



**Presentation of the priorities of the Bulgarian presidency of the EU
in the area of development cooperation and humanitarian aid
before the Development Committee of the European Parliament**

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Ladies and gentlemen

Let me start by bringing up some numbers. According to the United Nations there are more than 145 million people in need in the world; 105 million of them receive aid in one form or another. There is no guarantee that the aid most of them receive is adequate. Regardless of the ever increasing amount of aid provided by the international community there is a funding gap of about 25 billion US dollars. Let me also give you some examples from specific countries: In Syria alone there are 13 million people in need, 2 million of which are not covered at all by humanitarian action. For Yemen their number is 11 million. In the Rakhine region of Myanmar one third of the children suffer from malnutrition. 60 percent of the population in Libya needs food aid. In South Sudan there are 2 million internally displaced people while their number in Democratic Republic of Congo is more than 4 million. If I go on bringing up numbers on the humanitarian needs in the world we will have no time for discussion.

Bulgaria, along with many of our European partners, has seen at first hand the terrible impact of the current high level of global conflict as hundreds of thousands of displaced people have passed across our borders. The European Union leads the world in its collective response to

humanitarian disasters. Although our resources are not limitless, we need to step up our ability to respond to man-made conflicts and to natural disasters.

We must seek to get to the root causes of the problems. At least some of the current conflicts, particularly in Africa, have become more severe due to drought and conflict over decreasing access to productive land and water needed for agriculture. Thus, for instance, the conflict in Darfur can be described as the world's first climate change conflict. Some of the longest lasting conflicts in the world are in increasingly arid countries, such as South Sudan, Chad and Mali. According to the Global Climate Change Vulnerability Index, of 186 countries Chad is the most vulnerable one to climate change.

We believe that the answer lies in a combination of reforming international humanitarian system, leveraging additional resources and knowledge from the private sector, and moving upstream using the EUs new resilience framework to prevent or resolve conflicts.

Before I go further, I wish to pay tribute to the excellent work done by our predecessors Malta and Estonia which have provided a solid platform to carry these ideas forward. Both countries helped to define the challenge facing us and made good progress towards a broad agreement on the humanitarian/development nexus and on the approach to resilience. We see our role as helping move forward on the implementation of these strategies and policies.

At a meeting of this committee just a few months ago, our Estonian colleague Minister Sven Mikser mentioned that the United Nations High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing had identified a funding gap of 15 billion US dollars for global humanitarian action. We have seen limited progress since then and the needs in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and North-Eastern

Nigeria remain great. In addition, we have seen new problems in other regions, including the displacement of Rohingya people which is yet another humanitarian crisis driven by conflict.

The EU Global Strategy calls for common action to prevent fragile situations from turning into new humanitarian disasters. We want to see increasingly well-coordinated use of the EU collective humanitarian, development and diplomatic capabilities to address the root causes of conflict. We need to reflect together on what we can do differently to increase the coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of our collective resources. This approach is consistent with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid which expresses Europe's commitment to help people in need around the world.

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) saw a series of commitments from a broad range of actors. The Summit outcomes created a coherent framework for effective and efficient provision of humanitarian assistance. Taking into consideration the 2016 Council conclusions on the Summit and building on the work of the previous presidencies, the Bulgarian Presidency will continue to promote discussions on the progress in implementing the our commitments and initiatives. We will pay special attention to aid effectiveness and to the reform of the international system and actors in the follow-up process of the Summit.

Spain, France, Italy and Portugal have already kick-started an important debate with some ideas on a more systematic approach to responding to crises, in particular, to forgotten crises. The Presidency will take the opportunity to build upon these ideas and explore options to improve how we monitor and manage our reaction to both man-made humanitarian crises and natural disasters. We will look into the possibility of establishing a procedure among Members States and the Commission for sharing information about planning and crisis response. Understanding our

collective position on each crisis should help us to engage more effectively with both the United Nation system and other donors.

We also want to support and emphasise the current EU leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. We should think carefully about how we can take steps to combat sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) within the discussions on specific humanitarian crises. In this regard, we should consider taking practical measures in addition to advocacy. Such measures should, for instance, provide answers on how own programmes and procedures can help protect women, girls, boys and men from such violence in emergencies. We must have the policies, systems and mechanisms in place to decrease gender-based violence risks, especially the risks of violence against women and girls, and to provide safe and comprehensive services for those affected by gender-based violence.

One of the many worrying consequences of the current global humanitarian situation is the lost generation of children growing up in refugee camps, in which they may be denied the right to a decent education. We must help provide a sense of normality and give them hope and chance to be productive citizens. Accordingly, Bulgaria will promote the provision of quality education in humanitarian emergencies which can help prevent, reduce and mitigate dangerous gaps in children's development. Education is fundamental for human, social and economic development and a key element for achieving lasting peace and sustainable development.

Food crises continue to have a severe impact on affected populations, putting millions of people at risk. The Bulgarian Presidency will continue to work towards an adequate collective response to prevent and mitigate hunger and malnutrition.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) continues to be ignored and violated by many parties to conflicts around the world, including in some cases by government actors. At the EU level, we must continue to condemn such acts and to maintain the pledge we made at the World Humanitarian Summit to continue placing respect for IHL at the top of the international agenda.

These are our priorities. We want to address fundamental issues which are affecting the current high volume of humanitarian crises and seek to use our resources as effectively and efficiently as possible. We also want to work together on using innovative ideas to generate more help for the people in need from our current resources.

Sadly, the world is a scary place for the growing numbers of people who have been forced out of their homes by conflict and natural disasters. As Europeans, we must stand up for the people who are suffering. We must seek to enhance our ability to respond providing humanitarian support and using the available political tools. This Parliament consistently shows leadership in pressing for Europe to be a generous and capable development and humanitarian partner to governments and to people who need help. Bulgaria will play its part in making the most of the existing resources. We will concentrate on practical actions which can make humanitarian response more effective and efficient. I look forward to working closely with you over the coming months, and to hearing your ideas and questions right now.

Thank you.