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1. INTRODUCTION

Over half of global humanitarian aid is provided by the European Union, the Member States with the European Commission. Humanitarian aid is a tangible expression of the values of humanity and solidarity on which European integration is based. It is one of the policies that European citizens support wholeheartedly.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) is responsible for managing humanitarian aid funded by the Community budget. Its primary objective is to save and preserve life, reduce or prevent suffering and safeguard the integrity and dignity of third country populations affected by natural or man-made disasters, such as conflicts and wars, where their own authorities prove unable to provide effective relief.

DG ECHO's humanitarian aid mission is also to facilitate the return of populations to self-sufficiency. In this context, DG ECHO works actively to foster the transition from emergency aid to rehabilitation and development by collaborating with the Commission departments responsible for development cooperation and with the other donors. DG ECHO's mission also includes disaster preparedness activities and measures to reduce the vulnerability of populations at risk, for example by reinforcing the response capacity of the local communities and humanitarian aid workers concerned. Lastly, DG ECHO plays a role in strengthening coordination of aid between the Member States and supports the international coordination role of the United Nations.

The implementation of European humanitarian aid is based on the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, in accordance with international law and more specifically with international humanitarian law and refugee law. In practical application of these fundamental principles, decisions to grant humanitarian aid are based solely on an assessment of the beneficiary populations' needs and not on reasons of political expediency.

In this context, the Commission attaches special importance to forgotten crises, situations where there is a combination of major humanitarian needs, little, if no media coverage, and also little funding, often the sign of a lack of political interest, resulting in limited presence of humanitarian organisations.

DG ECHO is committed to the effective application of the Good humanitarian donorship principles agreed in Stockholm in June 2003 and it constantly aims at quality in defining its strategy, implementing projects and managing its budget in order to ensure that its activities are effective and efficient. DG ECHO is closely following the current debate on the humanitarian system reform – particularly within the UN – so as to improve the international response capacity in emergencies.

DG ECHO implements its humanitarian aid mission through specialist organisations: UN specialised agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and non-governmental organisations.

2. GENERAL SITUATION AND OUTLOOK FOR 2006

In humanitarian terms, 2005 will forever be synonymous with two massive disasters: the aftermath of the **tsunami** on 26 December 2004 and the **earthquake in Pakistan** in October. The tsunami affected 12 countries, brought about the death or disappearance of almost 226,000 people (3,4 times the average annual number of deaths caused by natural disasters in the world in the previous decade) and affected 1,9 million people,¹ most of whom were left homeless. It gave rise to an unprecedented outpouring of financial solidarity and large-scale mobilisation of humanitarian aid workers in the following months. DG ECHO's activities in 2005 were similarly dominated by this disaster, which accounted for almost 20% of its efforts with a total budget of EUR 123 million.

The devastating earthquake, measuring 7,6 on the Richter scale, which hit Pakistan on 8 October 2005 killed 73,000 people and injured 69,000 more in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.² On the Indian side, 1,300 people were killed and 6,600 injured.³ In total 4 million people were affected, 3 million of whom were left homeless.⁴ DG ECHO committed EUR 48,6 million in 2005 to provide immediate humanitarian aid to the victims of this disaster.

Even though the international humanitarian community's response, especially to the tsunami, was exceptional, both in terms of its scale and speed, these disasters nonetheless highlighted problems of coordination and effectiveness in the response provided. DG ECHO, like its partners, must draw lessons from this, for example by investing more in risk reduction and disaster preparedness, with the stress on building local resistance and reaction capacities to these disasters.

Apart from these events which captured the attention of the media and the general public, the global humanitarian situation has not significantly evolved. Although some crisis situations have died down, allowing DG ECHO to make way for development aid workers and to end its interventions, as for example in Angola, and although there are strong hopes in other cases for a hand-over to development cooperation, enabling DG ECHO to plan its withdrawal in the course of 2006, for example, in the Philippines, Cambodia, Tajikistan or Haiti, humanitarian problems and the need for assistance persist in the vast majority of crisis situations.

With five new **conflicts** in 2004, the number of violent conflicts in the world has remained at 36, but the degree of violence has decreased with the number of wars falling from 13 to 3.⁵ As the post-cold war trend is confirmed, all these conflicts, whose victims are now mainly civilians, are of a local or regional nature and essentially affect poor countries with weak or bankrupt state structures and a particularly vulnerable population.

Recent developments offer a slight hope for **uprooted people**. At the beginning of 2005 the number of refugees⁶ had gone down to 9,2 million (i.e. 52% of the number of refugees at the end of 1992). The downward trend that began 12 years ago therefore continued in 2004, which saw the return of almost one million Afghan refugees, a movement that continued in

¹ D.GUHA-SAPIR, A.van PANHUIS, "*The Andaman Nicobar earthquake and tsunami 2004*". Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), UCL, Brussels, July 2005.

² Source Pakistan Government, 2 November 2005

³ Source Indian Government, 26 October 2005

⁴ IOM estimate, 21 October 2005

⁵ HEIDELBERG INSTITUTE ON INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT RESEARCH (HIK), "*Conflict Barometer 2004*". University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, December 2004.

⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "*Refugees by numbers*" (2005 Edition), <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/basics/opedoc.htm?tbl=BASICS&id=3b028097c#Numbers>

2005 and will go on into 2006. But the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs),⁷ has virtually not changed in the past four years and remains at a little over 25 million, thus constituting the biggest “at risk” group in the world. This status quo conceals, however, that in 2004, like the previous year, almost 6 million people were internally displaced, 3 million leaving their home and another 3 million returning home. It is to be noted also that in 2004 the number of IDPs in a critical situation, trapped in areas of fighting or in one of the regions where state protection structures have collapsed (such as Sudan, Colombia, Chechnya, Nepal or Myanmar) rose from 11 million to 14 million.

In terms of **natural disasters**, discounting the tsunami where the scale of the disaster was unprecedented, the toll for 2004⁸ was less heavy in terms of the number of deaths (18,109 against 86,395 in 2003) and persons affected (136 million against 258 millions in 2003), despite a slight increase from 381 to 396 in the number of events. In the medium term, however, an improvement in this factor, the cause of immense humanitarian needs, is unlikely. On the contrary, there are many reasons to fear an increase in the scale and frequency of natural disasters, affecting a growing number of people particularly in the poorest regions: rise in world population, uncontrolled urbanisation, climate change and bad environmental management, to name but a few.⁹

Lastly, the delay in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is another source of concern. Attainment of the MDG is particularly delayed in sub-Saharan Africa, DG ECHO’s main area of intervention, which is no coincidence. The strong correlation between poverty reduction and global security is widely acknowledged. Research¹⁰ has shown that a sharp drop of five percentage points in economic growth increases the risk of civil war by some 50%. While it is clear that violent conflicts result from a combination of several factors, poverty creates conditions conducive to the outbreak or persistence of a conflict. More generally, the absence of economically viable options, other than crime, increases the potential for violence.

In the short term, therefore, there is no hope for major improvements in the humanitarian situation of the most vulnerable people and for DG ECHO, 2006 can only mean pursuing its aid strategy for the victims of these crises and building the response capacities of the local communities that are vulnerable to natural hazards. Implementing this strategy will continue to mean confronting cases of non-respect of international humanitarian law and attacks to humanitarian space, as well as difficulties in access to certain populations in need and security issues for humanitarian relief workers.

3. GENERAL PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES

In 2006, DG ECHO will continue its policy of assistance to populations with the greatest **humanitarian needs**. The identification of these populations is based on a parallel exercise: bottom-up assessments undertaken by DG ECHO’s geographical units and its field experts and top-down classification of developing countries according both to their degree of

⁷ GLOBAL IDP PROJECT, http://www.idpproject.org/global_overview.htm#1

⁸ CRED, <http://www.em-dat.net>

⁹ UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM, *Annual Report 2004*

http://www.unep.org/AnnualReport/2004/Responding_environmental_emergencies_p6-9.pdf

¹⁰ UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, “Millennium Development Goals Report”, <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/why5FR.htm>

vulnerability as reflected by GNA (*Global Needs Assessment*) and the forgotten nature of crises as reflected by the FCA index (*Forgotten Crisis Assessment*).

The GNA index works on the assumption that humanitarian aid needs in the event of crisis will be greatest in the countries or territories that are least developed and poorest, most likely to suffer severe natural disasters or violent conflicts, with a heavy burden of refugees or internally displaced persons and with a high prevalence of child malnutrition and a high mortality rate among children under the age of five. Some 140 countries and territories can be classified using this index. For the 2006 strategy, 31 countries or territories were identified as having high needs, of which 23 in sub-Saharan Africa (including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Somalia and Sudan), 1 in the Northern Caucasus (Chechnya) and 7 in South and South-East Asia (including Afghanistan, Myanmar and Nepal).

The identification of **forgotten crises** is based on a combination of the following elements: major humanitarian needs as reflected by the GNA index, little or no media coverage, little interest on the part of donors reflected by the level of official aid received, and an assessment by DG ECHO's geographical units and field experts. These crises are generally long-standing, which explains the lack of interest on the part of both the media and donors. This situation can, however, change rapidly. For 2006, DG ECHO has classified as forgotten crises: Chechnya, Myanmar, the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria, Nepal and, to a lesser degree, India for the crisis in Kashmir.¹¹

4. PRIORITIES FOR 2006

4.1. Geographical priorities

In general, DG ECHO will intervene in the developing countries with pressing humanitarian needs that the country is unable to tackle. Because of the duration of many crises, interventions in the following regions and countries can, however, already be envisaged.

4.1.1. Africa

4.1.1.1. West Africa

In **West Africa**, assistance will continue to respond to humanitarian needs linked to internal and cross-border population movements, which are the result of persistent conflicts and tensions within the region. Specific measures will also be taken to tackle the chronic nutritional crises and epidemics affecting the region.

In **coastal West Africa**, the repatriation process of Liberian refugees will continue in 2006. However, since Liberia, the *Guinée forestière* and the *Côte d'Ivoire* are confronted to more and more distinct problems, each with a separate pattern of evolution, humanitarian actions in 2006 will be covered by financial decisions specific to each country, rather than being covered by a Regional Global Plan. Nevertheless, DG ECHO will favour a regional approach for the protection of children affected by conflict and for the air transport service provided to humanitarian actors.

¹¹ Note that the forgotten crisis assessment was carried out before the earthquake hit India and Kashmir on 8 October 2005.

In **Liberia**, DG ECHO will continue to support both the return (whether voluntary or assisted) and the resettlement in their places of origin, of some 270,000 Liberian refugees who still live in countries in the region and of internally displaced persons. DG ECHO will also continue to support the restoration of access to basic services in the regions of large-scale return and in the regions neglected by humanitarian actors. DG ECHO will maintain minimum aid for displaced persons who cannot yet return home and are still living in camps and surrounding areas, and will continue to support protection measures for the most vulnerable people, including children. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the very precarious and unstable situation of “neither peace nor war” remains a threat for the country and the sub-region. The implementation of a peace process between Government forces and the new forces is constantly challenged. Despite some improvement, public services are still inadequate in a large part of the country and people’s safety is increasingly under threat. DG ECHO will support integrated emergency assistance for vulnerable people and will step up protection measures in the Northern region. In **Guinea**, the presence of refugees in the forest area, plus the many economic and political problems facing the country is a threat for the region’s stability. DG ECHO intends to maintain its support for the refugee camps and the surrounding population until the Liberian refugees are repatriated. In addition, although all the Sierra Leonean have been repatriated, 3,900 Ivorians still live in Guinean camps and need assistance.

Following the April 2005 presidential elections, over 20,000 Togolese fled their country to take refuge in **Benin**. DG ECHO could maintain its assistance to the refugee camps managed by the UNHCR in 2006 if the conditions for voluntary return in accordance with international rules are not met.

In response to the nutritional crisis affecting **Mali** and even more so **Niger** since the second quarter of 2005, following the drought and locust attacks, DG ECHO supports nutritional rehabilitation and food security measures in these two countries. In 2006, DG ECHO will continue to monitor the nutritional situation in Mali and Niger very closely, and also in **Mauritania** and **Burkina Faso**. If the nutritional and food situation so require, DG ECHO will examine the merits of a further intervention. Priority must, however, be given to seeking a sustainable food security strategy in a development cooperation context.

Following the deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Darfur since 2003, almost 215,000 Sudanese have entered Chad to seek refuge there. Some 200,000 refugees currently live in 12 camps in the border provinces of **Chad**. DG ECHO plans to continue its support for the refugees whether they are in the camps or outside them and for the most vulnerable groups among the local population. As it is unlikely that any refugee repatriation plan can be carried out in the near future, DG ECHO will set out its approach under a global plan in 2006, with the emphasis on health, water and sanitation, food, non-consumable products, education in an emergency situation and protection. DG ECHO will also support coordination and information activities.

Clashes between armed bands and Government forces in the northern regions of the Central African Republic have also triggered a new influx of refugees into the south of **Chad** since June 2005. They number an estimated 15,000 and DG ECHO has undertaken to support a UNHCR operation to open a new camp in the Goré region.

Lastly, in the **17 countries of the region**, DG ECHO will continue to support emergency actions in the event of an outbreak of uncontrolled **epidemics**.¹²

4.1.1.2. East Africa, Horn of Africa

DG ECHO's main programme in the region will continue to be in **Sudan**. The humanitarian needs of millions of people who have been displaced and affected by the conflict in **Darfur** continue to receive specific attention and responses. On the other hand, the recent peace agreement putting an end to more than 20 years of civil war between the North and the South of the country offers hope for an improvement in the situation in the medium term but also opens the door to the possible return of thousands of refugees and displaced persons, with the concomitant risk of increasing the humanitarian needs in an already badly affected region. DG ECHO will therefore maintain its commitment in 2006 to assist the most vulnerable and the neediest people via a multisectoral approach. It will nevertheless have to take account of the security conditions, which have proved very difficult for humanitarian aid personnel in 2005. The resumption of development cooperation should mean that eventually activities linking rehabilitation and development can be started up again.

Most of the countries in the **Horn of Africa** continue to suffer the consequences of internal conflicts and tensions, compounded by the extreme poverty of the population and their limited response capacity to natural disasters. DG ECHO's presence in **Uganda** remains vital because of the chronic humanitarian crisis. There has been no change in the situation as regards security and difficulties of access. DG ECHO will continue to intervene in a wide range of sectors, with the emphasis on food security and coordination and management of the humanitarian response.

In **Ethiopia**, serious political unrest followed the 2005 general elections and no solution has been found to the issue of the border conflict with Eritrea, the cause of constant tension between the two countries. The humanitarian situation remains worrying, with chronic malnutrition, exacerbated in 2005 by the late start of the national food security programme, which made Ethiopia even more dependent on international food aid. The health sector seems to be to in the worst state, with inadequate public services in the countryside and the ever-present risk of epidemics, especially malaria. DG ECHO's strategy will aim at covering acute needs, complementing the work done by other Commission departments, since Ethiopia is one of the priority countries for the European Development Fund (EDF) and food aid.

The situation in **Eritrea** has steadily worsened in the course of 2005, both from the political and the humanitarian point of view. The Government seems increasingly isolated at international level, border tensions with Ethiopia and Sudan are constant, restrictions on access and violations of civic rights are rising. International and national NGOs are finding it increasingly difficult to operate and some donors have been asked to leave the country as they are considered too "critical" of the Government. In a difficult climate of diminishing international aid and acute economic crisis, two thirds of the population are totally dependent on food aid. The role of humanitarian aid will be more and more crucial for alleviating the population's suffering, provided, however, that DG ECHO's partners can carry out their operations in acceptable conditions.

¹² Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea (Conakry), Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

Somalia is beset by an ongoing political crisis, extreme poverty and permanent security and access problems that mean international aid has to be managed from Nairobi. However, the constitution and installation of a federal transitional Government offers some hope for change, to which the EU and the international community are firmly committed. But even if the political crisis does improve, the role of humanitarian aid will remain essential in the short term in a country where needs are great, especially in the health, water and nutrition sectors.

4.1.1.3. Great Lakes region and Central Africa

The **Great Lakes** region has made great headway on political stabilisation, for example in Burundi, but the situation remains precarious, with mixed signals. In the DRC, fighting continues in Ituri and insecurity still reigns in other parts of the east of the country. A growing number of people have been able to go back to their country of origin and experience the beginnings of a return to normality but many others are still weakened by insecurity, very vulnerable and in need of humanitarian assistance.

In **Burundi** all the electoral promises were kept, resulting in the democratic election of a new President. However, although this represents a huge step forward and a big breath of hope, Burundi's problems are by no means over. Although an armed faction is still a threat in the province of Bujumbura Rural and the economic situation remains among the worst in the world, the improvement in the general climate will allow greater scope for development tools to accompany the process of resettling Burundians repatriated from Tanzania, reintegrating displaced people and rehabilitating essential infrastructure. Until they are actually up and running and pending its hand-over, DG ECHO will collaborate with other Commission departments to maintain a humanitarian support service to help the most vulnerable populations. DG ECHO will maintain its level of humanitarian funding in 2006 but is planning to progressively withdraw from several sectors (water, mine clearance, psychosocial...) to make way for the departments in charge of development.

There are some 380,000 refugees (about 60% Burundians and 40% Congolese) in the **United Republic of Tanzania**. They live in twelve camps located in the north-west of the country and are almost entirely dependent on humanitarian aid for their survival. In 2006, DG ECHO will continue to meet their fundamental needs for protection and health care and will also support repatriation to Burundi and DRC, whenever possible on a voluntary basis and in accordance with international rules. DG ECHO will continue to draw attention to the humanitarian situation of these refugees, whose food needs are only partially covered.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the political transition process remains on track even though several potential problems remain, such as the bloody fighting that persists in Ituri and the climate of insecurity that undermines economic and social recovery in the eastern provinces. Given that the institutions of the rule of law are still fragile or in places non-existent, some civilian population groups are still in the grip of attacks and terrible atrocities by armed groups, preventing them from regaining the stability needed to get back to self-sufficiency. Hundreds of thousands of people still need foreign aid, simply in order to survive. DG ECHO, with OCHA and its partners, has been involved in developing a common strategy which should be able to respond to the most pressing humanitarian needs. DG ECHO will also continue to work closely with the other donors to facilitate the introduction, where possible, of development and rehabilitation programmes. This is increasingly the case, so DG ECHO hopes to see its activities become more focused and therefore increased in the areas where needs are greatest.

The Republic of Congo Brazzaville and **the Central African Republic** have restored peace and stability throughout their territory, although the latter sometimes finds them hard to accept. In both countries the situation is such that DG ECHO has been able to withdraw its support to make way for development instruments, except for the operation to return refugees from the DRC to their country of origin.

4.1.1.4. Southern Africa

In the last few years, **southern Africa** has been repeatedly affected by natural disasters, AIDS and bad governance. Thanks to an improvement in farming conditions, the region was steadily recovering from the food shortage mainly caused by the drought that hit the region in 2002-2003. Humanitarian assistance was therefore no longer programmed for Zambia and Malawi. The overall situation in Lesotho and Swaziland had also improved, despite areas of extreme vulnerability.

This relative improvement now seems threatened by another year of drought and poor harvests throughout the sub-region, and more particularly in **Malawi** and **Zambia**. In addition to this, the cost of available food has risen so that it is unaffordable for the most vulnerable people, many of whom are already suffering from the effects of HIV/AIDS. Vulnerable population groups in **Mozambique**, **Swaziland** and **Lesotho**, and possibly even **Namibia** and **Botswana**, also risk being affected. Although the Commission's development departments are very active there, DG ECHO will monitor the situation in the sub-region closely and will be ready to intervene if emergency humanitarian needs were to arise.

In **Angola**, the rehabilitation process that began after the signing of the peace process in 2002 is continuing. The resettlement of war-affected populations (internally displaced persons and refugees) ended in the first months of 2005, except for some 30 000 refugees who must be repatriated from Zambia and Namibia before the end of 2005. In the last two years, DG ECHO's strategy has focused on implementing a process of transition towards long-term development the main thrust of which is health, food security and humanitarian access (mine clearance). DG ECHO's withdrawal has been confirmed, with the end of interventions and closure of the office in Luanda at the end of June 2005. DG ECHO is aware of the precariousness of the situation, above all until the holding of the first post-conflict elections scheduled for 2006, and will continue to follow the situation in Angola very closely from its office in Harare.

Still on refugees, in 2006 DG ECHO will assess the advisability of preparing the repatriation of a few thousand Congolese currently living in camps in **Zambia**.

The situation in **Zimbabwe** remains, by contrast, a matter of deep concern. The humanitarian situation there is worrying due to a combination of factors, including the constantly deteriorating economic situation, major political constraints (for example, the country's reform process) and bad governance, inadequate social expenditure for the social services and the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, all compounded by the urban clearance campaigns (such as "Operation Restore Order") in mid-2005, which hiked up the number of internally displaced persons by tens of thousands. The access granted to DG ECHO's partners, especially in the politically sensitive rural areas, remains elusive. The information received is contradictory so that it is difficult to assess the situation as regards the harvest and availability of food. The situation in the neighbouring countries none the less points to increased food assistance needs in Zimbabwe. DG ECHO will maintain its commitment to

provide humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe in 2006 in order to help the most vulnerable population groups.

Lastly, the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic are another major concern for the region. Death and disease is eating away at society and badly undermining the prospects for recovery. DG ECHO is already involved in the campaign against HIV/AIDS and will continue to include this problem in all the projects that it finances in southern Africa. People affected or infected by HIV/AIDS will also continue to be considered a priority recipient group.

4.1.2. *Mediterranean and Middle East*

Israel's withdrawal from the **Gaza Strip** and four settlements in the **West Bank** does not seem to have done much towards solving the crisis. Settlement activity and construction of the wall continue and movement by Palestinians on their own territory remains difficult, if not impossible. In these circumstances, the humanitarian situation remains delicate and in 2006 DG ECHO will maintain its assistance to the most vulnerable populations by continuing to respond to their essential humanitarian needs. This humanitarian aid strategy may, however, be reviewed towards the end of 2006 if the political process were to result in a tangible improvement in the situation and if the funds promised by the international community were actually released.¹³

Over 2,600,000 Palestinian refugees live in **Jordan, Lebanon and Syria**. These refugees are well integrated in Jordanian and Syrian society, including those living in camps (284,000 – or 16% - in Jordan and 114,000 - 27% - in Syria). In Lebanon, however, the 401,000 refugees live on the fringes of society. 53% are confined in 12 official camps, most of the others are in non-recognised camps. Furthermore, some 40,000 have no status. No improvement in these conditions is expected in the immediate future even though the Lebanese Government has decided to lift the ban on access to over 70 types of job.

Humanitarian actions in favour of Palestinian refugees in these three countries will therefore continue to focus on **Lebanon** in 2006 and will target the sectors of rehabilitation of makeshift housing, health, water and sanitation, employment and assistance for vulnerable population groups (children, the elderly and the disabled). In **Jordan** and **Syria**, DG ECHO will finance the rehabilitation of the worst housing, especially in the camps.

The **Sahrawi refugees** who have lived in camps in the desert region of Tindouf in Algeria since 1975 remain entirely dependent on humanitarian aid, victims of one of the oldest and largely forgotten humanitarian crises. In 2006, humanitarian aid will therefore continue to cover practically all sectors, and especially food. At the same time the dialogue must be carried on with the partners and the Sahrawi authorities so that operations are well targeted and carried out under optimum conditions.

¹³ The G-8 approved a framework reconstruction and development plan, presented by the special envoy, Mr Wolfensohn, which provides for financial assistance to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of up to EUR 3 billion annually in the coming three years, which means a doubling of the current efforts of the international donor community. The European Commission has proposed to Parliament and the Council to respond to such an effort by increasing the current Community budget for interventions in the occupied Palestinian Territories from EUR 200 to EUR 300 million per year, accompanied by an increase in Member State bilateral assistance.

In **Yemen**, a large proportion of the population lives in great poverty and the flow of refugees from the Horn of Africa is on the rise. In 2006, DG ECHO will conduct an evaluation of its past interventions in Yemen. If it decides to intervene, DG ECHO will target the water and sanitation, and health sectors, with particular emphasis on children and refugees.

4.1.3. Caucasus and Central Asia

In the absence of any conflict resolution in **Chechnya**, and given the scale of the destruction and the catastrophic economic situation (no running water in Grozny – a town of 100,000 inhabitants – sanitation problems, destruction of housing, of schools, of hospitals, of the capacity for production, lack of qualified personnel, an unemployment rate estimated at 80%), DG ECHO will continue to support the most vulnerable populations, as well as those people who, as a consequence of the conflict, were displaced to the neighbouring republics, **Ingushetia** and **Dagestan**. DG ECHO's strategy will nevertheless move towards the inclusion of more sustainable programmes. Food security and income generation programmes will gradually replace the food distribution programmes and integrated programmes of repatriation of displaced people will be developed. More traditional humanitarian interventions will be maintained in new intervention zones to which humanitarian organisations are beginning to obtain access to, and in which until recently the populations had not been included in any assistance programmes for security reasons. However, some of DG ECHO's partners remain regularly confronted to administrative problems which can even lead to accreditation refusals.

This strategy will be implemented in parallel with another North Caucasus rehabilitation programme within the frame of the TACIS programme in cooperation with the CIS countries. This EUR 20 million programme, which concerns itself with education, health and the banking/income generation sector, is intended to start a transition process towards longer-term actions.

In 2006, DG ECHO will engage in a gradual exit strategy in **Georgia** and in a process of relay through rehabilitation and development programmes, whilst maintaining its budget. Due to the persistence of humanitarian needs which are not being met in the west of Georgia, particularly in Abkhazia, DG ECHO will continue its support to the most vulnerable groups affected by the conflict, by encouraging its partners to work in the Gali region, a zone which was severely destroyed and in which humanitarian organisations are only starting to gain access to due to the recent improvement in security.

Several organisations have alerted DG ECHO to the worrying situation of the Chechen refugees in **Azerbaijan** who have not received refugee status and who live in very precarious conditions. In addition to the financing of the ICRC's current protection activities, DG ECHO will examine how the basic needs of these refugees could be addressed.

In **Tajikistan**, DG ECHO will complete in 2006 its withdrawal plan which was defined in 2003. In this transition towards development aid, the health sector in particular will require one last push of substantial support. The transition has been taking place successfully since the sectors in which DG ECHO intervened are gradually being covered by interventions under other programmes, particularly under TACIS. DG ECHO will nevertheless maintain vigilance in Central Asia, which is a chronically instable zone.

4.1.4. Asia

DG ECHO withdrew from **Iraq** in 2005 and does not foresee any new interventions in 2006. DG ECHO will nevertheless continue to monitor the situation so as to be able to respond rapidly if a new humanitarian crisis was to appear.

Following a reduction of its aid to **Afghanistan** between 2004 and 2005 – in favour of aid to Afghan refugees in **Pakistan** and **Iran** –, as a result of the increase in post-emergency funds DG ECHO will maintain its level of intervention in 2006. The intervention will focus more on Afghanistan, in view of the repatriation of some 700,000 refugees and of the announced withdrawal proposal by UNHCR in Pakistan and Iran in 2006. The needs identified as requiring a priority intervention are water and sanitation, protection and assistance to the resettlement of the most vulnerable, of refugees and of displaced people. DG ECHO will also remain ready to respond to any natural disasters (earthquakes and floods) in these three countries.

In **India**, DG ECHO will concentrate its response to the tsunami on displaced populations who are still living in semi-permanent shelters. Strengthening shelters in view of the monsoon, access to water and sanitation in camps will constitute the priority intervention sectors in 2006. The situation in **Kashmir** has evolved very little and the humanitarian needs linked to this forgotten crisis remain important. DG ECHO will therefore continue to lend its support to the populations who are victims of the separatist conflict which has lasted since 1989. Protection, the promotion of international humanitarian law and psychological support will be the main components of this assistance.

In addition, DG ECHO will pursue its humanitarian intervention in **Pakistan** and in **India** following the earthquake in Kashmir on the 8th October 2005.

Nepal is the scene of two forgotten crises. On the one hand, the rural populations, in particular children, are caught between the conflict which opposes the Maoist rebellion against the armed forces since 1996, and a phenomenon of forced displacement by these populations is developing. Despite the difficulties for humanitarian workers to access these rural zones, DG ECHO will try to continue its aid in the areas of protection, access to water and sanitation, and of food security. On the other hand, DG ECHO will continue its contribution to the supply of food aid to the 105,000 Bhutanese refugees piled up in the camps on the border with India. DG ECHO will continue to actively cooperate with other donors with a view to promoting the return of the refugees and to push the authorities to find a solution to this crisis: DG ECHO envisages the opening of an office in Kathmandu before the end of 2005.

In **Bangladesh**, DG ECHO will only intervene in aid of populations who fall victim of flooding linked to the monsoon or of other major natural catastrophes, if the national response capacities appear to be insufficient.

In **Sri Lanka**, DG ECHO helps both families displaced by the tsunami and 350,000 persons displaced due to the conflict which has prevailed in the country since 1983, so as to avoid any discrimination in the allocation of aid. The principal needs identified are the supply of water and of health facilities, of provisional shelters, including the improvement of existing shelters for the population affected by the conflict, support for means of subsistence, and food security and psychosocial aid. The level of intervention by DG ECHO in 2006 will depend both on the evolution of the peace process and of the progress in the implementation of the reconstruction projects (two factors which are likely to undergo long delays due to the current political situation in the country) and due to the conditions of access in the areas where there is a strong LTTE (Tamil Tigers) presence.

Burma/Myanmar accounts for one of the forgotten crises which will continue to play an important role in the DG ECHO's humanitarian strategy for 2006. DG ECHO was finally able to open a technical assistance office in Yangon. The authorities continue nevertheless to impose important restrictions on humanitarian organisations and major parts of the country remain inaccessible, in particular in the border areas where the majority of vulnerable ethnic minorities are to be found. The activities in Burma will focus on health, nutrition, water and sanitation, and protection. The Burmese refugees living in border camps in **Thailand** will also continue to benefit from food aid and medical assistance.

In **Laos**, DG ECHO will gradually transfer its activities to the development actors, in particular with regards to food security. DG ECHO will continue its support to any vulnerable pockets where humanitarian needs persist, notably in certain mountain villages, as well as continue emergency aid activities in relocated communities.

The process of progressive withdrawal from **Cambodia** will be completed in 2006, with the gradual handing over to development actors. In **Vietnam**, DG ECHO will intervene to support populations who are victim of major natural catastrophes only if the national response capacities appear to be insufficient.

In **Indonesia**, the implementation of post-emergency activities following the tsunami will continue in 2006. These are primarily activities intended for improving the water and sanitation situation and for improving the quality of shelters provided to the displaced populations on the western coast of Aceh and on the islands of Nias and Simeulue. These actions will be extended to the people of the districts in the Aceh province, areas which are newly open to humanitarian organisations following the signing of the peace agreements between the government and the GAM (Free Aceh Movement). In addition, DG ECHO will pursue its interventions to improve the nutritional situation in the eastern provinces in the country.

In **East Timor**, the interventions will aim to reduce the prevalence of acute malnutrition in the western and central areas of the country, in coordination with other more long-term actions planned by the Commission.

In the **Philippines**, DG ECHO will complete its gradual withdrawal in 2006 if the development of the peace process in Mindanao progresses favourably and leads to a decrease in humanitarian needs and to an increased availability of funds for development projects. In the event of a natural disaster, DG ECHO will only intervene if the local response capacity proves insufficient.

Finally in **North Korea** enormous humanitarian needs continue to be felt, combined with a certain indifference by donors despite the high political profile of the country. DG ECHO would like to continue its interventions in the health, water and sanitation sectors, as well as on infant nutrition, particularly in the far away regions of Pyongyang and the North East. However, since the 30th August 2005, the authorities have informed the international community on several occasions of their intentions of reducing the presence of humanitarian agencies at the end of the year. Within this context, DG ECHO will continue its interventions provided it can have satisfactory access and the possibility of satisfactory follow-up.

4.1.5. The Caribbean

In response to the persistent needs for humanitarian aid and for rehabilitation, the intervention of DG ECHO for the populations who are victim of hurricanes and of floods in **Grenada** and in **Guyana** will continue in 2006 but should be completed during the second half of the year. However, given the seasonal and recurring character of tropical hurricanes and of flooding in the Caribbean, DG ECHO will support the disaster preparedness activities of the International Federation of the Red Cross in the region.

If there are no new emergencies in **Haiti**, DG ECHO will not envisage any humanitarian interventions in 2006 (except DIPECHO) and hopes that support for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities promised by the International Community will answer the structural crisis of the country.

4.1.6. Latin America

The principal action axis will remain **Colombia** where the forty year long conflict shows no sign of abating. DG ECHO will act in the regions where the national institutions are lacking and will help displaced people to survive in their new situation and to attain a minimum level of self-sufficiency, whilst simultaneously encouraging capacity building of local organisations. DG ECHO will also provide assistance to populations economically limited or blocked by the armed groups, so as to allow them to access essential services that the State cannot provide. Moreover, DG ECHO will intervene to help Colombian refugees in the neighbouring countries, especially in **Ecuador** and in **Venezuela**. Aid will focus on primary needs, food and others, shelter, water and sanitation, health care and psychosocial support. Specific attention to the protection of populations affected by the conflict and to the context in which aid is delivered is increasingly required. Stopping the recruitment of children by illegal armed groups and the protection of children will be a specific aim.

In recent years, populations in **Central America** and **South America** have become increasingly vulnerable due to known structural weaknesses, to repeated financial and economic crises, to increasingly fierce and numerous natural disasters, and to political instability which affects many countries in the region. In this context, DG ECHO could be asked to intervene following certain natural disasters, if these create important humanitarian needs which the country could not cope with due to limited response capacity. In particular, DG ECHO will continue its intervention in **El Salvador** and in **Guatemala** in order to help the populations affected by the tropical storm Stan in October 2005. Finally, in **Guatemala** and in **Honduras**, DG ECHO will monitor the nutritional status of minority and isolated populations, as this is likely to deteriorate.

4.1.7. Disaster Preparedness and DIPECHO

DG ECHO supports disaster preparedness actions within local communities in several regions around the world, so as to help communities react rapidly and in an appropriate manner in case of a disaster, thus allowing many lives to be saved. These operations are carried out either under specific DIPECHO programmes or in the frame of traditional emergency interventions. DG ECHO hopes to develop this approach in 2006 by continuing its DIPECHO projects in the various regions concerned (Central Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia,

Caribbean, Central and Latin America), and by integrating more this dimension in its emergency interventions when this proves relevant.

Thus in **Western Africa**, DG ECHO will begin to reflect on the prevention of nutritional crises and on the preparation of this type of crisis in the countries most vulnerable in the region.

In the **Horn of Africa**, so as to better prepare the pastoral populations of Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti against recurring and evermore frequent droughts, DG ECHO is envisaging a regional decision concerning drought preparation. This financing would allow the support of actions such as mapping and the maintenance of water points or the improvement of animal health, and would include a certain reserve amount to use to intervene at the first sign of an emergency situation in order to avoid it from propagating to other areas. This drought preparation programme will be developed in close collaboration with DG Development and DG EuropeAid.

Central Asia has benefited from three successive DIPECHO action plans since 2003. The third action plan started in August 2005 with projects lasting 12 to 15 months, i.e. until autumn 2006. An evaluation of these three action plans will then be initiated and will help determine the direction to take for DIPECHO activities in the region in 2007 (and beyond the current DG ECHO operations in Tajikistan).

In **Latin America** and **Asia**, the new DIPECHO action plans for disaster preparedness will be implemented in 2006 in the Andean community (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela), in South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan) and in the Caribbean. New plans of action will be started in Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama) and in South-East Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, East Timor, Indonesia and probably the Philippines) following the organisation of consultation meetings in each country of each region. Emphasis will be put on small-scale projects tackling specific needs of local communities in the fields of disaster preparedness, of the alleviation of damage and of the adoption of early warning systems for the most vulnerable populations of these regions.

Particular attention will be paid to projects which can link in with broader risk reduction activities, within the context of the implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action*¹⁴ drawn up in Kobe (Japan) at the beginning of 2005.

4.2. Priorities related to the partners

DG ECHO will continue to contribute to a high quality partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with international organisations and with the United Nations organisations. When selecting new partners, DG ECHO will continue to apply strict criteria with regards to quality and performance.

As with every year, DG ECHO will carry out in 2006 an evaluation of its partner NGOs, in relation to their 2005 activities. By drawing out the lessons from the previous year's evaluation, this new evaluation exercise will centre on quality and the partners' performance, as well as on the actions taken by partners following the recommendations stated in the evaluation relating to the activities in 2004.

¹⁴ <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf>

At the same time, DG ECHO will pursue the effort carried out during the 2005 exercise concerning the following of the recommendations made in the audit reports of the partners. Where the UN partners are concerned, DG ECHO will ensure that these respect the verification clause stated in the financial and administrative framework agreement between the European Commission and the United Nations (FAFA) and in particular that they respect the requirements in relation to financing.

As in 2005, DG ECHO will support the implementation of the framework partnership agreement (FPA) by supplying partners with training and by creating supporting documents (guidelines, fact sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, etc.). The supporting documents already prepared in 2005 will be rigorously updated. In the interest of all parties, DG ECHO will thus ensure a common and coherent interpretation of the legal instruments in force.

With regards to the NGOs, DG ECHO will use in 2006, amongst others, the Grant Facility subsidies to finance the development of tools that will allow NGOs to improve their response capacity in humanitarian crises.

Regarding thematic funding, which aims to strengthen the institutional capacities of the United Nations organisations and of the Red Cross Movement, DG ECHO will adopt a 'case by case' approach in 2006.

4.3. Sectoral and transversal priorities

DG ECHO will not define in 2006 a new priority theme but will consolidate and/or diffuse the work undertaken previously (AIDS, children) or just finalised (water and sanitation).

Regarding **children**, who constitute a particularly vulnerable group in emergency situations, DG ECHO will proceed to the update and finalisation of the guidelines on the protection of children in emergency operations. DG ECHO also finances UNICEF to build its capacities in the area of child protection in emergencies.

A review and guidelines on **water and sanitation** in emergencies were demanded for in 2004¹⁵. Water is a paradoxical element in humanitarian aid, being the cause of many catastrophes – sometimes of a colossal scale such as the tsunami in 2004 – but also a crucial element of any humanitarian response. Unclean water can be the cause of numerous diseases – often mortal – whilst a minimal level of hygiene can be one of the best protections against many diseases. Supplying water is a critical element of any effort to preserve lives in an emergency and can have a reducing effect on humanitarian aid. These different aspects are discussed in the above-mentioned documents that will be published end of 2005. Their content will be disseminated in 2006 so as to guarantee the consideration of these aspects in DG ECHO interventions.

Link between relief, rehabilitation, and development (LRRD)

In several countries a process of transition towards development activities has been accomplished (Angola) or is currently taking place (Tajikistan, Laos, Philippines...). DG ECHO will continue to systematically seek a link with development instruments, condition for

¹⁵ [http://europa.eu.int/comm/DG ECHO/evaluation/thematic_fr.htm#water](http://europa.eu.int/comm/DG_ECHO/evaluation/thematic_fr.htm#water)

a successful exit strategy. This implies that this exit strategy is planned very early on in the intervention.

This link with development instruments must nevertheless not be limited to the European Commission's instruments but must be extended to all development actors as well as to the relevant Ministries in the country concerned, for example when health centres are involved. In addition, in certain cases, the situation in the field allows the implementation of development activities in certain areas or regions, whilst vulnerable pockets persist in other areas which require a humanitarian intervention to be carried out (Afghanistan).

The decentralisation of EU aid – aid which is now largely managed by delegations in the field – implies a change in the way of approaching the link between relief and development, which now has to be mostly ensured directly on the ground by DG ECHO experts and the delegations.

Finally, the fact that development cooperation is increasingly taking place under the framework of sectoral programmes and of budgetary support poses new challenges in terms of transition from relief to development, as the exclusive interlocutor for development cooperation is then the government and the cooperation is aiming to support its development policy.

Preparation for natural disasters

The tsunami has shown the importance of integrating disaster preparedness into humanitarian aid operations, but also – at a higher level and for longer term – into development cooperation. Commitments were made for this at the international level, with an accent nevertheless on early warning systems and their technological aspect. DG ECHO already carries out many actions in this domain (see paragraph 4.1.7.), which it hopes to reinforce in the future.

In a more general manner, DG ECHO intends to press for the introduction of a disaster preparedness dimension into development policies and into development cooperation, and for a better articulation and complementarity between the different levels of intervention (local, regional, national or even inter-state level, particularly in Latin America). Indeed, for maximum efficiency, disaster prevention and preparedness must be done in a coordinated manner, at all levels, from the national (and even supranational) to the local, with clear and effective transmission channels between these different levels.

4.4. Other priorities

4.4.1. Visibility, Information and Communication

The general objective of DG ECHO information and communication activities about humanitarian aid is to put forward, both in Europe and in developing countries, the concrete contribution brought by humanitarian aid to the overall commitment of the European Union to solidarity with the developing countries. The information activities also aim to ensure transparency and to increase the considerable efforts of the Commission “to be closer to the citizen”. Thus, DG ECHO's strategy in 2006 in terms of communication will aim to:

- Develop and deliver key messages: as a major humanitarian donor, the Commission must express itself clearly and communicate its values which underlie its actions.

- Improve the visibility of the Commission as a humanitarian actor, both in the field (where humanitarian operations financed by the Commission are implemented) and in the EU.
- Count on young Europeans: young people are generally receptive and are a good “multiplier effect”. The key communication activities will concentrate therefore on targeting this group, with a particular focus on secondary school pupils.
- Develop a wider information “reflex”: the more people are actively involved in the communication of the Commission’s humanitarian messages, the wider the impact will be. This information “reflex” will have to be developed both within the Commission and amongst partners. Activities in this sector will integrate the approach adopted by the Commission in July 2005 in its Action Plan for communication¹⁶.

In its strategy, DG ECHO will particularly aim to reach out to media with large audiences or circulation.

4.4.2. DG ECHO’s operational network worldwide

DG ECHO will continue in 2006 the implementation of the action plan adopted by the EU in January 2005 following the tsunami, whose objective is to build the Commission’s capacity to react to crises. For this, DG ECHO will continue the reinforcement of its network of experts around the world so that these offices may have the capacity to actively accompany the UNDAC and FACT teams in their evaluation missions. In 2006, DG ECHO will evaluate the impact that the reinforcement of its operational network has had on its capacity to react.

4.4.3. Humanitarian Assistance staff security

Efforts aiming to improve the overall security of humanitarian assistance personnel who work in more and more uncertain humanitarian environments, whether they be DG ECHO personnel or staff from implementing partners, will remain at the forefront of DG ECHO concerns in 2006.

DG ECHO will keep up its efforts to improve its management system for the internal security (procedures and conditions) of headquarter staff and security of field staff, with a particular focus on training. Furthermore, DG ECHO will continue to contribute to the improvement of coordination and collaboration on security issues with its humanitarian partners. To complement its report on the “Standards and practices for the security of humanitarian personnel and advocacy for humanitarian space”¹⁷, DG ECHO will present a follow-up study in the area of training for trainers involved in security, as well as generic models for the establishment of coordination mechanisms between NGOs.

Finally, DG ECHO will continue to support projects and specific studies which aim to develop tools to improve the overall security in humanitarian action.

¹⁶ SEC(2005)985final – 20/7/2005,
http://www.cc.cec/sg_vista/cgi-bin/repository/getdoc/COMM_PDF_SEC_2005_0985_F_FR.pdf

¹⁷ http://europa.eu.int/comm/DG_ECHO/pdf_files/security/DG_ECHO_security_report_en.pdf

4.4.4. Evaluation

In autumn 2005, DG ECHO launched an evaluation of the department. This follows the 1999 evaluation in accordance with Article 20 of Regulation N° 1257/96 of the Council meeting on 20th June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid¹⁸, an article which governs DG ECHO operations.

This evaluation undertaken by external consultants will involve a large consultation with DG ECHO partners, Member States and other concerned actors. The report will be available at the beginning of 2006 and DG ECHO will then analyse how to follow up on the recommendations in the report.

Furthermore, DG ECHO operations in the countries affected by the tsunami, in Darfur (the Sudan/Chad), in Zimbabwe and in Yemen will be evaluated in 2006, as well as DIPECHO programmes in Latin America and Central Asia. The partners who will be evaluated will be the ICRC and Save the Children UK. DG ECHO will also launch an evaluation on the quality of the procurement of medicine.

5. CONCLUSION

In 2006, DG ECHO will continue its action in favour of those populations whose humanitarian needs are the most obvious, be they as a result from conflict or natural disaster. DG ECHO will continue to defend humanitarian space and principles, and to promote the UN guidelines on the use of civil and military defence equipment in humanitarian operations.

A reflection process on the reform of the humanitarian system began in 2005, in liaison with the humanitarian response to the tsunami. Indeed, answers given to humanitarian emergencies have shown that the present system does not always meet the basic needs of affected populations in time. A series of suggestions were thus made and approved during the United Nations Summit in September 2005. Some of these will be implemented in 2006. DG ECHO will follow this process which should contribute to improve the capacity of humanitarian aid to respond to emergencies. DG ECHO will continue in parallel to support the coordination role of the United Nations.

¹⁸ Three years after entry into force of this Regulation, the Commission shall submit an overall assessment of the operations financed by the Community under this Regulation to the European Parliament and to the Council, together with suggestions for the future of the Regulation and, as necessary, proposals for amendments to it.