

Joint Statement on humanitarian principles

For endorsement by humanitarian NGOs as a common contribution to the Europe and others group WHS consultations

1. Today, the humanitarian sector faces an unprecedented number of protracted and acute humanitarian crises, such as the crisis in Syria, in Central African Republic, in South Sudan or the regional Ebola crisis, compelling humanitarian actors to stretch existing structures and practices to a breaking point. Considering the role the World Humanitarian Summit may play in the future of humanitarian action, it is of utmost importance that the international community uses this opportunity to reaffirm the shared value of humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.
2. The humanitarian principles emerged from International Humanitarian Law and are based on a common understanding that humanitarian action is driven by a sense of humanity, a willingness to relieve human suffering, regardless of culture, origins or religion. They are encompassed within the core of key humanitarian references, such as the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief or the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.
3. NGOs are operating in exceptionally volatile and insecure environments where political agendas are interfering with the delivery of humanitarian aid, causing increased threats to the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers and assets, and in some situations hamper impartial access of affected population to relief operations. For example, the growing numbers of counter-terrorism laws and measures adopted by States and inter-governmental organizations are restricting humanitarian actor's ability to develop partnerships, run projects in complex environments, and are delaying program implementation. The involvement of some donor states in stabilization operations in many contexts where humanitarian aid is needed, are increasingly blurring lines between political, military and humanitarian objectives, thus reducing humanitarian NGOs abilities to deliver aid. Therefore, due respect of the principles implies that governmental and institutional funding must remain detached from political or other agendas.
4. While affected states keep the primary responsibility to organize and deliver humanitarian support, they also have the fundamental duty to facilitate the work of other actors in situations when international solidarity is requested to answer the needs. Relief operations should not be considered as a challenge to State sovereignty nor the humanitarian imperative be undermined by making national sovereignty an excuse.
5. We concur that re-shaping aid is urgent with new actors and new donors playing bigger roles. Humanitarian aid must remain based on the needs as assessed by humanitarian actors and donors should abstain from using aid as a crisis management tool.
6. Consequently humanitarian NGOs, concerned about the threats posed on these principles, take the opportunity of the World Humanitarian Summit to strongly reassert their commitment to the humanitarian principles, as being critical in guaranteeing people in need

safe access to humanitarian aid. The humanitarian principles must be fully supported and adequately implemented by states and all organizations, and systematically feed all policies and practices on humanitarian aid.

As dozens of humanitarian NGOs humanitarian NGOs involved in crises around the world today, we strongly call upon Humanitarian actors, Donors, States and all parties involved in conflicts, to:

- Re-affirm their commitment to respect and to promote the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, towards any stakeholders involved in humanitarian crises, and re-affirm the value of the humanitarian imperative;
- Review and design all humanitarian policies in compliance with the humanitarian principles and enhance existing commitments for good donor practices such as the GHD principles;
- Reaffirm and protect the fundamental right for affected populations to access humanitarian aid;
- Allow and support full unimpeded access to all people in need of assistance and promote the safety, protection and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel.

We request that these recommendations be fully part of the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit.