



Written Statement

Kingdom of the Netherlands

**Humanitarian Affairs Segment
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Excellencies,

The COVID-19 crisis has been and remains a stress test for the humanitarian system and teaches us important lessons that we should start building on today.

The pandemic has illustrated the importance of **close coordination on the basis of needs, not mandates**, and reconfirmed the **decisive role of local frontline responders**, not only to deliver aid, but because they are instrumental in rebuilding their own societies in an inclusive manner. National and local institutions and organizations must therefore have adequate resources and capacity to act quickly.

We have witnessed the close **links between the human condition and environmental degradation, including climate change**. We have seen that **flexible funding in sufficient quantities allows for swift assistance**, pre-empting even deeper and more costly crises. And we have discovered the **potential of new technologies, information and data** to anticipate new crises and deliver aid, but also the risks they hold for privacy and misinformation and disinformation.

And we have learned the importance of **tending to the mental and psychosocial needs** of all, as part and parcel of humanitarian support given because psychological distress not only harms individuals, but communities as well, which has negative consequences for the long-term reconstruction of societies. Access to psychosocial support, sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, and income generation is also lifesaving and essential for the resilience and dignity of people in crises.

Excellencies,

Having learned all these lessons and more, it is **time to build forward better** and avoid falling back into conventional patterns of fragmentation. We have the opportunity for a new course for international humanitarian action. We owe it to the growing number of people who are affected by ever more complex crises and disruptive and disturbing trends, including the shadow epidemic of gender-based violence, increased protection challenges, rising displacement, escalating food insecurity, the resurgent threat of multiple famines, and the destructive compounding of man-made conflict and natural disasters.

Plotting this course should be founded on **open, critical and strategic reflection and discussions** among donors, UN agencies, the Red Cross Red Crescent movement, international, national and local actors and NGOs, to look beyond the delivery of aid and focus attention on **addressing the root causes of humanitarian crises**.

In addition, there is a need to recommit to respect for **international humanitarian law**, the centrality of protection, and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We need to reflect on the system and present **people-centred operating models** based on performance and accountability, joint and inclusive planning, programming and cooperation, localisation and the working relationships between humanitarian organisations and donors.

Excellencies,

The number of people in need has increased by 40% in 2021 and the number is still growing as a result of the socio-economic effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, existing and new conflicts, and climate change. And because the humanitarian needs are growing faster than the available resources, the humanitarian system is working overtime.



But no matter how hard the system works, we won't get far by just cleaning up wreckage at the bottom of the river. It is crucial that we also work upstream on **tackling root causes** and on **action that anticipates crises**. That is why **humanitarian, development, climate, and peace actors need to engage collectively**. We need to see humanitarian action in a broader context, by breaking out of our silos and strengthening complementarity, coordination and collaboration.

Excellencies,

Humanitarian **innovation is an imperative**. New digital technologies make it possible to **better collect, analyze and apply data**, ensuring a more informed, timely, and anticipatory response. However, increasing digitalization and the use of data is not without challenges or risks, such as misinformation, the invasion of privacy, and more generally speaking a new digital divide due to insufficient data and lack of connectivity.

Aid in the form of cash is often more effective and cheaper, as people decide for themselves what they need and stimulate local business. **Partnerships with the private sector** help to improve humanitarian aid, and humanitarian impact bonds, blended financing, and risk insurance in the event of natural disasters and biohazards are examples of new developments in the field of financing.

Excellencies,

As a driver of humanitarian crises and ever growing humanitarian needs, **climate change needs our full and collective attention**, by bringing relief and development cooperation closer. This includes anticipating climate-related crises and investing in prevention and resilience of at-risk populations and areas.

The humanitarian system must undertake a collective effort to **reduce its environmental and ecological footprint** by critically reviewing supply chains, capitalizing on the new virtual ways of work and on local production of humanitarian supplies. Concurrently, our emergency response must be designed in a way that creates positive space for development actors to build a society that respects nature and the environment, and is **adapted to the reality of climate change**. International humanitarian law must serve to guide our nature and environmental protection efforts in crisis situations.

Excellencies,

In war, crisis, and conflict, **the position of women and girls can become severely compromised**, as well as the position of men and boys, people with a disability, LGBT individuals, and the elderly. Many women and girls are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Aid organizations should therefore differentiate in the aid and protection they provide to at-risk populations, and **actively contribute to the full, equal and effective participation of women and girls in all aspects of humanitarian action**. This also entails transparent accountability by humanitarian organizations to the affected populations, as well as donors.

In closing, Excellencies,

The COVID-19 pandemic can only really be brought to an end with a sufficiently high vaccination coverage worldwide, including people in humanitarian settings. This requires a high and efficient degree of **international cooperation, coordination, and solidarity**. Governments have to take their responsibility to include at-risk populations, such as refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, displaced people, stateless persons and minorities, in national vaccination programs.

As a collective burden-sharing mechanism, **COVAX ought to be funded and equipped** to supply the vaccines needed, including through the 'humanitarian buffer'. And while we focus on curtailing the pandemic, let us not forget the vaccination campaigns against preventable diseases, the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, and overall health care needs, including sexual and reproductive health care and rights.

Thank you.