Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Delivered by

His Excellency Ambassador Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in New York

for

Humanitarian Affairs Segment of ECOSOC

United Nations
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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –
Mister President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Country Montenegro*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

Mister President,

Let me start by expressing our support to Bolivia as the chair of this Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the ECOSOC. The EU is fully committed to ensuring that the HAS remains a unique forum for an inclusive discussion on the trends and challenges in the humanitarian field.

This year’s edition of ECOSOC HAS takes place at a pivotal time.

296 million people will require humanitarian assistance and protection in 2022. This number is a significant increase from the number of people in needs a year ago, which was already the highest figure in decades.

Conflicts are on the rise and civilians continue to pay the price.

Vulnerabilities are growing.

Extreme poverty is rising.

Climate change effects are devastating, forced displacement is at record levels, and with up to 345 million people face acute food insecurity across 82

* Montenegro continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
countries worldwide, 50 million of which on the edge of famine in 45 countries.

COVID-19 and its direct and indirect effects continue to take a heavy toll on countries already struggling to cope with poverty, conflict, climatic shocks and other disease outbreaks.

The tasks facing the humanitarian community today have never been more daunting. It is not only the sheer volume of humanitarian needs but, most importantly, the very nature of the current humanitarian challenges.

Mr. President,

More than thirty years ago, the UN General Assembly established the current normative humanitarian framework, a humanitarian system rooted in the respect for International Humanitarian Law and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

A system conducive to address human suffering wherever it is found, based on needs alone, without making distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions; a system autonomous from political, economic or military objectives.

A system agreed consensually by all UN member states aimed.

To assist and protect the most vulnerable.

To ensure complete, safe, rapid and unimpeded access to people in need.

To guarantee that humanitarian and medical workers are respected and protected.
To avoid that civilians and civilians and health structures are attacked.

However, in spite of this collective commitment, humanitarian access is more and more restricted due to the systematic and continued disregard of Human rights law and International Humanitarian Law.

We see that in Ukraine.

We see that in Yemen.

We see that in Ethiopia... and in many other places all over the world.

Humanitarian assistance, and tragically, aid workers themselves, are increasingly under attack. Despite their vital role, last year at least 117 humanitarian workers were killed while trying to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance.

Armed conflicts across the globe cause immense suffering to millions of civilians, including civilian deaths, the destruction of vital infrastructure, and massive displacement.

Mr President

In a time where the humanitarian system is more important than ever, we all have a collective responsibility to getting our commitments back on track

We should start with a renewed commitment to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

The EU and its Member States will remain committed to put IHL, and the centrality of protection, at the heart of their external action.
We advocate for the universalisation of IHL instruments, and we call on states that have not yet done so to ratify and fully implement important IHL instruments, such as the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute, and to develop and adopt any necessary implementing legislation, policies and practical measures.

We also call on MS to endorse the “Call for Action to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and principled humanitarian action”, launched by Germany and France three years ago and that now counts with 53 signatories.

Mr President,

The fight against impunity for serious violations of IHL must be a priority for all.

The EU will use all the tools at its disposal to strengthen accountability for IHL violations, including supporting initiatives aimed at ensuring that perpetrators of serious human rights violations and violations of IHL, some of which may amount to war crimes, are held accountable.

The EU will support the collection and analysis of data on IHL violations, including attacks against medical personnel and health facilities.

Building on last year’s discussion series on the protection of humanitarian workers and medical personnel in armed conflict, and the European Humanitarian Forum, the EU is also committed to supporting concrete measures to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers.

Addressing the protection risks and needs of civilians affected by conflicts remains central, including conflict-related sexual violence, even more so when armed conflicts are increasingly fought in urban areas, exposing civilians and civilian infrastructures to substantial risks.
Mr President,

Children remain disproportionately affected by armed conflict, including through an increasing rate of attacks on maternity yards, children’s hospitals and education facilities, and a high level of sexual violence. The EU strongly supports the Children in Armed Conflicts mandate and the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, as shown both in our first-ever European Strategy on the Rights of the Child, and in our policies and funding. The EU call to all Member States to implement Security Council Resolution 2601 to protect schools from attacks and mitigate and avoid the military use of schools, and welcomes the efforts of UN Member States that have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.

We reiterate our commitment to put people at the centre of the humanitarian response. Women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are disproportionally affected by disasters and conflicts.

The EU remains committed, in line with Security Council Resolution 2475, to ensure that persons with disabilities affected by conflicts have access to adapted services and unimpeded humanitarian assistance.

All humanitarian operations need to take into account the needs and capacities of everyone. This includes assistance to women and girls on sexual and reproductive health as well as actions to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence.

Mr President,

Conflict remains the main driver of hunger; compounded with the impact of climate change and economic downturn, including the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. With the latest figures being unprecedented in scale and severity, food insecurity and malnutrition are a grave cause of concern.
The EU and its Member States call for more efforts to alleviate hunger in armed conflict, in line with UNSC resolution 2417, including condemning the use of starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has dramatic global implications. Not only do we see an alarming rise in the number of people suffering from acute food insecurity, but by the end of 2022 millions of people could be pushed into poverty and hunger. 2022 could therefore become the most food-insecure year on record globally. Let us be clear that the root cause of the accelerating spikes in food prices and shortages of fertilizer, which threaten to destabilize fragile societies, remains Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine.

The EU fully support the initiative of the UN Secretary-General to create a Global Crisis Response Group. We call for a strong coordination of the international efforts to address this crisis, such as the Global Alliance for Food Security and the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission.

We also welcome the increased allocations for humanitarian food assistance announced by the main global donors, including the EU and its Member States. We have put forward a comprehensive Global Food Security Response in a Team Europe approach.

Mr. President,

At present, more than 100 million people in the world have been forcibly displaced – a tragic record which is testament to the international community’s collective inability to prevent and resolve conflict. Refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants and stateless persons are among those that also feel the effects of this crisis and risk being left behind.
The EU support to the Secretary-General in his efforts to develop a draft Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, and expects this document to help find ambitious solutions and generate the political will for a more comprehensive response to this global challenge.

Mr President,

The EU remains particularly concerned by the consequences of climate change. We call for humanitarian actors to adapt their response strategies to the realities of climate change. The EU welcomes the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations developed by the IFRC and the ICRC and has signed the Humanitarian Donors’ Declaration on Climate and Environment. Furthermore, we are determined to reduce the environmental footprint of EU funded humanitarian operations.

We have set an ambitious approach to achieve this objective and we hope that others will join us in our efforts.

Mister President,

Humanitarian needs rise to an all-time high while the global donor base remains disturbingly narrow. The world’s top 10 donors currently contribute 80% of humanitarian funding. This is unsustainable in light of budgetary constraints and, more importantly, it falls short of addressing increasing humanitarian needs. We call on more donors to step up their funding and support to the UN-coordinated humanitarian system.

The strategic framework of the EU’s response, centred on respect for IHL and humanitarian principles, safeguarding humanitarian space, including safe, rapid and unimpeded access to people in need, and protection of civilians in situations of conflict and disaster, remains unchanged.
Getting back on track is not impossible. It takes determination to deliver better and work towards greater efficiency and effectiveness of international humanitarian response, including greening of humanitarian assistance. It takes investment in measures to increase preparedness, risk reduction and more anticipatory action, including at local level and in displacement settings. It takes concerted effort and collective action, in the spirit of effective multilateralism and of building back better, and it takes a collaborative and coherent approach along with development partners and communities as well as peace actors – in the spirit of the Humanitarian Development Peace-Nexus.

Only through synergies and robust cooperation can the short and longer-terms needs of vulnerable people be addressed in an efficient and effective manner, and the trend of steadily growing needs can be revised.

The EU and its Member States remain committed and ready to take their share of responsibility. We count on the rest of the international community to stay the course and step up to this common endeavour and on aid organizations to increase cooperation for a truly collective response.

Thank you.