

# RESTORING HUMANITY GLOBAL VOICES CALLING FOR ACTION

Synthesis of the  
Consultation Process for the  
World Humanitarian Summit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The worldwide consultations leading up to the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit has generated a demand for a vision of a world whose fundamental humanity is restored, a world where no one confronted by crisis dies who can be saved, goes hungry, or is victimized by conflict because there is not enough political will or resources to help them. Consultations with over 23,000 people repeatedly called to put people affected by crises at the heart of humanitarian action.**

**Human suffering from the impacts of armed conflicts and disasters has reached staggering levels.** Nearly 60 million people, half of them children, have been forced from their homes due to conflict and violence. The human and economic cost of disasters caused by natural hazards is also escalating. In the last two decades, 218 million people each year were affected by disasters; at an annual cost to the global economy that now exceeds \$300 billion.

**Even as global leaders pledge to “leave no one behind”, the needs and dignity of millions of people in crises are being neglected.** Millions suffer from the devastation wrought by frequent disasters that recur before they can fully recover their livelihoods. Political paralysis leaves the root causes of armed conflicts and vulnerability to disasters unaddressed, while also hindering access to those in need.

**The humanitarian system has never reached more people in so many places, but with its current resources and structure, it is no longer able to address the scale and complexity of present, let alone future needs.** Each year, an ever larger proportion of life-saving humanitarian needs remains unmet, despite greater funding contributions. The strengths and skills of the growing diversity of humanitarian partners, particularly from the Global South, are not sufficiently harnessed; nor are the transformative powers of science and technology.

**Decisive, collective action is needed** to uphold our shared responsibility to save lives and enable people to live lives of dignity.

**For all of these reasons, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit**, which will take place in Istanbul, Turkey, on 23-24 May 2016. A uniquely inclusive process, the Summit will be a critical moment to set a new vision on how to meet the needs of the millions of people affected by conflicts and disasters.

**The Summit will take place within an unprecedented global drive for change.** It is situated within the push for the renewal of global frameworks for disaster risk reduction (Sendai, March 2015), sustainable development (New York, September 2015), climate change (Paris, December 2015), and urban development (Quito, October 2016). It will also benefit from the reviews of the UN peacebuilding architecture (June 2015), UN peace operations (also June 2015), and the Women, Peace and Security agenda (October 2015); the High-Level Panels on Humanitarian Financing (November 2015) and the Global Response to Health Crises (December 2015); and the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Geneva, December 2015). Finding new ways to address humanitarian needs and to comprehensively manage risk will be a critical part of this global agenda.

**At the heart of these concurrent processes is an effort to redefine how the global community delivers for the world’s most vulnerable people**, even as rapid changes are putting more people at risk. Global trends such as climate change, urbanization, economic growth and inequality, food insecurity and resource scarcity have impacts that extend far beyond national boundaries in our interconnected world. A window of opportunity is now open to

transform the collective approach to managing and mitigating new risks, and to work together to support the poorest and most vulnerable people, enabling them to live dignified lives.

**This is a collective endeavour.** We cannot achieve development or disaster risk reduction goals without reaching the millions caught up in humanitarian crises. Increasingly, no country or organization can respond to these challenges alone. A change in how we prepare and respond to crises is needed to leverage the strengths and abilities of affected people and communities affected by crises, and those of a broader and more diverse group of actors.

**The World Humanitarian Summit will be a defining moment in which to reinforce our collective responsibility to save lives, prevent and alleviate suffering and uphold human dignity in crises.** Heads of State and Government, and stakeholders from multi-lateral and other humanitarian organizations, the private sector, academia, and affected communities will come together to announce support of a future agenda for action, forge new partnerships, and find practical solutions to pressing humanitarian challenges of today and tomorrow, in order to build a safer and more humane world for all.

**Between May 2014 and July 2015,** eight regional consultations involving more than 23,000 people, as well as major thematic and stakeholder consultations and online dialogues took place, backed by over 400 written submissions. They consistently called for change in how we prepare and respond to crises, in how we work together and ultimately in how we deliver with and for the millions of people whose lives are caught up in crisis, now almost always for a protracted period measured in years and not months.

This inclusive consultation process resulted in five major areas for action, each presenting an ambition for the future of humanitarian action. From this foundation, stakeholders can build the commitments, partnerships and transformative actions required to deliver change at the World Humanitarian Summit.

### DIGNITY

**Empower people to cope and recover with dignity through humanitarian action that puts people at its heart, delivers equally for women and girls, reaches everyone, invests in youth and children, and protects and enables people as the primary agents of their own response.**

- ❖ People affected by crises should be at the heart of humanitarian action. Affected communities, their organizations and their communities should be recognized as the primary agents of their preparedness, response and recovery. First responders should be better supported, and all humanitarian actors, both national and international, should complement local coping and protection strategies wherever possible.
- ❖ People affected by crises should be enabled to exercise greater voice and choice in humanitarian action, including through better two-way communication and feedback mechanisms, the increased use of cash-based assistance, where feasible, and concrete measures to increase accountability to affected people.
- ❖ Humanitarian actors should deliver equally for women and girls, by addressing the specific needs of women and girls of different ages and backgrounds, and empowering women to be equal partners. Funding and programming should enable women and girls to realize their right to services and protection, including from gender-based violence, and to be leaders in crisis response and recovery.
- ❖ Humanitarian action should guarantee protection and education for children, provide employment and livelihoods opportunities for young women and men, and recognize youth as partners in humanitarian preparedness and response. No one should miss a month of schooling due to conflict or disaster. Young people should be empowered

through national and global networks to rally around humanitarian action to help those in dire need.

- ❖ All those involved in humanitarian work should correct the neglect of older people, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups; ensure their specific needs are met; and enable them to participate in decision-making.

### SAFETY

**Keep people safe from harm by putting protection at the centre of humanitarian action, increasing political action to prevent and end conflict, preventing and putting an end to violations of international humanitarian law, and ensuring humanitarian action is not instrumentalized.**

- ❖ Protecting people's safety and dignity is a primary aim of humanitarian action. All humanitarian decisions should take into account what affected people already do to protect themselves, what the biggest threats to them are, and how each actor can contribute to their safety.
- ❖ In armed conflicts, humanitarian action should not be a substitute for reaching political solutions. Member States and the international community should step up political action to end conflict through prevention, early warning and diplomacy, building capacities for peace, and tackling the root causes of conflict.
- ❖ Parties to conflicts have the obligation to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law (IHL), limiting the impact of conflicts on affected people through preventive action and accountability for violations. The World Humanitarian Summit is an opportunity to promote universal adherence to and implementation of IHL, and for States to recommit to respecting and ensuring respect for IHL through concrete actions.
- ❖ To ensure victims in conflict have access to protection and assistance, there should be respect for principled operational policies and practices; strengthened partnerships between local and international actors; enhanced training and duty of care of staff; and effective dialogue with the parties to a conflict. There should also be sufficient security, qualified staff and resources to allow close proximity to affected people. In protracted conflicts, humanitarian actors should address affected people's immediate and longer-term needs by adopting longer-term strategies and working appropriately with development and peacebuilding partners.
- ❖ There should be greater accountability of humanitarian leaders for prioritizing and delivering on protection outcomes. Mechanisms for monitoring violations need to be put into place and linked more consistently to early action and advocacy. Protection concerns need to be systematically integrated in all assessments by all humanitarian actors, from the onset of a crisis and not as an after-thought.
- ❖ Improving the safety and security of aid workers is a priority concern. It requires building trust with armed groups, traditional leaders, government, and other local stakeholders; effective communication strategies on humanitarian action and safety and security of aid workers under international law; adherence to humanitarian principles; security management systems commensurate with the local level of threat; and ensuring staff are adequately trained in security management.

### RESILIENCE

**Build hope and solutions for people in new or prolonged crises through collective action by humanitarian, development and other partners to strengthen people's resilience to crises, by investing in preparedness, managing and mitigating risk, reducing vulnerability, finding durable solutions for protracted displacement, and adapting to new threats.**

- ❖ A new framework of cooperation is needed among humanitarian, development, climate change and peacebuilding actors to manage and find solutions to situations of prolonged crisis. This framework should be built on long-term commitments that address immediate life-saving needs alongside underlying causes by making simultaneous use of all instruments, underpinned by shared risk and context analysis and joint, outcome-oriented planning.
- ❖ With the number of people enduring protracted displacement steeply rising, a fundamental shift is needed in support of refugees and host countries and communities. The Summit could examine a comprehensive “refugee hosting deal” by recognizing host countries’ contributions; arranging longer-term, predictable and sustainable financial packages to assist them; giving refugees self-reliance through access to livelihood opportunities; and creating more equitable arrangements for their resettlement in third countries.
- ❖ The global community is urged to equally protect, assist and find durable solutions for internally displaced people in accordance with humanitarian principles and international law, and through new national and regional instruments.
- ❖ Concerted effort is required to address the humanitarian dimensions of migrant and refugee movements by reinforcing life-saving efforts and through commitments to protect and promote the human rights of all people on the move. Strengthened international cooperation is needed, in particular at border areas and along migratory routes, and more support should be provided to those States bearing the brunt of the influx of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
- ❖ Governments need to invest more in reducing exposure and vulnerability and in disaster preparedness. Disasters caused by natural hazards, particularly those that are recurrent or predictable, require a shift from managing crises to managing risk.
- ❖ Governments should forge “preparedness and response agreements” for natural hazards with the international community. Such agreements can increase the predictability and discipline of crisis management by investing in national risk reduction and response capacities to handle needs up to specified thresholds, beyond which international assistance at a predictable scale and capability is triggered. This approach needs to be supported by risk financing and increased use of innovations in science and technology to improve forecasting, early warning and risk modeling.
- ❖ Governments and development partners should scale-up social protection measures, building on the delivery of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. These measures should serve as the norm for longer-term provision of assistance, with particular attention to the challenges faced in urban settings and situations of protracted conflict.
- ❖ Governments and international actors need to better manage health crisis risks, strengthening community and public health systems to respond in a timely manner, protecting health facilities and workers, and managing trans-border disease outbreaks through better implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) and rapidly deployable surge capacities and contingency funds.
- ❖ With the accelerating impact of conflict, disaster and displacement in an urbanizing world, a new global urban crisis alliance of municipal authorities, urban professionals and humanitarian and development actors should be established. This will tackle escalating risk and generate urban-specific response mechanisms that build on more resilient people, infrastructure, and systems. This will mobilize commitments and investment, focusing particularly on the most at-risk towns and cities.
- ❖ An independent advisory group should be convened to advise on preparing for new threats and managing future humanitarian risk. It should comprise of expertise from all regions.

## PARTNERSHIPS

**Build diverse and inclusive partnerships that reaffirm the core humanitarian principles, support effective and people-driven humanitarian action, enable first responders to take a leadership role, and leverage the power of innovation.**

- ❖ All countries and humanitarian actors should reaffirm commitment to the universally applicable humanitarian principles – humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence - with assistance and protection provided for all according to need and without discrimination on any grounds.
- ❖ Local and national leadership and responsibility for crisis management should be reinforced wherever possible, backed by stronger regional cooperation and supported by global institutions. The implementation of such a shift should be aided by analysis of the local operational capacities, a review of current roles and cooperation arrangements, and by the creation of more inclusive decision-making arrangements founded on the principles of partnership.
- ❖ In each crisis, a mechanism is needed to verify and improve the quality and credibility of needs assessments, track progress in meeting needs and provide a channel for handling complaints by affected people. These mechanisms should be independent, and consult local people, government authorities, civil society and humanitarian organizations.
- ❖ Globally, a common framework is needed for assessing the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action, supported by transparent and responsible sharing of data.
- ❖ To face new challenges and better meet the needs of affected people, it is crucial that the humanitarian system embraces opportunities to innovate and develops a culture of continuous learning and adaptation, by generating the right environment, incentives and capacities. The consultations emphasized the need to promote the consistent application of innovation and proposed a global humanitarian innovation alliance to stimulate new and ethical approaches to tackle challenges, build new partnerships and leverage resources to support the research, development, testing and scaling-up of new and improved ideas.
- ❖ Governments and humanitarian actors should develop new partnerships to leverage the capabilities of other sectors, including by building pre-crisis agreements with the private sector and dedicated initiatives to scale-up civil contingency expertise for domestic, regional and international deployment, with particular focus on South-South cooperation.

## FINANCE

**Ensure sufficient and more efficient use of resources to preserve life, dignity and resilience in crises through new and diverse funding sources and expanded support to local organizations.**

- ❖ Humanitarian action needs to be adequately resourced so that an essential level of assistance to preserve life and dignity can be guaranteed. With the cost of meeting humanitarian needs at an all-time high, there is a pressing need to secure adequate and predictable finance to support people in humanitarian crises and help communities develop resilience. This will be further informed by the imminent outcomes of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing.
- ❖ The finance gap should be closed by bringing together diverse sources of domestic and international finance, using the right combination of instruments in each context, further reducing waste and inefficiencies where they can be found, and improving transparency and accountability to enable more simplified common reporting, and expanding unearmarked and multi-year financing. Innovations for mobilizing finance should be promoted, such as emerging instruments for Islamic Social Finance.

- ❖ Direct funding of local organizations should be expanded and the level of direct finance to affected governments through risk financing or budget support should be increased.
- ❖ Transaction costs should be cut and obstacles removed to the flow of remittances during crises, and banking and communications should be rapidly resumed to make sure money can flow immediately after a crisis. There was also a call to reduce the impact of counter-terrorism legislation on remittance flows, as well as humanitarian action.

### TOWARDS ISTANBUL

The consultations have generated a demand for a vision of a world whose fundamental humanity is reaffirmed and restored. A world that puts people and principles at the heart of humanitarianism.

Ambition without a commitment to act will not build on the best practice and create far-reaching change. Decisive, collective action is needed to uphold our responsibility to save lives, protect people and preserve dignity.

The Charter of the United Nations commits us to save future generations from the scourge of war, and reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person, and the equal rights of men and women. This call is echoed in the new Sustainable Development Goals, through which the world's leaders have pledged to leave no-one behind, and to work together for "a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive", "a world free of fear and violence", and "a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met". These ideas resonate across every culture, faith and society, and are the responsibility of all to deliver. They underpin the four fundamental principles of humanitarian action: humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, which the consultations resoundingly called on all those involved in humanitarian action to reaffirm.

The World Humanitarian Summit will build on these commitments. It is a pivotal moment for governments and affected communities, civil society organizations, multilateral organizations and other partners to reaffirm their commitment to humanitarian action. It is an opportunity to develop new partnerships, and to rally around major changes required to improve the lives of all people affected by crises.

Above all, the World Humanitarian Summit must put people at the heart of humanitarian action, and enable them to lead the way to a safer and more humane world.

