



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

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Remarks to Danish Foreign Ministry Seminar on Coherence in Conflict

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The humanitarian system as a whole is under great strain as we respond to the acute crises in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Yemen, the Central African Republic and many other countries. Political solutions seem to be more elusive than ever. In regions like the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, we are dealing with chronic, protracted emergencies that have continued for years. The number of people displaced by conflict is higher than at any time since 1945. Our capacity and our funding are stretched to the limit and we are forced to reconsider how we can fulfil our mandate.

The humanitarian-development relationship is at the heart of the thinking around these issues. The study you have commissioned, and today's seminar, are timely contributions particularly as we prepare for the World Humanitarian Summit next year. I thank Ambassador Staur and our hosts at the Danish Foreign Ministry.

The cost of humanitarian action has risen by more than 500 per cent in the past decade and the total global appeal is now at a record high of \$18.8 billion. Donors have been generous, but the funding gap remains stable at around 40 per cent, which means humanitarians are failing to reach increasing numbers of people every year.

Much of our funding goes towards our work in protracted crises affected by conflict, which comprises 80 per cent of humanitarian work. In these settings, humanitarians are often engaged in long-term projects that were traditionally thought of as development work. Protracted engagement by international humanitarian actors has a tendency to expand until humanitarians become essential service providers. This approach is expensive; it does very little to reduce vulnerability or develop local capacity; and it is not what people affected by crisis want or need.

My main message today is that humanitarians must adapt to protracted emergencies in conflict settings by bringing development actors into the response at a much earlier stage.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

My own organization, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is already working with development partners on some joint projects that I would like to outline for you today.

First, we are working together at the regional level in the Horn of Africa, where humanitarian appeals have been launched for years and humanitarian organizations are providing basic services that should be the responsibility of national governments and development partners.

The Horn is in a state of chronic emergency with recurrent acute crises. Food security still impacts more than 13 million people, and 9 million people have been displaced from their homes.

Despite this complex situation, humanitarian and development actors are working together on the Horn of Africa Initiative launched by the Secretary-General and the World Bank last October. This initiative is based on a risk-based approach including common needs assessments and analyses of the drivers and triggers of food insecurity and displacement.

So far, joint analysis has identified urgent needs in several border areas, which are hotbeds for the radicalization of young people and the growth of violent extremism, and are associated with high levels of migration. Humanitarian action alone can do very little to deal with the root causes of these dangerous trends. We are now planning assessment missions to these areas which will feed into a \$300 million borderlands programme.

Second, humanitarian and development actors are finding ways to work together at the national and local levels. In Darfur, for example, large IDP camps are often contiguous with towns and cities. By using food vouchers instead of in-kind assistance, humanitarian programmes can contribute to economic development goals and build the resilience of displaced people and local communities alike.

In Colombia, development actors are meeting some of the needs of displaced people through a joint UNDP/UNHCR programme which includes livelihood support and income generation. And in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, NGOs are shifting resources to more durable solutions including rehabilitating water systems, in partnership with the World Bank, the private sector and the local authorities.

So the good news is that these programmes are already underway and we must build on them.

Third, on the policy side, OCHA has been working on the thinking behind the transition from humanitarian to development work. A new study to be published in July recommends measuring the success of humanitarian engagement against clear, time-bound outcomes which would make it easier to formulate exit strategies. It recommends targeting areas of greatest vulnerability and risk; and complementing national actors and systems rather than replacing them.

One important area for further study is looking at the factors that trigger or speed up the involvement of development actors. Considerations include government support and the intensity of conflict. Syria, for example, is not suitable for development work, while the Somali government is already working with development actors.

My fourth and final point is that the World Humanitarian Summit provides an opportunity to pull this thinking and these successful programmes together to make a transformational change.

The consultations have introduced the idea of an agreement or Compact on a collective and joined-up approach to crisis management – at the heart of which is better cooperation between

humanitarian and development partners.

The building blocks for this agreement are likely to include better risk and crisis management; the determination of long-term, mid-term and short-term outcomes; a shift to programmes focusing on social protection, basic services and livelihoods; and a financial framework to support this.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The study launched today reinforces all these points and is a valuable contribution to building an evidence base for the bold changes we need.

I thank for your engagement in this important issue and look forward to hearing your views.

I would like to start the discussion by asking you what you think are the barriers to more joined-up work from humanitarian and development partners? And how can they be overcome?