



**High Level Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland
Monday 19 June 2017**

Co-Chairs' Summary

Australia and Germany co-chaired the annual High Level Meeting (HLM) of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative on 19 June in Geneva. Senior representatives from the 42 members participated in the day-long event, which was moderated by Ms Heba Aly, Director of IRIN News. Three panels composed of external interlocutors reflected on progress and ongoing challenges in implementing key World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) reforms related to humanitarian financing; protecting humanitarian principles while working with partners outside the humanitarian system; and strengthening impact at the field level.

The co-chairs noted that this year's GHD HLM was being held at a critical time for the humanitarian community, one year after the WHS launched an ambitious reform agenda. The GHD HLM offered an opportunity for humanitarian donors to come together and take stock of progress achieved since the summit. The GHD HLM aimed to: facilitate strategic dialogue on progress in core areas of WHS reform; share examples of emerging good practice post-WHS; and promote continued donor commitment to implement WHS reforms.

Session One: *Reviewing humanitarian Financing: How to achieve and accelerate impact*

Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Muller, said the last year had seen numerous multi-dimensional crises that had tested the ability of the international community to respond effectively. Reforms implemented since Istanbul had gone some way to meet these challenges but they had been outpaced by the scale and complexity of need. GHD donors had acknowledged their role in improving the impact of humanitarian assistance and their efforts were needed now more than ever. Expanding the donor base – especially among growing economies like Brazil, China and Russia – and shrinking humanitarian needs – at the core of the New Way of Working – would also be critical. Better performance by the UN was also essential. UN Secretary-General Guterres had launched reforms to reduce bureaucracy, increase impact and reduce competition, and UN agencies were implementing Grand Bargain commitments aimed at increasing efficiency. Nonetheless, even with these reforms, lack of adequate funding would continue to constrain responses.

In the following panel discussion, Mahmoud Mohieldin (Senior Vice President for Agenda 2030, UN Relations and Partnerships, World Bank) said the World Bank was in the process of fundamentally transforming its engagement in contexts affected by

fragility, conflict and violence. It could no longer focus only on risk-reduction activities to prevent crises or post-conflict reconstruction – there was a need for the World Bank to engage in countries that were currently experiencing crises. The Bank had established strong partnerships with humanitarian actors, including its joint programming with UNHCR in refugee-hosting states and its recent funding for activities implemented by ICRC, FAO and the UN in crisis-affected countries. Sean Lowrie (Director, Start Network Consortium and Chief Executive, Start Network Company) focused on accelerating response and boosting predictability. (He acknowledged that Start would not increase the available resource base.) Start had developed the NGO-led “Drought Financing Facility”, which was designed to respond early to prevent droughts from developing into famines. The facility, a parametric insurance-based mechanism to pre-position donor funding, would release resources when certain criteria were met. This provided more predictable, needs-based disbursement of funds for early, preventive action.

At the conclusion of the panel, there was consensus that a strategic dialogue between the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the GHD should be initiated.

Session Two : *Working with partners outside the Humanitarian System: Principles, Complementarity and Humanitarian Space*

Panellists Rachel Scott (Head: Conflict, Fragility and Resilience, OECD DAC) and Patrick Youssef (Deputy Regional Director for Africa, ICRC) addressed the issue of protecting humanitarian principles and humanitarian space while partnering with non-humanitarian actors. The OECD DAC was supporting implementation of the New Way of Working in Sudan. The focus was on ensuring the right funding at the right time for the right needs, and this required working across humanitarian and development mechanisms. Some sectors were particularly well placed to pursue this type of collaboration, including social protection, nutrition and durable solutions for the displaced. In Sudan, beneficiaries of WFP cash assistance were later transitioned to receive local zakat payments. A critical issue was when humanitarian financing should end and whether this needed to be conditional on the initiation of development funding. Scott noted that the World Bank, though its IDA 18 concessional funding, would soon be the largest funder in many crisis contexts and this would have implications for humanitarians. Scott also called for context-specific application of the humanitarian principles and suggested that overly large planning and programming exercises would be either under-funded or too complex to be implemented. In the Pacific, it made sense to pass cash assistance through the government after a disaster – while not neutral, it was effective and built local capacity. The lack of “neutrality” would be acceptable in the absence of conflict.

ICRC drew on its work in Iraq as an example of the complexity of, and opportunities for, working with partners outside the humanitarian system. The cumulative impact of war since 1978 meant that ICRC was providing immediate response to urgent humanitarian needs while also addressing longer-term, systemic needs such as for water and sanitation services. ICRC sought to connect with non-humanitarians in addressing these needs but there were limitations to its partnerships. It had, for example, declined to become a member of the Stabilization Task Force given its lack of neutrality, but this did not prevent it from actively coordinating with that unit. ICRC stressed the unique value-add of principled humanitarian action and the

importance of consistently applying humanitarian principles over time in order to preserve access to those most in need.

Participants acknowledged the primacy of humanitarian principles as well as the need to operate in context-specific ways and to leverage the comparative advantage of non-humanitarian partners to reduce needs.

Session Three: *The Impact of World Humanitarian Summit Commitments: Views and Local Solutions from the Field*

Nick van Praag (Director, Ground Truth Solutions) presented the outcomes of surveys completed in Afghanistan, Haiti and Lebanon on perceptions of aid effectiveness. In each context, aid workers had more positive assessments of aid impact than aid recipients, with the latter reporting low levels of participation in shaping humanitarian assistance and low levels of satisfaction. The data suggested, however, that participation is a key driver to quality delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Panos Moutzias (Director, IASC Peer to Peer Support Team) reflected on 48 peer missions undertaken pre- and post-Istanbul. One year after the summit, reforms were “a mixed bag”, with some progress but a clear need to accelerate the roll-out of WHS commitments at the field level. Progress was evident in relation to cash, multi-year programming and localization. Nonetheless, many key reforms had not been addressed and collective action at country level was hampered by inter-agency competition. Leadership on protection and related issues remained a key gap.

Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie (UN Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator for Ethiopia) highlighted the “huge gap” between the global dialogue and what is happening in the field. The field was being studied as opposed to being engaged and this needed to change in order to find solutions. The low level of tolerance for failure in the humanitarian system was impeding innovation. The New Way of Working was “wicked hard” and required a higher level of risk tolerance. Resident Coordinators / Humanitarian Coordinators were best placed to drive collaboration but there was currently no accountability for these leaders in relation to WHS reforms. The approach adopted to addressing malnutrition in Ethiopia – where development funding was being applied in an urgent manner on development activities that also had humanitarian impact – showed that working toward collective goals was possible and had significant impact.

Key Messages

The GHD HLM agreed the following key messages:

The GHD’s comparative advantage is to:

- Be a platform to expand donor engagement in support of principled humanitarian action, including amongst growing economies and emerging donors
- Facilitate sharing of lessons and emerging good practice on implementing WHS reforms amongst donors
- Communicate reform priorities to the field level, and encourage our humanitarian partners to do the same
- Incentivize change through our funding choices, while being realistic about the time needed for genuine change

- Incentivize more direct engagement with, and accountability to, beneficiaries amongst our humanitarian partners
- Support increased risk tolerance, innovation and learning from these experiences

In our work with non-humanitarian partners, we will:

- Encourage collaboration and mutual learning about our respective strengths and limitations, invest in each other's "literacy"
- Refrain from overly large planning and programming; keep activities to manageable and pragmatic dimensions
- Acknowledge that different parties, while operating according to their own mandates, need to respect the primacy of the humanitarian principles to achieve collective outcomes in conflict-related contexts. Awareness of this is key to successful partnerships
- Establish new partnerships using existing mechanisms, rather than creating new ones
- Accelerate use of new financing models to ensure the most appropriate, context-specific response to the respective needs, whether this be development, humanitarian or private sector financing

In order to translate WHS commitments into action, we will:

- Encourage the IASC to develop practical guidance, and to promote dialogue, on the roll-out of key WHS reforms at country level to complement action at HQ levels

Key Action Items

- Initiate, with OCHA, a strategic level dialogue between the IASC and GHD
- Use the GHD platform also at country or regional level, where appropriate, to foster exchange of information and best practises as well as inform about key reform initiatives
- Review the structure of GHD workstreams in order to deepen synergies between them