

# World Humanitarian Summit 2016

## Concept Note

### The changing humanitarian landscape

Almost 25 years after UN General Assembly resolution 46/182 created the present humanitarian system – around the ERC, the IASC and a set of established core and guiding principles – the landscape of humanitarian action has changed considerably. Inter-related global trends, such as climate variability, demographic change, financial and energy sector pressures or changing geo-political factors have led to increased demand for humanitarian action. This focuses around three types of humanitarian realities: armed conflicts, disasters caused by natural hazards, and ‘chronic crises’ where people cyclically dip above and below acute levels of vulnerability. Each scenario has its own characteristics and challenges.

There has also been an important shift in the number and nature of actors involved in humanitarian action. The deepening consequences of disasters on long-term development have led many governments to boost national and regional capacities for disaster management, prompting a more prominent role for affected states, regional organizations and neighboring countries in responding to emergencies. As more countries reach middle income status, their governments become donors or providers of in-kind assistance and share their experience and expertise, including through increased South-South cooperation. In addition, the number of NGOs operating in major emergencies has grown, with the largest recent increases being in the number of actors from the Global South. In recent years, national and foreign militaries and the private sector have also taken on greater disaster response roles, and new forms of communication enabled by fast-moving technologies have meant that humanitarian needs are detected and communicated faster, information is better consolidated, and affected people are able to express their needs and interests more strongly. We need a better understanding of the impact of these interconnected trends and approaches. We need humanitarian systems, which are more inclusive, effective, responsive and interoperable.

In response to the challenges, humanitarian actors have sought to improve their services and maximize their impact on people in need. In particular, the 2005 Humanitarian Reform and more recently the IASC Transformative Agenda developed new approaches to working more accountably, predictably and effectively, and discussions to update international humanitarian legislation take place each year in the General Assembly. But there has been no collective exercise to take stock of the achievements and changes that have occurred since the current system was formed. Nor has a structured dialogue taken place

### The changing humanitarian landscape

- In each of the last three years, international humanitarian organizations have targeted over **100 million** people for assistance
- The population in humanitarian focus countries is expected to **nearly double between 1990 and 2025**. This and other demographic changes – including rapid urbanization – will put pressure on resources for humanitarian assistance and require changes to how it is provided
- From 2006-10, only **3%** of official humanitarian aid was spent on disaster prevention and preparedness
- It is estimated that over **3,000 NGOs** were operating in the Haiti emergency
- People (and therefore, responders) are able to connect more quickly and easily than ever before – in **105** countries, there are more mobile phone subscriptions than people, and **50%** of people in developing countries will be using the internet by 2015

between the four major constituencies that contribute to humanitarian action today: Member States (including affected countries, donors and emerging and interested partners); the global network of humanitarian organizations and experts; associated partners, (including private sector, religious charities, etc.); and, affected people themselves – as first responders, communities and civil society organizations, to think through how to address the current challenges. While the fundamental principles enshrined in General Assembly Resolution 46/182 will continue to guide our work, we need to explore how to create a more global, effective, and inclusive humanitarian system.

The UN Secretary-General is convening a global humanitarian summit in 2016 to take stock of where we are, discuss the changing humanitarian landscape, share knowledge and best practices, and set a forward-looking humanitarian agenda. Extensive consultations on four key themes to facilitate an inclusive discussion will form the core of the process leading up to the Summit. Regional meetings will bring together the experiences of the four constituencies and build legitimacy and support for the outcomes of the summit. This exercise will set an agenda for work beyond 2016 to ensure humanitarian action is fit to respond to the challenges of the future and provide input into the post-2015 development agenda.

## Summit objectives and process

The Summit will set an agenda to make humanitarian action fit for the challenges of the future, by broadening and deepening partnerships to assist those in need. The Summit will be the midpoint in a process of consultation beginning in 2014 and extending after the 2016 Summit has concluded. It is anticipated that through the consultations, a set of core issues will be identified for discussion at the Summit.

The discussions will start in 2014 with technical consultations in the four thematic areas, complemented by regional and global consultations, focused on learning from field-based perspectives through mid-2015. In addition, United Nations and other meetings in 2013, 2014 and 2015, including ECOSOC and the General Assembly, will be used to facilitate wide-ranging dialogue. It is intended that the preparatory process will build up the partnerships required to take the agenda forward after the Summit. Consultations will benefit from the experience of Member States that are affected and deeply involved in humanitarian response and will be informed by the views of affected communities and civil society organizations.

At the Summit itself, plenary discussions will address the recommendations of a report from the Secretary-General that summarizes the outcomes of the regional, global and online consultations. These will be turned into a set of concrete proposals on how to improve the capacity and effectiveness of humanitarian response, to better serve people affected by crisis and disaster. This Secretary-General's report will be provided to UN Member States and summit participants in the months prior to the Summit. Summit participants could announce new policy commitments, innovations or partnerships that they plan to implement after the Summit. There will also be opportunities for side events to facilitate focused discussions around Summit themes and expected outcomes, and for humanitarian organizations to showcase new approaches and initiatives in an interactive way.

## Themes

The Summit will focus on four thematic areas, to be further refined through the 2014-2015 consultation process. The themes are based on current analysis of what is needed to build a more inclusive, accountable, transparent, interoperable and effective humanitarian system. The themes are:

## Humanitarian effectiveness

The Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda prioritizes strengthening humanitarian aid and promoting a global agenda on humanitarian aid transparency and effectiveness. Humanitarian organizations agree that the system-wide response to emergencies must improve, and evidence from evaluations and performance monitoring points to the need for more innovative approaches to strengthen response efforts and improve effectiveness. Several initiatives, including IATI, the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, the SPHERE project, and the IASC Transformative Agenda have contributed to change in elements of humanitarian action, for example on accountability, transparency, performance monitoring, professionalization, standardization and data collection and sharing. The consultations taking place in the lead-up to the summit will be an opportunity to develop a joint understanding of what we understand by humanitarian effectiveness and what its constituent elements and key indicators are.

## Reducing vulnerability and managing risk

Recent food security and nutrition crises in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel have shown the urgent need for a new model of cooperation between humanitarian and development actors, financial institutions, bilateral partners, and affected Governments and communities - one that is based on coordinated humanitarian and development approaches to understanding and reducing risk and a more systematic, joined-up approach to information sharing and analysis, planning, prioritizing and funding programmes. Disaster risk reduction, disaster response, resilience, preparedness and capacity building are core components of this agenda. It is an opportunity to explore ways to reduce and manage risks in the interest of building more resilient communities and limiting the need for humanitarian assistance. Organizations like the World Bank, IMF, OECD, UNDP and UN ISDR, as well as key affected and donor Member States, need to be part of this discussion.

## Transformation through innovation

There are many examples where humanitarian response systems have been innovative, but we need to work on how best to sustain change. Work under this theme will address two key areas: how we can create systems that are self-critical and open to risk and experimentation, and how we can ensure that new products, processes, and positions are identified and integrated to address operational challenges. Work under this theme will contribute to summit outcomes aimed at creating systems which support a proactive, and not just reactive, response.

## Serving the needs of people in conflict

The scale, intensity and duration of armed conflicts, including the massive displacement of people, continue to create immense humanitarian need. Equitably offering assistance and protection to all people affected by conflict, in particular in zones of active combat, remains a critical challenge. Work under this theme will include identifying more effective strategies and methods of providing assistance to people affected by conflict and other forms of violence across lines of combat or hostility. It will also focus on finding more durable solutions to displacement, including displacement to and within urban areas, which exacerbates developmental challenges such as urban planning, lack of essential services and unemployment, as well as the unique and emerging challenges posed by conflict and other forms of violence in urban settings. It will explore strategies and mechanisms to coordinate work across the system on these issues post-2016.

**Partnerships for effective humanitarian action:** Broadening partnerships for humanitarian assistance underpins all of the thematic discussions described above. With the increase in capacities and expertise of Member States and the proliferation of operational actors and aid providers, humanitarian action and how it is done is changing rapidly. A forward-looking humanitarian agenda must incorporate the interests and experiences of a broader range of actors than those who have traditionally participated in this type of

discussion, particularly given that many long-standing and active contributors to humanitarian response efforts have often not been recognized as such in the formal humanitarian system. The preparatory process for the summit could identify new forums for collaborating and coordinating policies and responses with these partners (governments, agencies, private sector and NGOs/charities and foundations). The consultations will be essential to set up and strengthen the partnerships required to advance the agenda after the summit.

## A consultative process

OCHA is seeking the views of humanitarian partners on the nature and scope of the preparatory process. In order to ensure that the consultative process is inclusive and cost-effective, existing humanitarian forums and networks, as well as regional and global consultations, will be used to facilitate a structured dialogue. Discussions in these forums will help refine and validate the themes for the summit and reflect the views of a broad base of constituents – so that everyone agrees on the summit themes and works together to implement any recommendations arising from the summit. Intergovernmental processes will be one of the avenues of consultation, including the General Assembly proceedings (GA) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Other forums will include the Dialogue on Humanitarian Partnership (DHP), OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG), Humanitarian Liaison Working Group (HLWG), World Economic Forum (WEF), Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHD), the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC), International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the planning processes for the post-2015 Hyogo Framework and post-2015 MDGs, and others.

To date, partners have demonstrated strong interest and support for the Summit, and many have pledged to participate actively in the preparations leading up to 2016. They have also helped to shape the development of the thinking about the summit by raising constructive questions about the aims, process and structure of the event. The Summit is meant to build on current best practices to find ways for humanitarian organizations to work together more effectively and coherently. It is not intended to challenge the long-standing core principles that continue to guide humanitarian work.

## The road to the summit

**Timing and location:** There has been no final decision by the Secretary-General on the precise date and location of the summit. OCHA is currently looking at the first half of 2016. 2015 will be a busy year, and OCHA is coordinating with partners to ensure Summit preparations are complementary with major initiatives culminating in the same timeframe, including the post-Hyogo and post-2015 development agenda events, the International Red Cross/Red Crescent conference and others. Logistical, financial and political factors will be considered in determining the location of the Summit. It is intended to host a number of preparatory consultations in the Global South.

**Participation:** The Summit is targeted to all four humanitarian constituencies (Member States, the global network of humanitarian organizations and experts, associated partners and affected people). These include a diverse range of actors: governments of affected countries, donors and partner countries, NGOs and civil society networks, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, humanitarian and development agencies, regional, national and local operating partners, technical subject experts and academics, and associated partners like the private sector and militaries, and most importantly, people affected by crises.

**Technical consultations:** The work of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and other inter-governmental forums will contribute to the outcome of the summit. It will also be important to reflect the views of affected people and communities, utilize the expertise of subject-matter experts and academics and incorporate the

operational experience of humanitarian agencies and responders. Inputs from the private sector and civil society will also contribute to delivering successful outcomes of the Summit. Consultations will take place through regional and global conferences, an online communication platform, and through key humanitarian meetings already in the pipeline for 2013, 2014 and early 2015. Technical consultations will take place on each of the themes, to bring together and interpret analytical work taking place across the system and set up the communities of practice that will be necessary to take recommendations forward after the summit. This will be done by task teams of experts from interested humanitarian organizations for each theme.

**Regional and global consultations:** Regional consultations in 2014 and the first half of 2015 will provide an opportunity to seek the views of regional, national and local-level practitioners. Each meeting will help refine thinking on the four broad themes of the Summit. The agenda will be designed to reflect the realities and priorities of the region and the consultations will help shape the outcomes of the Summit. A report on the key findings and recommendations will be drafted after each meeting and used to contribute to the final agenda for the Summit. These findings will be brought together at the global level in late 2015. Background and outcome documents will be posted online for comment through an online dialogue.

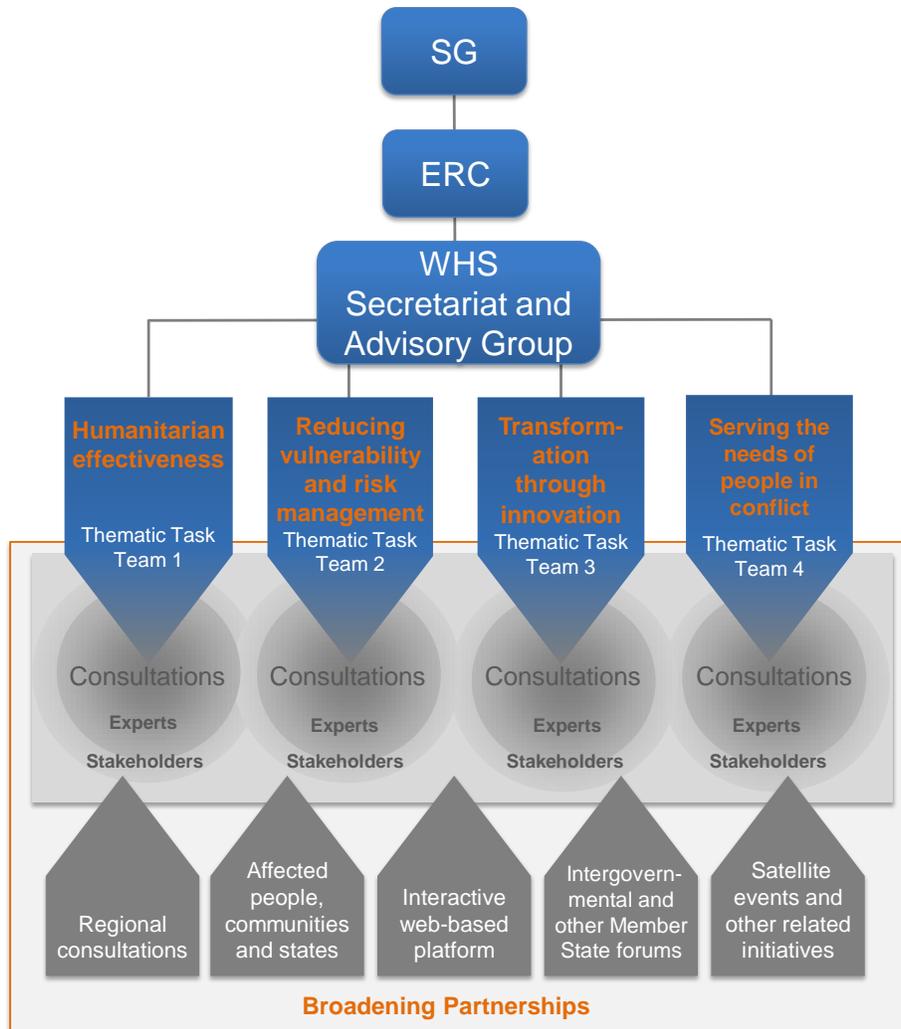
**Interactive web-based platform:** In order to expand the reach of the consultations and engage a broader audience in the preparations for the Summit, OCHA has established a dedicated web presence: [www.worldhumanitariansummit.org](http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org). Initially, the website will enable people to learn about progress in the preparations for the Summit. At a later stage, users will be able to comment and share contributions, such as research or opinion pieces. Web-based contributions will be integrated into consultation outcomes to feed into the Summit preparations.

**Opportunities for broader participation:** A common calendar of events will be regularly updated and posted on the official WHS website. Discussions of the Summit themes will also take place in thematic meetings and conferences of humanitarian networks, regional academic or practitioner meetings, and national events. Civil society actors, Member States, academic institutions, NGOs and others are encouraged to contribute to the preparations by hosting consultative events and feeding their outcomes back into the overall preparatory work. The Summit itself will be an opportunity to showcase innovative humanitarian work at interactive side events.

**Funding:** Adequate support will be essential to ensure that the Summit preparations move forward in a timely and cost-effective way. Options for financial or administrative support to the Summit preparations could include agreement to host, co-host or help coordinate regional and global preparatory consultation events, and commitments to make or sponsor secondments to the Summit Secretariat. OCHA is considering opening a special designated contributions account to support a secretariat, travel, consultations, and conference costs. A budget and a resource mobilization strategy are being developed.

**Organizational architecture:** Preparations for the summit require a clearly defined structure to support thematic work and consultations leading up to 2016. Current thinking on how to organize the work within the United Nations and with the broader humanitarian community includes a Summit Secretariat, an advisory group and task teams made up of experts from a range of organizations to develop substantive work on each theme. The advisory group and task teams would draw on the expertise of leaders from the relevant branches of OCHA and other interested humanitarian organizations to provide guidance and align support to keep summit preparations on track. Partnerships with two sets of stakeholders (networks of technical experts and of humanitarian stakeholders from various constituencies) will be essential to ensure that consultations are inclusive and productive.

## Proposed World Humanitarian Summit Architecture



### Summit outcomes

The outcomes from the consultations will be presented to Summit participants in a report from the Secretary-General summarizing findings and recommendations with a suggested 'road map'/ Plan of Action for post-2016. The intergovernmental process will be one of the avenues for work after the summit, to give shape to any relevant recommendations leading from the S-G's report or the summit itself. Though it is too early to identify specific outcomes, the intention is to set an agenda and make recommendations with the aim of improving humanitarian response.