

# **The European Union and Humanitarian Aid**

## **Questionnaire for stakeholders**

*Non-Paper of the European Commission -  
Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid ( ECHO)*

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## INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian assistance stands as one of the main external policies and instruments of the European Union. It is a shared competence between the Member States and the Community. The EU as a whole, that is EU Member States and the Commission, represents the largest humanitarian donor in the world, accounting roughly for 50% of the total annual volume of humanitarian funding. Community humanitarian assistance alone represents between 30 and 40 % of the total EU humanitarian funding. The Community has established over years a good reputation both as a donor and as a contributor to the governance of the international humanitarian system.

This leading status bestows particular responsibilities on the EU to continue to spearhead international efforts aiming at alleviating the suffering of millions of people throughout the world that are victims of man-made or natural disasters.

As the international humanitarian community is facing major challenges, renewed expectations are placed on the EU. The level of humanitarian needs worldwide remains as high as ever if not on the increase. Humanitarian crises resulting from man-made or natural disasters have not only increased in numbers but also changed in nature and complexity. Asymmetric wars, civil conflicts often breeding on widespread poverty, bad governance and failed states have multiplied and become protracted. Civilians are the main victims. Vital public infrastructure and services are disrupted if not destroyed altogether. Humanitarian workers and operations find it increasingly difficult to operate in such complex situations both in terms of access and security. This has been exacerbated by the geopolitical changes in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. The increased (mis)-perception that humanitarian aid is a 'western business' has further eroded the 'humanitarian space'.

The cumulative effects of climate change, and demographic and land use pressures have also increased the exposure and vulnerability of populations to natural disasters that have also increased both in scale and frequency. Finally, pandemics (with HIV-AIDS, malaria and Tuberculosis as the 3 main killers) have expanded with a huge human and socio-economic cost on developing countries.

In the face of such dramatic evolutions and challenges, in recent years there have been substantive international debates on the humanitarian system. The follow-up to the 2005 World Summit includes the international recognition of states' responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The 'Humanitarian Response Review'<sup>1</sup> made a number of substantive proposals to improve the international humanitarian system. The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative promotes concrete ways of improving aid programming and delivery.

Such evolutions cannot but impact on the policy developments at European level where there has been a general effort to improve the coherence, effectiveness and visibility of the EU external action. In this context, the EU is striving to reinforce its crisis management capacities – with obvious implications for humanitarian aid. Furthermore, in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 the European Union made a significant investment in improving its disaster response capacity at all levels.

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Humanitarian Response Review' (August 2005) – an independent report commissioned by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs.

Against this background, it seems necessary to review where the EU humanitarian “sphere” stands in relation both to the EU's external action and to the international humanitarian system. It is also opportune to stimulate reflections as to the respective roles of EU Member States and of the Community in contributing to EU humanitarian aid, and upon whether there are new opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of EU policies in this domain.

This questionnaire is a vehicle to opening an informed debate and a broad-based consultation process between the main stakeholders, mainly the EU Member States and EU institutions and the humanitarian partner organisations. This questionnaire addresses a series of issues and proposes a series of questions under the following headings:

- (1) the WHY: aim, values and principles on which EU humanitarian aid is based;
- (2) the WHAT: scope and policies;
- (3) the HOW: the mechanisms that are used to implement humanitarian aid; and
- (4) the WHO : the actors who deliver the aid.

The result of this consultation will feed into the preparation of policy initiatives on humanitarian aid at the EU level in 2007.

## WHY EU HUMANITARIAN AID - AIM, VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

### ISSUE 1. UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMANITARIAN AID

The European Union was established on the basis of common values of its Member States, which the Union promotes in its international action. These values include liberty, democracy, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights.

In the context of humanitarian aid, it is in particular the respect for human life and dignity and a duty of solidarity that motivate the Union's actions. The purpose of Community humanitarian aid is to save and preserve lives, alleviate suffering and protect victims, particularly the most vulnerable among them, which are affected by man-made or natural disasters. The Commission has been assigned the objective of providing relief, assistance and protection for the period needed to meet the humanitarian needs of the affected people.

Community humanitarian aid is governed by a number of specific principles that reflect and translate these values at the operational level :<sup>2</sup> *humanity*, that is, a focus on saving human lives and on alleviating suffering; *impartiality*, meaning that aid is based solely on need and without discrimination; *independence*, which ensures that humanitarian aid is neither guided by nor subordinated to any geopolitical, military or economic objectives; and *neutrality*, obliging humanitarian aid actors not to take sides or favour any side in armed conflicts.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance: Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid (OJ L 163, 2.7.1996).

It has always been assumed that such a principled approach is a *conditio sine qua non* for the effective delivery of humanitarian aid particularly in conflict situations in which acceptance by warring parties is crucial. However, this principled approach is increasingly challenged by the changing nature of conflicts and warfare, which no longer pit conventional armies one against another, but increasingly involve self-styled rebel forces and militias. Relief operations and workers are less tolerated than before and are sometimes even subject to deliberate targeting.

### **Question**

- (1) In view of the changing political and operational contexts in which humanitarian interventions take place, has the European Union sufficiently insisted on the respect for the principles underpinning its humanitarian aid or should it do more to uphold these principles and the specificity of humanitarian aid?

## **ISSUE 2. ADVOCATING THE RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW**

European Union Member States are committed to the respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), in particular the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols of 1977. All 25 EU Member States are signatories to these conventions and protocols and as such have an obligation to ensure their respect. In 2005, the Union adopted guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law.<sup>3</sup>

IHL is mainly about guaranteeing that parties to a conflict observe minimal rules when waging war, notably ensuring free and unhindered access of relief to victims as well as the protection of civilian populations.

However, IHL is increasingly violated by warring parties. This is due either to the ignorance of warring parties as to the existence of IHL, or to a deliberate lack of willingness to apply IHL rules, or even due to a political standpoint that regards IHL as no longer relevant, if not totally irrelevant. As a result of such violations civilian populations increasingly bear the brunt of suffering.

Such human tragedies have prompted the international community to take action and to promote the concepts of “responsibility to protect” and “human security”.

### **Excerpt of Outcome Document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly in September 2005 on the Responsibility to Protect**

“Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means.”

“The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes,

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<sup>3</sup> European Union Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL), (OJ C 327/4, 12.12.2005).

ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate”.

#### **Excerpt of the Report of the UN Commission on Human Security**

“Human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms - freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf. To do this, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from dangers. It requires concerted effort to develop norms, processes and institutions that systematically address insecurities. Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision-making. Protection and empowerment are mutually reinforcing, and both are required in most situations”.

#### **Questions**

- (2) Should the European Union engage more forcefully in order to increase the respect of and compliance with International Humanitarian Law (and if so how), or should it rather focus its efforts upon/put greater emphasis on taking action in line with the concept of “responsibility to protect” and “human security”?
- (3) To what extent should the European Community play a specific role in IHL advocacy?

### **WHAT KIND OF AID – SCOPE AND POLICIES**

There is a broad understanding at an international and at the EU level of what should be the scope of humanitarian aid. In the EU and international debates, the issues of best practice in humanitarian donorship, rapid response, crisis management and the articulation of policies along the spectrum from disaster preparedness to LRRD have been particularly prominent. Yet, although the largest global donor of humanitarian aid, the European Union (EU Member States and Commission) has no common framework that defines the scope and basic policy guidelines of its humanitarian action.

#### **Issue 3. Good Humanitarian Donorship policy**

In order to achieve its aim, humanitarian aid must be delivered in an effective, efficient and timely manner. The European Commission through DG ECHO, its humanitarian aid department, has a well established policy of a quality aid approach based on: clear needs assessment methodologies (Global Needs Assessment and country needs assessments); the systematic inclusion of "forgotten crises" in financial planning; flexibility in financing; rapid mobilisation of funds; benchmarks for quality aid; and a continued operational and programmatic dialogue with implementing partners.

This Commission's drive for quality donorship echoes the international debate about what constitutes a good donor. There is a growing consensus that needs-based

programming, predictability and flexibility of financing, capacity building for partners and benchmarks to measure quality are some of the important elements that should govern funding policies. This consensus has culminated in the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.

*Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative*

*The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHD) was endorsed in June 2003 by 16 donor countries and the European Commission. Among others, it reiterates the basic values and principles on which humanitarian action should be based, advocates the promotion of IHL, reaffirms the diversity of implementing partners, and sets out good practices such as equity, transparency and accountability in funding humanitarian operations. Furthermore, the Initiative highlights the central role of the United Nations and existing guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets in humanitarian action.<sup>4</sup>*

So far, 16 EU Member States and the European Commission have subscribed to the Initiative. In addition, GHD principles were endorsed by the 23 members of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. However, GHD has not yet been endorsed at the EU level.

**Questions**

- (4) Should the European Union's Member States and the European Commission endorse at the EU level a common set of principles and good practices to govern humanitarian funding policy?
- (5) If so, should they endorse the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative as such, or a more self-styled set of principles?

**Issue 4. Emergency Response Policy**

Many Member States and the European Commission have developed funding mechanisms that enable them to act as first wave donors, who can react immediately when disasters strike, in particular in the wake of natural disasters. Obviously, there is a direct inverse relationship between the speed of reaction in money allocation/aid delivery and the quality of needs assessments that should inform decision-making: either aid is delivered immediately on the basis of assumptions about needs, or its delivery is well calibrated and targeted with respect to needs, but this might entail a time lag in the reaction. Through DG ECHO, the Commission has attempted to strike a balance between these two factors by developing a surge capacity of multi-sector field expert teams for rapid needs assessment and organisation of relief.

**Question**

- (6) Do stakeholders consider that in the context of sudden-onset disasters the current balance of the Community's emergency response between a needs-based approach and the ability to react rapidly needs to be changed in favour of either greater quality, or greater speed?

**Issue 5. Scope of Humanitarian Aid in Relation to Crisis Management and ESDP**

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<sup>4</sup> For further information see: <http://www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org>

Because of its own rationale and specificity, as well as its principled approach, Community humanitarian aid is not an EU crisis management instrument and is not driven by the ESDP policy agenda. Its purpose is not to solve crises, but rather to save lives and alleviate suffering. However, by so doing it can sometimes contribute to the mitigation and resolution of crises.

Nevertheless, humanitarian aid operations increasingly take place in complex emergencies, often side-by-side with international, including European, military operations.<sup>5</sup>

While the respective mandates of humanitarian and military operations and actors are usually relatively clear and distinct, there has been growing interaction between the two spheres and this in two main respects:

- On the one hand, international military forces through their peace-keeping or peace-making mandate, aim at securing the overall environment, which includes facilitating the provision of humanitarian aid both in terms of access and of protection (e.g., in the recent past, UN operations in Sierra Leone or Kosovo etc; EU Artemis Operation in DRC).
- On the other hand, military forces might provide humanitarian aid themselves and/or mobilise military and civil-defence assets to deliver aid.

There is a significant level of concern among humanitarian organisations with respect to such an involvement of the military. It is feared that it might blur the distinction between their respective roles, therefore undermine the ability to operate and ultimately endanger the security of relief workers. At the same time there is a recognised need to establish practical cooperation between them.

There have been attempts at international level to "codify" the conditions in which military means can be mobilised for humanitarian purposes, resulting in the adoption of guidelines known as the MCDA (Military and Civil Defence Assets) and the Oslo guidelines<sup>6</sup>. These guidelines clearly spell out that humanitarian operations "using military assets must retain" their "civilian nature and character" and that the use of such assets must be a "last resort".

At the EU level, as the recent evaluation of DG ECHO's activities pointed out, despite increasing use of military assets and forces in humanitarian operations, "the European Union has no regulation on military-humanitarian coordination and cooperation"<sup>7</sup>. There is, for example, no clear established policy regarding the scope of the so-called Petersberg Tasks that foresee humanitarian tasks by the military.

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<sup>5</sup> Roughly 80% of Community funded humanitarian operations is spent on complex emergencies.

<sup>6</sup> These guidelines provide rules on the use of military and civil defence assets in disaster relief (Oslo guidelines of May 1994, updated in November 2006) and to support UN humanitarian activities in complex emergencies (MCDA guidelines of March 2003), respectively, see: [http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/programs/response/mcdunet/0guid.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/programs/response/mcdunet/0guid.html) and <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/LGEL-5KUDK8?OpenDocument>

<sup>7</sup> Evaluation of the European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (2000-2005), GFE Consulting, June 2006, p.44.

At the same time there is a wealth of more or less formal "guidelines", "issue papers", "civil-military concepts" and "operating procedures" that touch in various ways upon the issue of the interaction between the military and humanitarian actors.

### **Question**

- (7) Should the EU establish a consolidated and coherent policy framework governing the relationship between humanitarian and military actors, and, if so, should it be based on international best practice?

## **Issue 6. Scope of Humanitarian Aid in Relation to Disaster Reduction and Transitional Contexts**

Disaster reduction and mitigation and the link between relief, reconstruction and development (LRRD) form the outer policy boundaries of humanitarian aid activities.

Both issues have become increasingly prominent on the international agenda for the following reasons:

- Complex emergencies are increasingly characterised by a juxtaposition of situations that require the flexible mobilisation of not only humanitarian aid but also of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction aid in order to consolidate post-emergency/post-conflict dynamics wherever possible.
- The increasing number and frequency of natural disasters and their ever more devastating impact, notably due to climate change and demographic pressures, have lent credit to calls for investing more in disaster reduction/mitigation and preparedness strategies in order to reduce exposure and vulnerability of populations to such natural disasters. The 2005 Hyogo World Conference on Disaster Reduction has helped create a growing international consensus on an International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

The Commission puts a strong emphasis on both issues, attempting to streamline them in its humanitarian aid and development cooperation programmes. This effort is implemented on the ground in an increasing number of countries.

As far as LRRD is concerned, experience has shown that a certain "grey zone" in which humanitarian aid operations are slowly phasing out while development operations have already started is almost always to be observed in successful LRRD operations, this particularly in the early recovery phase.

### **Questions**

- (8) Should the EU develop policy guidelines regarding LRRD that recognise the need for a flexible transitional approach?
- (9) Should the EU develop a common policy framework on Disaster Reduction and Mitigation Strategies?

## **Issue 7. Policy coherence – sectoral policies**

Sectoral policy choices have a clear effect on the efficiency, effectiveness and long-term impact of humanitarian aid. There is a wealth of best practice, guidelines and



issues papers on the numerous sectoral aspects of humanitarian aid, covering areas such as: food aid; water & sanitation; health; protection; logistics and transport; children; and security of relief workers. However, so far there have been very few discussions about sectoral best practice at the EU level (between Member States, European Commission and their humanitarian partners).

### **Question**

- (10) Should the Member States and the Commission strive to develop at an EU level a standard body of sectoral policy guidance for the delivery of humanitarian aid, based on international best practice?

## **HOW TO DELIVER HUMANITARIAN AID – PARTNERS, DELIVERY MODALITIES**

### **Issue 8. Partnership and Professionalism**

There is a large diversity of partners to implement humanitarian aid, be they part of the UN, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, NGOs or Member States' own specialised agencies, civil protection and military forces. Recent years have been characterised by a consolidation of the number of NGOs as well as by a general trend towards greater professionalism.

This has been matched on the part of donors by a greater focus on quality of aid and therefore more selective procedures for the choosing of partners and identification of projects/programmes to be funded.

EU Member States have their own traditions with respect to the channelling of their humanitarian funding. They rely to varying degrees on the different types of partners.

As far as Community humanitarian aid is concerned, the partnership is defined by two legal frameworks:

- On the one hand, Council Regulation 1257/96 regarding humanitarian aid provides for the possibility to fund NGOs (art.7), international organisations and agencies (art.8) and, where necessary, operations by the Commission or Member States' specialised agencies (art.9).
- On the other hand, within the rules of the EC Financial Regulation established by the Council, the Commission has established an approach based on Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA), that govern the contractual and operational relationship between DG ECHO and its partners. The FPA operates as a quality charter designed to ensure that Community funded humanitarian partners and operations meet the highest standards of performance and quality. For instance, DG ECHO's NGO-partners need to prove a certain level of experience, know-how and organisational capacity on an ongoing basis in order to become and remain partners under the FPA.

There is an inherent tension between the respect for diversity and the need for professionalism. On the one hand, this diversity has the obvious advantage that the people best placed to do a given job in a specific situation can be chosen to perform the required service, ensuring that the EU's aid delivery is professional, effective

and cost-efficient. In addition, this diversity strengthens civil society and ensures that key humanitarian actors receive constant support not only for their operations but also for the strengthening of their own capacities.

On the other hand, the growing diversity of partners increases the investment that needs to be made in capacity building as well as coordination on the ground. Attention needs to be paid to ensuring that funding mechanisms that support a trend toward professionalism do not exclude smaller actors from humanitarian aid.

### **Questions:**

- (11) Should the European Union's Member States and the Commission maintain the financing of a large diversity of partners (Member States' specialised agencies, UN and Red Cross/Red Crescent families and NGOs) that implement the European Union's humanitarian aid?
- (12) Should the Commission continue to finance partner capacity building and should local NGO "partners of partners" also be able to benefit from this?

## **Issue 9. Direct and Indirect Aid Delivery**

Council Regulation 1257/96 regarding humanitarian aid allows the Commission to fund direct aid operations (art.8). It has long been Commission policy not to get engaged in such operations, for which humanitarian organisations are much better placed (no substitution). However, there are some specific “niche” needs that require the Commission to act as direct operator. The Commission’s engagement in such operations is conditioned on the identification of “services” that are missing and that would benefit the humanitarian partners and ultimately the aid beneficiaries.

For instance, an area of direct service is the humanitarian flight service in third countries covered by ECHO FLIGHT, where other partners are not in a position to sustain such a service or cannot meet the level of needs in this area.

The existing global network of ECHO field experts and field offices is another example: it is conceived as an instrument designed to strengthen the overall need-assessment capacity of the humanitarian community – especially in emergency situations –, to monitor humanitarian situation and projects, and to foster greater coordination and synergies among actors in the field (facilitation role).

The European Union's ambition to increase its capacity to respond to natural and man-made disasters brings new impetus to the Commission’s potential role as a humanitarian service provider both to the Member States and to the humanitarian organisations. Apart from rapid and accurate needs assessment, coordination has become a key task due to the multiplication of actors involved in emergency relief (civil protection, military).

The network of ECHO field experts offers a significant potential of specialised “surge” capacity in case of disaster, working closely with the UN and Red Cross/Red Crescent families in rapid assessment and coordination tasks (cf. recent experiences in the context of the tsunami, Pakistan and Java earthquakes or the conflict in Lebanon). This experts' network could also be further developed to collect and disseminate timely and relevant information to the benefit of EU

Member States and partners. In addition, the rapid response capacity of humanitarian partners could be topped-up in specific areas such as transport and logistics, should there be capacity gaps.

**Question**

- (13) Should the Commission through DG ECHO explore further ways and means to fill specific response capacity needs and gaps to complement the overall humanitarian capacity, and if so, which needs should be addressed as a matter of priority?

**Issue 10. Contributing to the Strengthening of the International Humanitarian System**

There are a number of key issues about the reform and strengthening of the international humanitarian system that are currently subject to discussion.

First, there is a perennial shortfall in humanitarian aid financing. This shortfall is to be measured against the growing humanitarian needs resulting from increasing exposure and vulnerability of civilian populations in the face of conflicts, wars, natural disasters and epidemics. Operational budgets of the main international humanitarian organisations have all boomed over the last decade. The total volume of humanitarian aid is estimated to stand over \$5 billion but still falls short of meeting all humanitarian needs. While international organisations, in particular the United Nations, strongly voice this concern, considerable amounts of humanitarian aid go unregistered as they are delivered through non-traditional donors. These include countries that hitherto were not active in humanitarian donorship and private sector and corporate initiatives.

The EU Member States have committed themselves to an increase in overall Official Development Aid (ODA) in the context of the Monterrey process, however, it is not clear whether such an increase in ODA would also result in an overall increase in humanitarian aid funding, that is counted as part of ODA. It is clear, however, that humanitarian needs continue to increase and that action needs to be taken to fill the gap between needs and financing.

**Question**

- (14) In order to address the perennial shortfall of humanitarian funds, should the EU promote the idea of establishing international targets for humanitarian financing and greater participation of non-traditional donors, and, if so, on what basis should such targets be established?

A second issue concerns leadership and coordination in crisis situations to ensure that all needs are effectively covered. Some of the major proposals made to reform the international and UN humanitarian systems concern the improvement of leadership, in particular through the cluster-lead approach and efforts to strengthen the Humanitarian Coordinator system and the coordination role of UNOCHA. These proposals are well documented and are now being progressively implemented in the field. There are however concerns that these improvements are not inclusive enough and do not reach out to humanitarian organisations outside the UN system.

**Question**

- (15) What could the European Union do to further reinforce ongoing international reform efforts and should it take specific initiatives in this respect?

A third issue that has reached prominence in the wake of a number of recent large-scale natural disasters relates to emergency preparedness and response capacity. Some significant shortfalls have been observed in the international humanitarian system, notably in the areas of pre-positioning of stocks/key-relief supplies, the quality/appropriateness of certain relief items (shelter), and of logistics and transport capacities. There are ongoing efforts by international organisations – such as the World Food Programme and the International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent – to increase such capacities. This question also encompasses the issue of developing capacities in countries prone to natural disasters. At the same time the EU is considering ways of developing its own disaster response capacity, mostly through civil protection and military means (post-tsunami proposals; Barnier Report; etc)

**Question**

- (16) What are the advantages of developing a self-standing EU capacity in the pre-positioning of stocks, logistics and transport as opposed to EU support for a reinforcement of international capacities and how can the EU ensure the overall coherence of its policy in this area?

**WHO DELIVERS HUMANITARIAN AID – ACTORS AND COORDINATION**

**Issue 11. Coordination and Complementarity at EU level**

Humanitarian Aid is a shared competence within the EU. In any given year, the Commission manages 35%-40% of total EU humanitarian aid on behalf of the Community. Council Regulation 1257/96 regarding humanitarian aid refers to measures that can be taken to strengthen the Community's coordination with Member States. In practice, coordination is taking place mostly in a pragmatic and informal way in order to ensure a productive division of labour. However, there is a sense that Member States and the Commission could do more to work together on the ground, in international fora and at headquarters level. If the EU is to punch its real weight as the largest global donor of humanitarian aid, it ought to have a more coherent and influential voice on the international scene in humanitarian matters. Complementarity requires a common set of policies, strategies and programming for the delivery of aid (see issue 7). Coordination is conducive to greater efficiency and effectiveness in our aid.

There is therefore a case for strengthening coordination, complementarity and coherence between the Community and the Member States, building on the comparative advantage and added-value of each.

**Question**

- (17) Should the European Commission and EU Member States strive to coordinate their humanitarian aid programmes more closely in the EU context with a view to increasing complementarity and coherence and if so, what are the priorities?

## Issue 12. Coordination with other EU Actors involved in humanitarian relief

Member States' military and civil protection forces have played a growing and visible role in recent humanitarian disasters and crises. It has become apparent that they constitute an additional instrument to deliver relief and humanitarian assistance in addition to Member States' indirect bilateral aid and Community humanitarian aid. This is a welcome development as it bolsters overall EU capacity.

Whilst the role and mandate of military forces are usually relatively clearly circumscribed (see issue 5), the role and mandate of civil protection actors and the scope of their activities are not always clearly understood. Civil defence functions are defined in Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions as well as in the Oslo guidelines<sup>8</sup>.

It is therefore important that the EU has proper systems in place that ensure effective coordination between all these actors, fostering positive synergies and minimising the potential for overlaps and confusion. It is equally important that the actors base their interventions on the same operational principles. The Barnier report has suggested combining forces in the sense that there should be a "guichet unique", i.e. a "one-stop shop" for humanitarian aid and civil protection interventions.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, coordination with civil protection actors both at Member State and at Union level requires further investments.

### **Question**

- (18) Should the European Union strive to coordinate more closely the interaction between humanitarian aid and civil protection on the basis of a common understanding of mandates and roles, or should the European Union strive to combine all humanitarian aid-related policies and activities in a more integrated and coherent fashion?

**Please feel free to provide us with any additional comments.**

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 **Please send your responses to this questionnaire by electronic mail to:**

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<sup>8</sup> Paragraph 61 of Protocol 1 defines "civil defence" in terms of functions, which include, inter alia, warning, evacuation, rescue, fire fighting, decontamination, emergency accommodation, and emergency repairs. See: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/93.htm> The Oslo guidelines refer to civil defence forces as any organisation that performs these functions under the control of a government.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Barnier, For a European civil protection force, May 2006.

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**by 31 January 2007**

*Thank you for your time and interest in participating in this consultation. General information on its outcome will be made available in spring 2007 on the DG ECHO website: [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)*