

## The Future of Humanitarian Affairs:

‘Towards greater inclusiveness, coordination, interoperability and effectiveness’

### National statement by Ireland

Mr Chairperson

This is a very appropriate and timely debate as we reach the mid point of 2014. This has already proven to be another difficult and challenging year on the humanitarian front. The tragic situation in Syria continues to deteriorate and its repercussions can be felt throughout the region, now most dramatically in recent developments in Iraq. The international community continues to grapple with the protracted and complex humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Somalia and Yemen just to highlight the most pressing in terms of scale. USG Amos has recently reminded us that this year the UN has asked for a record US\$16.9 billion, the highest amount ever requested in a single year. As of today, only 30 per cent of that funding, or \$5.2 billion has been received. Given the scale of the funding needed, the ever increasing gap between the needs throughout the world and the resources available to meet those needs, it is vital that the money that is available is spent to maximum effect and reaches those in most need without delay.

We need to continue to strengthen the humanitarian response system, in particular with regard to working more closely with our development colleagues to ensure that the causes, as well as effects, of fragility are addressed. Unfortunately, the international community largely operates on a model that is reactive and relies on humanitarian agencies to pick up the pieces of failed development or lack of development and respond to crises rather than managing risk and underlying causes.

As we mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, much has been written about how the international community failed to take adequate notice of the underlying fragility and growing ethnic tensions in that country in the years leading up to the terrible events of 1994. So too today, even before the current crises erupted, the Central African Republic and South Sudan were two of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, facing a myriad of problems exacerbated by inter-communal tensions.

These crisis situations are the outcome of years and indeed decades of endemic poverty, under-development, weak democratic institutions and neglect by the international community. We must work harder at developing resilience and moving more quickly to deal effectively with challenges before they are able to develop into full blown crisis.

In the context of today's discussion I want to raise an issue to which Ireland attaches great importance and which we feel demonstrates the need in future humanitarian action, to make real progress on the objectives we have set ourselves today, that of **protection and gender based violence**. Ireland has long prioritised the protection of women and girls in emergencies through dedicated policy, programming and advocacy efforts. Ireland affirms that the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls is in itself a life-saving action which needs to be an essential part of every humanitarian operation.

As a result of our learning from bitter experience we are now more aware than ever that violence against women and girls is not just perpetrated by combatants but also by civilians. It is aggravated in all countries affected by wars and also natural disasters, drawing a link between the occurrence of sexual violence and significant uprooting of a society and the crumbling of social norms. Despite this awareness, there is still a long way to go to ensure that every humanitarian response addresses gender, protection and in particular sexual- and gender-based violence issues.

Ireland is honoured to be hosting a side event here on Wednesday on the impact of gender equality programming on humanitarian outcomes, given our deep commitment to gender equality, and our recognition of its central role in ensuring and informing humanitarian effectiveness.

We must recognise that the needs of women, men, boys and girls are distinctive and different in emergency contexts and that programming must be designed and implemented to meet their needs and address their particular vulnerabilities appropriately. We must prioritise the need to adopt a gender-lens in all humanitarian programming in order to instil greater inclusiveness, coordination, interoperability and effectiveness. We need meaningful, concrete and targeted action.

According to recent research Ireland's spending on sexual and gender based violence as a percentage of development assistance is the highest of any donor. However, even as the highest we are only devoting 2.7% of our budget so we must all work to increase our targeted funding for initiatives in this area and Ireland is ready to continue to take a lead in this regard.

Finally I would like to close by renewing Ireland 's strong support for the ongoing efforts at UN level under the leadership of USG Valerie Amos, to continue to strengthen and reform the overall international humanitarian relief effort through the Transformative Agenda.

Thank you

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