

## EU-Switzerland co-chairs

### High Level Meeting 13 December 2019 Geneva, Switzerland Co-chairs' summary

The GHD co-chairs, European Union/DG ECHO and Switzerland hosted the third High-Level Meeting (HLM) on the theme of **promoting and ensuring respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL)** on 13 December 2019 in Geneva. The meeting was co-chaired by Monique Pariat, Director General, European Commission's Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), and Ambassador Manuel Bessler, Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid.

The meeting featured a keynote speech by **Peter Maurer, President of the ICRC**, followed by a lively exchange of views with GHD members. This offered a good opportunity to link the GHD discussions with the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which took place during the same week. The exchange of views highlighted the importance to consider IHL from a broader perspective, given its intersection with other policies and legislative frameworks as well as to take into account States' multiple roles and responsibilities (as opposed to limiting reflections to the role as "donors"). This called for greater **policy coherence**, continued **in-reach** within administrations, as well as addressing certain **dilemmas**, i.e. trying to ease tensions between different policies / approaches within administrations (e.g. reconciling counter-terrorism measures and humanitarian aid). **Positive examples** of donors' engagement with parties to conflict existed and had contributed to enhancing behaviours, hence the importance to keep up this engagement. The debate highlighted the need to invest more in collecting **evidence** on how IHL is applied and on IHL violations. This would help establish the trust that IHL respect and disrespect is accurately reflected. Reference was also made to the need to further investigate the impact of **climate change** on conflict and humanitarian needs. The debate also highlighted the importance of **data**, e.g. to track and deal with IHL violations, while underlining the challenges of ensuring an appropriate use of data to ensure digital dignity and people's safety. Finally, ensuring greater **effectiveness** and **accountability** to affected populations called for a more **people-centred** approach, which would ultimately also contribute to restoring **trust** in humanitarian action and addressing growing needs more effectively.

Building on previous exchanges in the GHD context, notably focused on identifying good practices of donors' engagement on IHL, and in particular looking at concrete field illustrations (Northeast Nigeria, Ukraine and South Sudan), the HLM highlighted the added value of **collective action** (notably **joined-up advocacy** which had proved to be more effective than action by individual donors or States), as an effective way to push IHL advocacy forward. To this end, **GHD may usefully offer a platform to develop joint approaches**. Reference was also made to the **Call for Humanitarian Action on IHL**, launched in the UN Security Council context as well as the resolution "**Bringing IHL home: A road map for better national implementation of international humanitarian law**" adopted by the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The HLM also featured an exchange of views with the IASC on **early warning** signals of significant worsening or new humanitarian crises. GHD members concurred with the usefulness of this type of exchanges as well as with the importance to keep up and strengthen exchanges with the IASC on these subjects.

The HLM also offered an opportunity to share updates on the **other priorities** of the co-chairmanship. In particular:

- **Reconciling counter-terrorism measures and humanitarian aid:** GHD members concurred with the need and importance to keep this item high on donors' agenda and to continue engaging at all levels and settings (capitals, Geneva, New York).
- **Innovative humanitarian financing:** Further to the last HLM in June 2019, donors' discussions would continue, notably through a webinar in early 2020.
- **Impact of UNDS reform roll-out on humanitarian response in the field:** GHD co-chairs debriefed about the first high-level engagement with IASC Principals on 5 December, which offered an opportunity for a preliminary exchange of views on this priority. GHD members welcomed engagement with the IASC. The HLM also confirmed the proposed approach to carry out a field-focused assessment of the preliminary impact of the UNDS reform rollout from a humanitarian perspective, with a view to informing subsequent discussions in the run-up to the next HLM.