Sudan became the world’s 196th country on 9 July 2011. However, armed conflict along the new border is continuing to worsen and difficult negotiations are still pending to resolve a number of outstanding disagreements (e.g. oil revenue sharing, border demarcation). In the meantime, there have been more new emergencies leading to a sharp increase in humanitarian needs in both Sudan and South Sudan.

The occupied Palestinian territory, where the population continues to live under Israeli occupation in severe hardship and social distress. A protracted socio-economic crisis, characterised by harsh restrictions on movement and the continuing destruction of physical

assets, has led to major increases in poverty and unemployment. In the West Bank, the growth in Israeli settlement, violence by settlers against Palestinians, and the security barrier continue to affect everyday life. Strict controls on Palestinians' entry to Israel and East Jerusalem remain in place, and farmers are having difficulty in accessing their land near the security barrier and settlements. Thousands of house owners continue to be threatened by pending demolition orders and an increase in the number of evictions.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where there are 1.9 million displaced people out of a total population of some 71 million, the humanitarian situation is still precarious in many regions. There is a significant loss in harvest due to access problems and conflict. There are still many internally displaced people in conflict-affected North and South Kivu, in the East of the country. Although there has been a gradual stabilisation in some parts of North Kivu, the situation in other parts has seriously worsened, making the overall situation extremely unstable. In Equateur Province, inter-ethnic conflict at the end of 2009, followed by an intervention by the army, led to significant displacement and outflow of refugees to the Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic (CAR). Persistent attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have led to massive displacements within Province Orientale and significant refugee outflows to CAR.

Despite the heavier toll taken by complex emergencies over the past few years, and the lack of respect for humanitarian principles and the safety and security of humanitarian workers, there are also cases where the humanitarian situation has improved. For example, there are indications that conditions improve when humanitarian actions are closely followed by appropriately targeted development actions⁵.

3.2. Civil protection operations

As regards civil protection, the EU *Civil Protection Mechanism* was activated 18 times during the year⁶ (4 times within and 14 times outside the EU), to respond to events such as the explosion at a naval base in Cyprus, forest fires in Greece and Albania, floods in Pakistan, an earthquake in Turkey, the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. In addition, EU citizens and third country nationals were evacuated during the crisis in Libya. Experts were dispatched within and outside the EU as part of twelve assessment and coordination missions.

The proposal for a Decision on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism was adopted⁷ by the Commission at the end of 2011. It is still under discussion by the Council and the Parliament. Further details are contained in section 4 below.

The aim of this legislative proposal is to strengthen the instruments of the Mechanism. At present, the deployment of EU civil protection assets is largely based on ad hoc voluntary offers from the 32 participating States. The Commission intends to move to a system which is pre-planned and enables immediate action to be taken.

3.3. Financial and human resources

ECHO has more than 300 people working at its headquarters in Brussels and more than 400 in 44 field offices located in 38 countries around the world. Immediately following a disaster, humanitarian experts are on the ground to carry out needs assessments, and also to monitor the implementation of the EU-funded humanitarian projects. This needs-based approach is a

⁵ As further explained with concrete examples in the accompanying document. See examples of Chad, Burundi/Tanzania or, in Chapter 3.9, on transition and resilience.

⁶ 18 activations, 3 pre-alerts and 6 monitoring requests.

⁷ COM(2011)934 final, adopted on 20.12.2011.

key characteristic of EU humanitarian aid and how it is distributed to about 200 partners composed of non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies, other international organisations (such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies) and some specialised agencies from EU Member States.

It is important for ECHO to have a wide range of partners, as this enables it to cover a growing list of needs in different parts of the world, often in increasingly complex situations. ECHO-managed grants and contributions are made by selecting the best proposals received. In 2011, funding was distributed among ECHO's partners as follows: NGOs 50%, UN agencies 36% and international organisations 14%.

Humanitarian organisations are faced with increasing problems of gaining access to the people that need help. This is due to tightening of the humanitarian space by governments and armed groups who disregard even the most basic protection granted under international humanitarian law on the one hand, and as a result of security constraints on the other. Increasingly, governments are imposing restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid (e.g. Sri Lanka). In many conflict zones (e.g. DRC, Somalia, Sudan) humanitarian workers are witnessing particularly brutal methods of warfare, including the targeting of civilians and frequently the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

In addition, the incidence of attacks on humanitarian aid workers, including kidnappings, expulsions and killings, appears to be on the rise. Donors have to face the fact that not only the safety of humanitarian staff, but also the funding and infrastructure that they provide, is at risk. Some governments are willing to go to the extreme of expropriating or 'borrowing' funds and property financed by donors and/or expelling humanitarian aid organisations once they have been stripped of their assets.

4. HUMANITARIAN AND CIVIL PROTECTION ASSISTANCE POLICY

At policy level, in 2011 the Commission focused on the following **strategic initiatives**:

- Presentation of **legislative proposals on the EU's civil protection** with the aim of substantially strengthening the existing instruments. At present, the deployment of EU civil protection teams and assets is based largely on ad hoc voluntary offers from participating States. Although the EU Civil Protection Mechanism already plays an important role in supporting, coordinating and complementing the process of mutual assistance, the Commission is proposing to move to a system which is pre-planned and immediate. In this context, preparations have started in order to create a more efficient **Emergency Response Centre** in 2013, which will be the successor of the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC). It will be a genuine 24/7 fully fledged Centre that will allow the EU to take a more pro-active role in planning, preparing, operational coordination and logistical support.
- Moves to establish a **European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps**, as required by the Lisbon Treaty (Article 214 (5) TFEU). In 2011, ECHO initiated a public consultation and an impact assessment, as well as the launch of pilot projects. The results of these activities will feed into a proposal for a legislative framework setting up the Corps expected to be adopted in 2012.

ECHO also placed particular emphasis on selected **horizontal policy priorities**, in line with the commitments of the **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**⁸ and its Action Plan. These policy priorities include, for instance, the further roll-out of the EU humanitarian **food assistance** policy. The negotiations for the modernisation of the Food Aid Convention took place against this background. In order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of joint efforts to meet food security and nutrition needs, the Commission signed a Statement of Intent on "Programmatic Cooperation on Food Security and Nutrition" with three UN agencies: FAO, WFP and IFAD.

The Commission supported **disaster preparedness** actions in regions that are prone to natural disasters, in order to help local communities to react rapidly and efficiently when disaster occurs, enabling many lives to be saved. This support is provided through the DIPECHO programmes launched in 2010 and new programmes in South Asia, Pacific, South America and the Caribbean. Contribution to disaster preparedness goes well beyond DIPECHO action plans, as many of the major humanitarian financing decisions include disaster preparedness or mitigation of disaster impacts among their objectives. Mainstreaming is based on activities related to infrastructure support, advocacy and public awareness, small-scale mitigation, mapping and data computerisation, early warning systems, education, institutional strengthening and climate change activities.

Under its **civil protection** mandate, ECHO encouraged and facilitated cooperation between the 32 States⁹ participating in the Civil Protection (CP) Mechanism. In doing so, it seeks to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing and protecting against natural, technological or man-made disasters in Europe.

The Commission also started collecting information as part of an 18-month good practice programme for disaster prevention, focusing on specific disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, storms, droughts and heat waves) and horizontal measures (such as planning and infrastructure design). The implementation of the CP Mechanism ensures that people, the environment, property and cultural heritage are better protected in the event of disasters. In the area of preparedness, EU support focused on early warning systems, modules and the training programme of the Civil Protection Mechanism (over 890 experts were trained in 2011 and five full-scale exercises were supported). In addition, the Commission provided financial support to a number of preparedness cooperation projects (setting up a team for the evacuation of citizens, evacuation in the event of a nuclear incident, cave rescue awareness raising and the clean-up of shore lines polluted by oil).

Assistance based on resources that are made available by Member States was provided within those EU and third countries affected by disasters, in response to a request from the government of the country concerned.

⁸ Adopted by the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on 18 December 2007 — OJ 2008/C/25/01 of 30.1.2008.

⁹ The 27 EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Croatia and fYRoM.