



Swiss Declaration

ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

11 June 2020

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19 is more than an unprecedented health crisis: it is also a protection crisis and has an escalating socio-economic impact worldwide. It further aggravated the already high levels of humanitarian needs and challenges faced by populations and the governments in the most fragile contexts. Achieved development results are threatened and further development improvements severely hampered.

Switzerland is particularly concerned about the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable. It is a test for the impartiality of the humanitarian response. In light of the current pandemic one point is clear: the impact of Covid-19 is particularly harsh on the displaced populations. Often cramped in overcrowded camps with insufficient wash facilities, this population face a higher risk to contract COVID-19. Challenges such as closed schools and discontinuation of school meals, limited access to health facilities and no possibility for social distancing add to their vulnerability. Furthermore, the socio-economic aftermath of the pandemic renders the livelihoods of displaced populations even more precarious. As a result, they are at risk to be forced to move again—either to urban centers or neighboring countries.

To fight this pandemic and its consequences, the needs and rights of displaced populations must play a central role in our response—a point that is also emphasized in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan. An all-inclusive public health and socio-economic response will not only help us fight the virus, it will also help us restart our economies and stay on track to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

Switzerland believes that the current situation can only be overcome in solidarity and with joint-action. Switzerland calls for swift and effectively coordinated action by the UN system, in line with the priorities outlined in the revised version of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, highlighting the crucial role of local actors in the response, including their access to funding.

Furthermore, analysis spanning beyond the silos of development cooperation, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding is needed. Such joint mechanisms, as well as the management of different funding instruments at the intersection of peace, development and humanitarian action, requires strong coordination. We need a more thorough understanding on the pathways through which peacebuilding, development, humanitarian, human rights and security actors can jointly contribute to peace and

sustainable development. These actors should be encouraged to go beyond mere attention to “conflict sensitivity” in their respective areas of intervention.

As we have seen in the last few months, new technologies can help to curb the spread of COVID-19. Similarly, new technologies increase the scale, reach, and effectiveness of humanitarian action. Switzerland supports the responsible deployment of new technologies, such as certain secure technologies to trace COVID-19 infections or facial recognition algorithms for a more efficient search for missing persons.

However, new technologies also come with potential risks for affected people that must be carefully controlled in line with the specific purpose and scope of humanitarian activities. The crucial question is: How can states and humanitarian organizations join forces to maximize the benefits of new technologies while meeting the highest standards and minimizing risks for affected people? A central element of the answer is the protection and responsible use of data, which is a priority of Switzerland. We aim at bringing humanitarian organization, states, civil society, academia and the private sector together to catalyze collective action on data responsibility for better humanitarian outcomes. The trust of affected people in how their personal data is protected is a precondition to fight the COVID-19 pandemic successfully.

Thanks you