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General Guidelines on Operational Priorities for Humanitarian Aid in 2013

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INTRODUCTION

The European Commission, principally through its Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) takes the lead in formulating EU humanitarian aid policy and for managing humanitarian aid to the victims of conflicts or disasters, both natural and man-made, in non-EU countries. The mandate of the European Commission in this area is to save and preserve life, to reduce or prevent suffering and to safeguard the integrity and dignity of people affected by humanitarian crises by providing relief and protection. The Commission also helps to facilitate coordination with and among EU Member States on humanitarian assistance. The overall priority is to ensure that the aid is managed in the most effective and efficient way possible so that the help Europe delivers to people in need has the maximum effect, whilst respecting the principles of international law and the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity, non-discrimination and independence.

The Commission is also responsible for the management of the civil protection instrument which covers interventions in Member States, as well as in non-EU countries. The two instruments, humanitarian aid and civil protection, are linked and under the responsibility of the same Commission department and Commissioner.

The present document drawn up under Article 16.1 of the Council Regulation No 1257/96 covers the operations for the year ahead, involving both tools with an emphasis on humanitarian aid. Civil protection activities are described in the annual work programme for actions to be financed in 2013 pursuant to Council Decision No 2007/162/EC.

1. GENERAL CONTEXT AND OUTLOOK FOR 2013

In 2012, the **global humanitarian context** remained challenging. While the number of people affected by humanitarian crises went down in 2011-2012 and there were a smaller number of natural disasters and conflicts registered world-wide, the increasing global vulnerabilities and the vast economic damage caused by disasters remained a major source of concern.

The forecast for 2013 is that humanitarian needs will not diminish. A number of factors contribute to this **negative outlook**, including the complexity of conflict situations, the increasing disregard of international humanitarian and refugee law and the multiplication of actors appearing on the humanitarian aid scene. The combined impact of continuous demographic pressure and urbanisation, climate change, access and competition for resources, high and volatile food and energy prices, security threats and poor governance contribute to exacerbate vulnerabilities and to further increase humanitarian needs. The effects of the global financial crisis further aggravate the challenge by limiting resources available for humanitarian ends.

In this context, the humanitarian community needs to do more with less by increasing the **effectiveness, efficiency and quality of aid**. The Commission will continue placing particular emphasis on **preparedness and resilience building**, which reduce the need for response actions, as well as reinforcing **coordination** internationally, including through engaging 'non-traditional' donors in response to crises. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (**LRRD**) and the transition from humanitarian to other policy instruments will also remain high on the list of priorities. The Commission will continue supporting the strengthening of the **overall international humanitarian system**, and by encouraging other actors to step-up their part in humanitarian preparedness and response.

As in previous years, the Commission will focus on responding to the most urgent needs of people in sudden onset, protracted and forgotten crises. The five largest programmes will cover regions in Africa facing persistent humanitarian needs (Sudan/South Sudan, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa), the increasingly violent civil war in Syria and a highly complex but far less visible crisis in Asia (Pakistan). Overall, the Commission will continue supporting relief and resilience work in around 80 countries.

2. POLICY PRIORITIES

In 2013 the Commission will increase focus on **aid effectiveness, results-orientation and impact**. The development of clear guidance on thematic and cross-cutting issues such as **WASH (Water, sanitation and hygiene), gender, nutrition, DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction)** and others, as well as targeted dissemination, training strategies and monitoring of implementation will help us and our partners to get the best value for money. It will also help ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable crisis-affected population are addressed efficiently and effectively. In this context, the further development and roll-out of policies on specific sectoral and thematic issues that are considered crucial for the Commission's humanitarian interventions will remain a priority. Thereby, the anchorage of policy development in operational experience and best practice will continue to be primordial. Furthermore, concrete efforts will be undertaken to guide and foster the implementation of the Commission's Resilience Communication¹ and the linkage between humanitarian and development actions.

As in previous years, translating the commitments of the **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** into practical actions will remain high on the Commission's agenda. Particular emphasis will be given to addressing the recommendations from the Mid-Term Review of the Action Plan. In this vein, an independent and comprehensive evaluation of the impact achieved by the Consensus in terms *inter alia* of policy development and operations will be launched. The evaluation will cover actions of both Member States and the Commission during the period 2007-2012. The findings of the evaluation together with the results of the stakeholder consultation launched in 2012 will contribute to the Commission's effort to further enhance the effectiveness and impact of the Union's humanitarian assistance.

In the international arena, the Commission will continue to support the UN-led efforts to strengthen the humanitarian system through the '**Transformative Agenda**'. These efforts set out to improve the accountability and performance of the system. Coordination and leadership are crucial at a time of severe budget constraints and an ever-more challenging humanitarian landscape. The Commission also supports the continued work towards developing a framework for common needs assessments, which are critical to bringing about a shared understanding of humanitarian needs.

Given the increasingly important role of **non-DAC donors** in providing humanitarian assistance regionally and internationally through growing financial allocations and expanding activities, the Commission will strive to intensify cooperation with a number of them, in particular with Arab donors and ASEAN.

Security and defence policy actors are sometimes deployed in the same theatres where humanitarian actors are active and often seek involvement in the provision of humanitarian aid or in indirect assistance to the humanitarian community. The Commission, through **civil-**

¹ COM (2012)586, dated 03.10.2012

military coordination, seeks to ensure that this interaction is not to the detriment of principled humanitarian aid. Coordination will continue to be carried out at strategic (e.g. exchanges in the framework of the Annual MCDA Consultative Group) and operational (in the framework of actual crises) levels.

In 2013, the Commission will pursue work for the finalisation of the revised **EU civil protection legislation**² proposed by the Commission in December 2011. Developing the European Emergency Response Capacity and strengthening the coordination of both civil protection assistance and humanitarian aid through the establishment of the Emergency Response Centre will feature high in the Commission's agenda.

Pursuing and finalising the **legislative framework for the EU Aid Volunteers**³, as proposed by the Commission in September 2012 and building on the pilot projects and the preparatory actions implemented since 2011 will be carried out throughout 2013.

The Commission's **communication strategy** will focus on the policy priorities in humanitarian aid and civil protection as outlined above, and on the EU's operational response to meeting the needs of people facing humanitarian crises. The broad objective of the strategy is to boost awareness, understanding and support for the EU's role and actions among the EU citizens, to promote policy priorities within the EU and globally, and to support advocacy for the humanitarian principles and actions including among the donor community, international organisations and other partners.

3. OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

3.1. Priorities reflected in the budget allocation

3.1.1. General principles

In line with the Treaty, the Humanitarian Aid Regulation and the Consensus, the Commission is committed to providing relief and protection to populations affected by natural or man-made disasters solely on the basis of need.

The process leading to the allocations per individual country or region is divided into different steps.

- Firstly, the Commission carries out at central level a global evaluation, which has two dimensions: (i) the Global Needs Assessment (GNA), which categorises almost 140 developing countries on the basis of the existence of a recent crisis (man-made or natural disaster) and the degree of vulnerability of the country's population; (ii) and the Forgotten Crisis Assessment (FCA), which identifies crises that have been overlooked or neglected by the international humanitarian community and/or the global media and which need special attention.
- Secondly, given the importance of food assistance/nutrition (which is the Commission's single largest aid sector), a specific food insecurity needs assessment is carried out in the countries/regions with food assistance/ nutrition interventions. The specific needs-based analysis is reinforced with reports from field missions, nutrition and food

² Decision COM (2011)934, final adopted on 20.12.2011

³ Decision COM (2012)514, adopted on 19.09.2012

indicators, an assessment of the potential funding from other donors and the possible capacity and access limitations faced by implementing partners. The sectoral analysis is validated by and dovetailed with the Global Needs Assessment established by the Commission.

- Thirdly, an evaluation of needs of the specific country/region is conducted by the Commission field experts in coordination with the respective geographical units of the Commission. This analysis provides a first-hand account of crisis areas and gives an insight into the nature and the severity of needs. The Commission field experts conduct such assessments for every crisis in close cooperation with the Commission's implementing partners.
- This process results in provisional allocations for each country/region, which are further examined in the light of other factors, one of the most relevant being the amount allocated for humanitarian assistance in the EU budget for the following year. The mismatch between the available budget and the estimated needs usually leads to a substantial downsizing of the preliminary allocations.
- However the budget is not the only factor that intervenes in the fine-tuning phase of the allocation process. Other key elements are the access to beneficiaries and the security aspects. Moreover, essential factors are constituted by the operational capacities of partners on the ground, which include the capacity to efficiently absorb funds already allocated to the country and the presence of the other donors, which may lead to changes in the priorities (in terms of geographical coverage, sectors, etc) not to duplicate efforts and to ensure the best coverage of the needs.
- As a final step, a comparative analysis of proposed budget allocations is carried out in order to ensure consistency and balance of allocations across countries and regions, taking due account of the Commissions' operational priorities.

The Commission is within the first among the donor community to establish and share detailed assessments and budgetary allocations for the countries/crises in which it intervenes for the year ahead. The Commission also seeks to engage actively in dialogue throughout the year with other donors, both at HQ and in the field, on funding intentions in different crises, not least in the context of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative.

3.1.2. Global needs Assessment (GNA)

The process of collecting and calculating the data needed for the GNA/FCA is outsourced to the Joint Research Centre (DG JRC). The ranking is produced by compiling a range of internationally available indicators covering development, social as well as climate and conflict-related trends into a database. The indicators used mainly come from the World Bank, the UN organisations, and Research institutes. In 2012, JRC developed a dedicated web application for the creation, management and publication of the composite indicators (including interactive maps).

The Global Needs Assessment categorises 140 developing countries (Low income countries as defined by the World Bank) on the basis of:

- the existence of a recent crisis (caused by conflict, natural disaster, or presence of a large number of refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs)), and
- the degree of vulnerability of the country's population.

The combination of **crisis and vulnerability indices allows the identification of the high priority areas.**

Using the GNA methodology, the Commission identified 68 countries or territories currently experiencing at least one humanitarian crisis, increasing from 52 and 49 in previous years.

Out of these, 15 countries are either "extremely" or "very vulnerable", and have at the same time a crisis index of 3. They are: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Liberia, Mali, Myanmar, Pakistan, Republic of Congo, Russian Federation (Chechnya), Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Yemen.

A visual representation of the GNA results is to be found in the first Annex to this document.

3.1.3. Forgotten crisis Assessment (FCA)

The FCA attempts to identify crises that have been overlooked or neglected by the international humanitarian community and/ or the global media and which need special attention from the Commission. The forgotten crises often concern minorities, or specific groups of people within a country. The assessment from the Commission country desks and field experts serves as the main guiding feature.

The 2011-2012 FCA assessment concluded on the existence of 9 forgotten crises situations among which 8 were already identified as forgotten in 2011:

- The Rohingya refugees and the Chittagong Hill Tracts crisis in **Bangladesh**;
- The Rohingya crisis and inter-ethnic conflict in **Myanmar** (Burma);
- The populations affected by the internal armed conflict in **Colombia**;
- The conflict in the north of **Yemen** as well as the refugees crisis;
- The Sahrawi refugees in **Algeria**;
- The internal armed conflict in the **Central African Republic**;
- The conflict-IDPs crisis in Northern **Pakistan**;
- The crisis in **India**: Naxalite affected regions, North-East regions and conflict in Kashmir;
- The post-conflict return process in **Sri Lanka**.

Many of the forgotten crises are becoming chronic. They have been identified as a forgotten crisis for several years now and for most of them, there is no solution in sight.

At this stage, 15% of the planned geographical humanitarian and food aid budget allocation is being earmarked for these forgotten crises.

3.1.4. Food Insecurity Needs Assessment (FINAT)

The Food Insecurity Needs Assessment Template exercise (FINAT) is an in-depth analysis that allows the identification of countries and crises where the budget allocations for food assistance and nutrition may require adjustment (increase, decrease) based on identified and forecasted needs.

The FINAT exercise is based on two major elements, i.e. a situation analysis score, combining the measurement of the severity and magnitude of the crisis, and a composite

indicator of the Commission's comparative advantage. The detailed analysis bases itself on food assistance/nutrition key indicators and risk factors (e.g. food availability, food access, livelihood, nutrition and health data, information on food price developments), as well as the absorption capacity of partners on the ground. Funding sources available from other donors are systematically taken into account and the analysis is complemented by information and field reports from country/regional experts.

The results of the analysis for the food assistance/nutrition sector are factored into the overall allocations proposed per country/region so as to ensure coherence and be proportionate to the current level of response.

The analysis for 2013 covering 36 countries/crises indicates that, in comparison to 2012, some will have reduced or substantially reduced allocations reflecting the prognosis captured by the FINAT which includes the availability of potential funding from other donors, limitations in absorption capacity of implementing partners or phasing out of food assistance based on reduced need.

The FINAT resource allocation model thus suggests, for example, that:

In the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), food assistance can be clearly reduced so as to reflect the decreased needs identified.

In Sri Lanka, food assistance can be reduced so as to meet only food and nutrition needs in identified pockets of food and nutrition insecurity.

The rebalancing of proposed assistance based on need points to 16 countries/crises requiring a modest or substantial increase in allocation. The principal countries/crises include:

Pakistan, where the overall deteriorating situation requires important food assistance and nutrition interventions;

Ethiopia, where food and nutrition needs keep increasing.

3.1.5. Other considerations

The Commission aims to ensure availability of funding for as many crisis situations as possible and that there is a swift, efficient, comprehensive response. Whilst funding allocations are based on needs assessment and co-ordination with other donors, certain factors that are outside our control may reduce the volume of aid that can effectively be delivered to the beneficiaries. Such factors are in particular two: the presence and the handling capacity of the implementing organisations in the field and access restrictions.

Access restrictions faced by implementing partners are most prevalent in areas of conflict, a marked absence in the rule of law or due to political and administrative impediments (e.g. Somalia or Sudan).

The Commission's funding under this operational strategy involves constant re-appraisal of humanitarian crises as they evolve. If the need for humanitarian assistance diminishes, often due to the start of rehabilitation and development activities, the Commission winds down its humanitarian work. The Commission puts a high priority on linking humanitarian aid and development activities.

The exit strategy for all areas of humanitarian intervention is reviewed twice a year, first, when funds are initially allocated, then, during a mid-term review. The latter is an opportunity to review priorities for remaining funds in accordance with evolving needs.

3.1.6. Budget planning

The general budget earmarked on the budget lines for humanitarian aid, food aid and disaster preparedness (DIPECHO) is €856 million. The graph below shows the percentage of the planned budget for each region and the related supporting instrument.

As in previous years, **sub-Saharan Africa** will be the region in which the bulk of the budget will be programmed (52%) given the consequences of natural disasters and recurrent complex emergencies in the region.

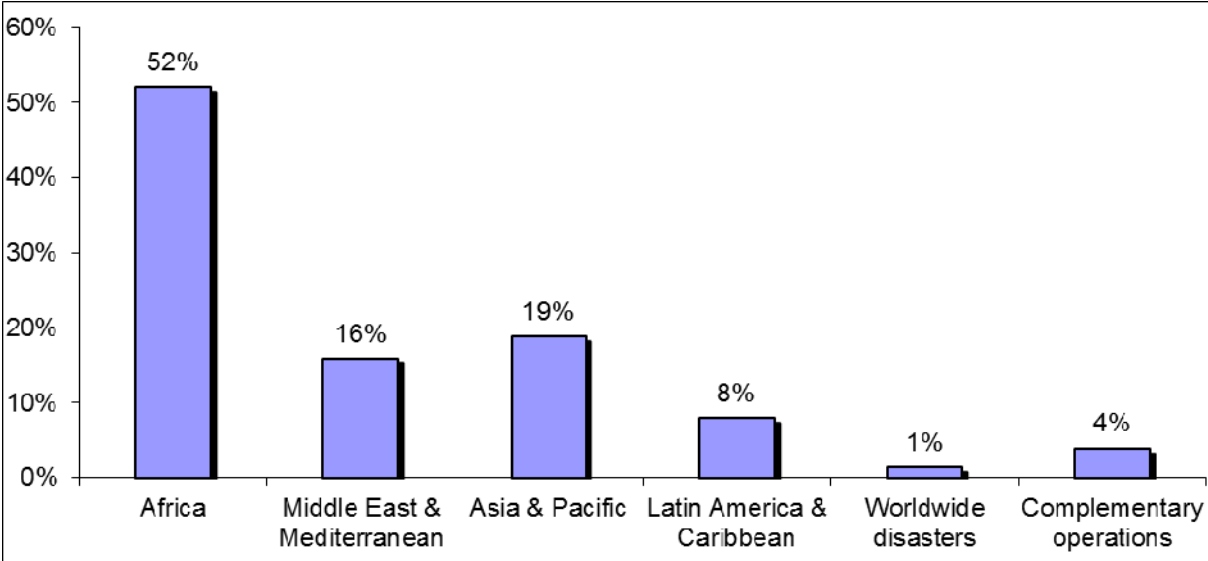


Figure 1 — Budget planned in 2013 by region
 (1) includes technical assistance, enhanced response capacity, worldwide geographical allocations

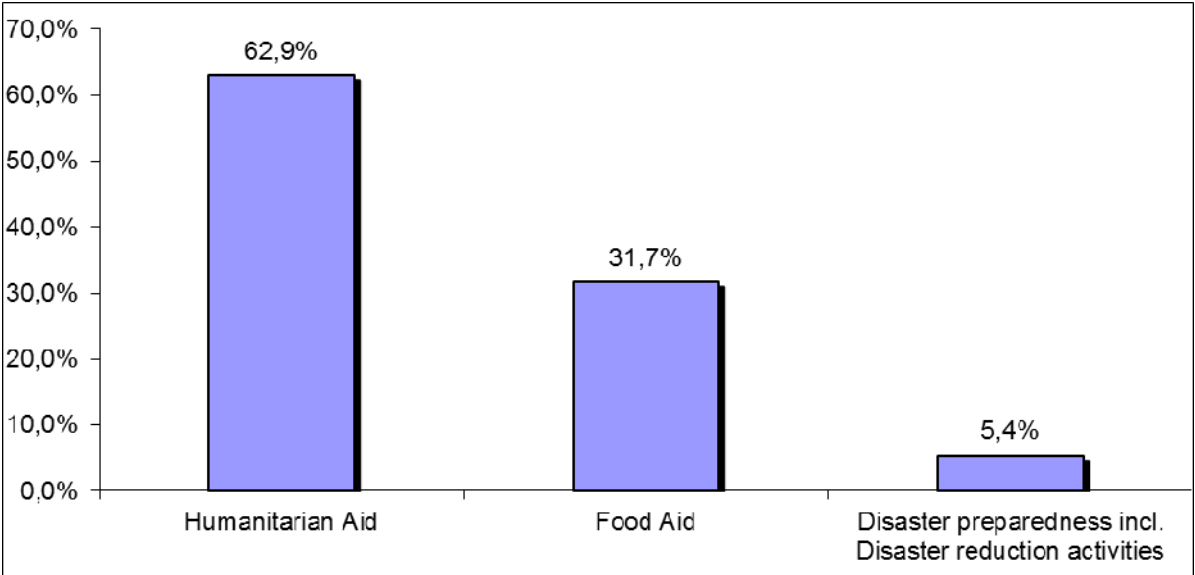


Figure 2 — Budget planned in 2013 by budget line

The chart below shows the response planned for complex emergencies and natural disasters based on budget per region.

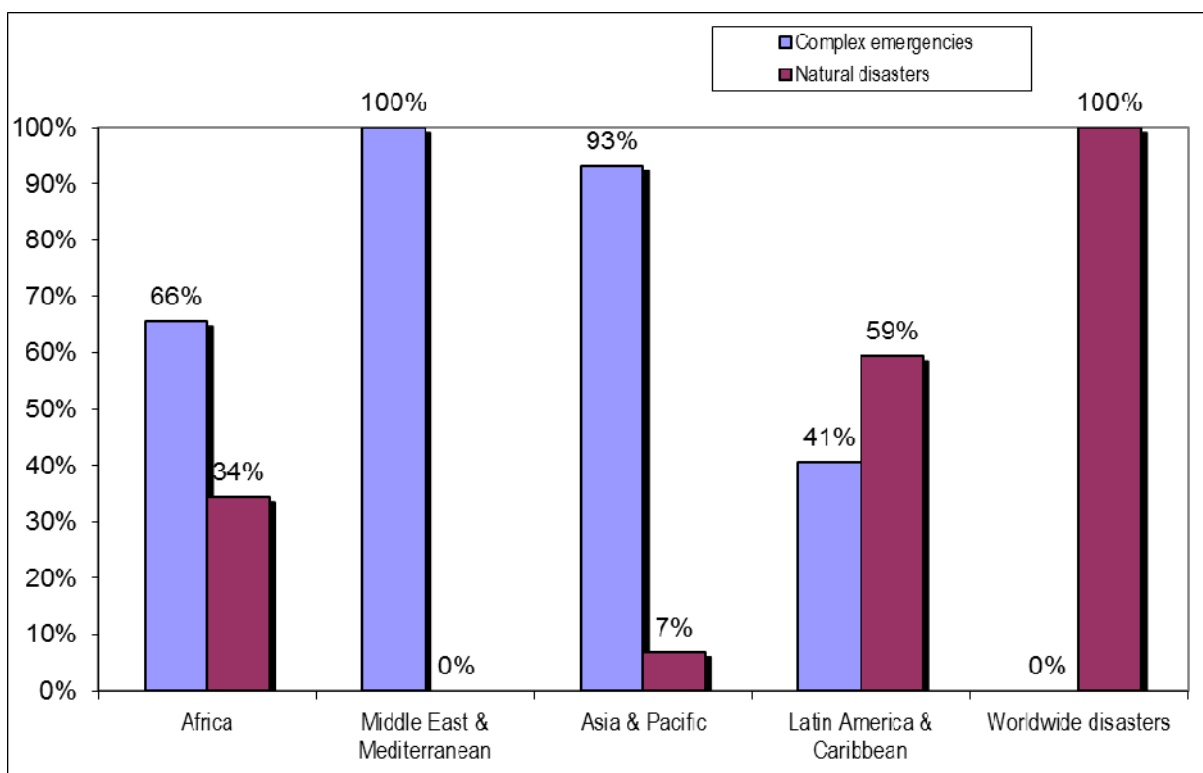


Figure 3 — Budget planning: response to complex emergencies and natural disasters

3.2. Africa

3.2.1. Sudan, South Sudan and Chad

Sudan and South Sudan

The independence of South Sudan in July 2011 led to fresh outbreaks of conflict and a significant worsening of the overall humanitarian situation in both countries. Issues of border demarcation, citizenship rights and sharing of oil revenues remain unresolved, and over six million people are in need of emergency assistance. Humanitarian operations in both countries face severe challenges due to access limitations, insecurity, logistical and administrative impediments and poor local capacity. Advocacy for opening up humanitarian space and for respect of humanitarian principles will therefore continue to play a key role in the Commission's strategy.

In 2013, funding for Sudan (Darfur, the Transitional Areas and the East – if access allows) will focus on life-saving and life-preserving operations for displaced people, refugees, returnees, host communities and nomads, and will consist of emergency items (food, non-food and shelter), access to water, primary healthcare and nutrition. In South Sudan priority will be given to preparedness for rapid response to new emergencies and enhancing communities' resilience, primarily in areas subject to conflict and other emergencies and in places with high levels of malnutrition or large IDP and returnee populations. A multi-sector approach will be adopted, integrating health, nutrition, water and sanitation and hygiene promotion, food aid and food security, and protection. Common humanitarian services such as air transport, assessments, security training and coordination will continue to be funded. All opportunities to coordinate and integrate development and humanitarian operations will be pursued, although the South Sudanese government's decision to stop oil production has negatively impacted on development prospects.

Chad

In the Sahel belt in 2013 and in Chad in particular, the Commission will adjust its programming in relation to the level of the 2012 harvest and of market prices. The focus will be on treating malnutrition and helping populations recover from the cumulative effects of the 2009/10 food and nutrition crisis, the 2010 floods and the 2011 Libya crisis, with a focus on LRRD and disaster preparedness and prevention. Multi-sectoral aid (protection, food security, nutrition, health, water and sanitation) will be provided to 1.8 million people. If new external shocks lead to a knock-on crisis, support for emergency nutrition and food security operations (including general food distributions and blanket feeding operations) will remain a priority. If the situation stabilises the Commission will focus on high-impact early recovery operations to recapitalise affected households and strengthen coping mechanisms.

In the East, the Commission will continue to provide essential life-saving services and livelihood recovery support for vulnerable refugees, returnees and host populations, encouraging self-sufficiency as much as possible. For returnees the focus will be on LRRD, with monitoring of residual assistance and protection needs, as development funds are now available to support them. The extension of the Sahel Plan to the eastern regions of the Sahel belt will continue, so as to incorporate former IDPs. Given the volatility of the situation and the potentially destabilising regional dynamics, advocacy and support for logistics and transport services, to secure humanitarian access for partners, will continue to be important, along with the promotion of humanitarian coordination, and emergency and epidemics preparedness and response.

3.2.2. Central Africa

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Great Lakes and DRC refugees

The crisis in DRC remains first and foremost a protection crisis, with civilians plagued by violence (including sexual and gender-based violence), generalised insecurity and impunity, on the side of both rebel groups and FARDC (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo). Livelihoods are jeopardised by population displacement, insecurity prevents access to land, and vulnerable populations do not have adequate water, sanitation and medical care. In the areas not affected by conflict, malnutrition rates are often above emergency thresholds as a result of economic difficulties and instability. The whole country is regularly subject to epidemics, due to the poor health and sanitation conditions.

In 2013 the Commission will continue to address urgent needs arising from population displacements in conflict zones and life-threatening situations in non-conflict areas. Protection will be at the core of its activities, whether mainstreamed into food security, livelihoods and basic social services interventions, or through specific protection activities. The Commission will continue to support emergency preparedness to ensure response capacity in a volatile context. Activities will be closely coordinated with development cooperation instruments. Advocacy for the defence of humanitarian space and respect of humanitarian principles and IHL will be maintained, along with support for humanitarian coordination and logistics, and the provision of the ECHO Flight service and helicopters for access to very remote areas.

The Commission will continue to provide camp maintenance assistance for the 38,000 Congolese living in three camps in Burundi and for the 64,000 Congolese and Burundians in Nyarugusu, the remaining camp in Tanzania. Emergency assistance will be given in response to sudden, unexpected population movements. Food, healthcare and relief items will be provided, and support will be given to repatriation and reintegration processes (especially the Burundians from Tanzania), while seeking to ensure that refugees are given proper protection and are treated with dignity in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

Central African Republic (CAR)

In a context of chronic poverty, structural collapse, ineffective government and absence of basic services, populations in CAR are pushed into humanitarian emergency by the frequent conflicts that break out, often in an unpredictable fashion. Despite the signature of peace agreements with the most important rebel groups, the situation remains fragile because of lack of progress on the reinsertion and reintegration of ex-combatants, insufficient state presence and the appearance of new unidentified rebel groups in the North and North-East. CAR has more than 65,000 IDPs, 50,000 returnees (both IDPs and refugees) and almost 18,000 refugees from Sudan and DRC. Meanwhile, 150,000 Central Africans are refugees in Cameroon and Chad. 1.9 million people are in need of adequate water and sanitation (out of a total population of four million) because of the poor level of structural development. The South East continues to be a target for attacks by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) and populations are grouped around urban centres, with limited access to land for cultivation. Donor interest is low, there are not enough partners working in the really difficult areas, and delivery of humanitarian aid is hampered by insecurity and logistical and infrastructure problems, thus fully justifying CAR's status as a forgotten crisis.

The Commission will continue to address the needs of refugees, IDPs, host populations and other highly vulnerable groups with multi-sectoral humanitarian aid, maintaining the flexibility to respond as and when new crisis situations arises – always provided that there are competent partners present in the affected areas and that access is possible. Humanitarian partners will be encouraged to set up operations in the most critical (and usually the most difficult) areas, and humanitarian logistics and coordination services will be supported.

ECHO Flight

Because of insecurity and logistical issues (e.g. all DRC commercial air companies are on the EU blacklist), the Commission operates four fixed-wing aircraft in DRC (and neighbouring areas) and Kenya. ECHO Flight provides an efficient and reliable service to enable safe and accountable implementation of humanitarian projects in remote regions that would otherwise be inaccessible and unreached. In view of the demands on ECHO Flight in Kenya, linked to the Horn of Africa famine, and in DRC, where the security situation dramatically deteriorated throughout the East, flight levels were maintained at a substantial level in 2012, and are likely to continue so in 2013. As ECHO Flight aircraft cannot reach areas without a landing strip, in 2012, the Commission began funding a helicopter service in Eastern DRC which is complementary to ECHO Flight. The service will continue to be closely coordinated with other humanitarian air services and will avoid duplication and competition with safe, viable commercial airlines.

3.2.3. Horn of Africa

While the overall situation in the Horn of Africa has improved when compared to the 2011 crisis, 9.1 million people still need humanitarian assistance in the region. The Commission will sustain its activities to avoid people sliding back into crisis. The assistance will put special emphasis on strengthening resilience of vulnerable people to drought. The refugee crisis in the region is both acute and protracted with 1.2 million refugees, originating mainly from Somalia. In the framework of the 2013 strategy, the Commission will be actively involved in the search for longer-term solutions for protracted refugees in coordination with development partners.

Somalia

Somalia still represents one of the most serious humanitarian crises in the world. Famine conditions ended in early 2012, but 2.12 million people are still considered in crisis and in

need of sustained humanitarian assistance to prevent the most vulnerable falling back into destitution and further emergency. Drought, food insecurity and conflict still have the effect of aggravating the humanitarian situation, leading, among other things, to further displacement and the exhaustion of coping mechanisms. Restricted access and high insecurity are major challenges for implementing aid agencies. The Commission will continue to focus on emergency response through life-saving activities in the South-Central regions of Somalia and in urban areas of Puntland and Somaliland. Protection and support to livelihoods as well as the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction initiatives will be considered. This will contribute to strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable communities.

Ethiopia

In the second half of 2012, 3.76 million people remained in need of humanitarian assistance. The influx of refugees into Ethiopia from Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia is increasing and is not expected to reduce soon. Movements of internally displaced people, rapid-onset natural disasters and epidemic outbreaks are also recurrent.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable populations, preparing them better for the next drought cycle and increasing their coping capacities. The Commission will provide assistance through a multi-sectoral approach, with nutrition as the entry point, complemented by interventions in health, water, sanitation, hygiene, food security and disaster risk reduction. The rapid response capacity, to be deployed following a major displacement, rapid onset natural disaster or epidemic outbreak, will be reinforced. For the refugee caseloads, the Commission will provide life-saving assistance and advocate for a longer-term approach and more durable solutions. Opportunities for LRRD will continue to be pursued in close collaboration with the EU Delegation and other major donors.

Kenya

In the arid lands, the Commission will support nutrition and livelihood activities. The creation of "safety nets" will be encouraged throughout the region while disaster preparedness will continue to be a strong component. Opportunities for LRRD will be pursued in close collaboration with the EU Delegation, especially in the sectors of nutrition and livelihood. Disaster risk reduction, health, nutrition and hygiene education will continue to be mainstreamed. The Commission will pay particular attention to the humanitarian consequences of the political situation in view of the forthcoming elections and the implementation of the new constitution (devolution process).

In the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, more than 575,000 people, mainly from Somalia, live in extremely precarious conditions. The Commission will continue to address their most pressing needs, including protection.

Djibouti

The Commission will continue supporting food assistance and food security in the country. Food security activities in rural areas, aiming to build people's resilience to drought, will be taken over by the EU Delegation. Refugees in the Ali Addeh and Hol Hol camps will be supported through food assistance and WASH activities. Vulnerable urban people may also be supported, depending on the specific needs.

Uganda

Besides the on-going support disaster risk reduction activities in the Karamoja Region mainly focusing on livelihoods and early warning systems, the Commission will support the

response to the influx of Congolese refugees in south-western Uganda, mainly through nutrition and protection activities.

3.2.4. Southern Africa and Indian Ocean

Zimbabwe

The situation in Zimbabwe continues to move from the emergency to recovery phase. However, while political and economic stability is not entirely consolidated, it is important to maintain a minimum humanitarian capacity to monitor the situation and respond in case of emergency. In 2013, the Commission will further strengthen LRRD strategies while continuing its support to the most vulnerable groups affected by acute food insecurity, epidemic outbreaks or new displacements.

3.2.5. West Africa

The Sahel

Looking at the prospects for 2013, while the rains so far give hope for an adequate 2012/2013 agricultural season, the scale and frequency of the extra shocks that have affected the most vulnerable households in recent years (three major crises in a decade) mean that resilience is extremely low. People will continue to require humanitarian assistance both to recover from the 2012 crisis and to build their coping mechanisms. The poorest households in the Sahel already spend more than 70% of their daily income on food. Rising food prices on the world market risk driving many of the most vulnerable into full crisis again.

In 2013, the Commission will therefore continue to focus on achieving a sustainable reduction of malnutrition-related mortality among children under five using the successful two pillar strategic approach developed by the Commission in the Sahel in recent years. First, it will pilot innovative and replicable actions to prevent, mitigate and treat malnutrition, especially in under-fives and pregnant and lactating women. Second, it will support advocacy and measures to improve the knowledge base, strengthen early warning and promote the take up of food and nutrition security, including more support to the health sector in a permanent and sustainable way in Sahel government policy planning and the priority areas of action for development partners.

Apart from direct action to help those most in need, the Commission will continue to encourage high-level attention on the urgent need to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable populations in the Sahel, through the AGIR Sahel initiative launched by the EU in June 2012.

Mali

The Mali situation remains complex and confused. The country is, *de facto*, cut in two, with a National Unity Government established in August 2012 in the south, and the north under the control of a number of Islamic militia groups. The humanitarian situation in northern Mali is very volatile. Fighting and attempts by extremist Islamist groups to impose strict Charia rule have resulted in the displacement of more than 430,000 people either as IDPs or as refugees in neighbouring countries such as Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Niger. Population displacement is continuing. This influx of displaced people and refugees is adding an additional constraint for host families already seriously weakened by the 2012 food crisis, the decline in agricultural production, rising prices and declining purchasing power, and disruption to the functioning of basic services as a result of the fighting.

In 2013, the Commission will continue activities undertaken under the 2012 Emergency Decision and the modified Sahel Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) for 2012. These will concentrate on:

1) Continued support for the vulnerable population in North Mali directly affected by the conflict, through increased access to basic services: distribution of shelter, food and nutrition assistance and non-food items, access to drinking water and improved sanitation and support for basic health services. The Commission will participate in the coordination of humanitarian activities and in improving humanitarian access. Continued support for humanitarian flights (UNHAS) is essential both in view of the distances to be covered and for security reasons.

2) Continued support to the Mali refugee population in neighbouring countries especially for care and maintenance activities in existing refugee camps. These activities will also benefit the host communities. Protection aspects will also be prioritised. Contingency measures will be taken to face the potential big increase in the number of refugees. Efforts to reduce the chronic malnutrition rates in Mali will be supported under the separate 2013 Sahel strategy.

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire is in a fragile post-crisis phase with delays in the provision of essential services between the phasing out of humanitarian aid and the phasing in of long-term development assistance. Continued limited access to basic public services, land, food and livelihoods resulting from the post electoral crisis is hindering the re-installation of 550,000 returnees as well as the return and re-installation in their home villages of 80,000 refugees and 180,000 internally displaced peoples. It is also negatively impacting on the reconciliation process.

In 2013, the Commission will continue to support and encourage the transition from humanitarian to development assistance and the full resumption of government services. In this context, special emphasis will be given to assisting the implementation of the "Partnership for the Transition" LRRD initiative. This initiative has gained considerable momentum since its launch in April 2012 and has the clear support of the Côte d'Ivoire government at the highest levels as well as of all the main development donors.

3.3. Middle East and Mediterranean countries

3.3.1. Middle East

Occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)

Palestinian refugees and local populations within oPt continue to suffer from the occupation policy. The demolitions and forced evictions, the movement restrictions affecting access to land and to basic services, and violence against Palestinians continue to create humanitarian needs. This protracted crisis undermines the development of the region and has a serious impact on the conditions of the Palestinians. Due to the blockade, people in Gaza face high unemployment, and their situation in terms of food security, health and water/sanitation remains extremely complex. In the West Bank, Palestinians are confronted with more demolitions and forced evictions, settler violence and restricted access to basic services. LRRD is difficult to implement in this particular context.

Relief assistance alone is insufficient to protect communities from IHL violations. Therefore in 2013, the Commission will prioritise sectoral humanitarian operations that streamline protection and advocacy. Specifically, the Commission will intervene in the sectors of protection, food assistance, water/sanitation, coordination, advocacy and health/psychosocial care. These actions will focus on communities most severely hit by the closure policy. A continuation of the close coordination with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and Commission services including DG DEVCO will ensure programmatic complementarity between relief and long-term operations.

Iraq

The withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in December 2011 and the escalation of violence in Syria have shaped the evolution of the situation for Iraqis inside Iraq and Iraqi refugees in the neighbouring countries (Jordan, Lebanon and Syria). The security situation now falls under the full responsibility of the Iraq government, and has not improved. Insecurity remains wide-spread and large pockets of vulnerable civilians are still living in an intense, violence-prone environment, notably in the Disputed Areas. The process of resettling Iraqi refugees to third countries has been all but halted, aggravating the dependence of Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries on medium-term assistance. The civil unrest in Syria has prompted Syrians to flee to Iraq (more than 22,000 as of 12 September) and Iraqi refugees to return home (more than 26,000 as of 13 August). The humanitarian needs of the Syrian refugees in Iraq will be addressed by the Syrian HIP. The Commission's priority will continue to be protection with basic health and food assistance (including cash and voucher components) for the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees.

Syria

Since March 2011, the violent crackdown on protests in Syria and the ensuing protection crisis have progressively developed into a widespread non-international armed conflict, with severe humanitarian consequences in both Syria and neighbouring countries. Populations in the worst-affected cities have been badly hit, with many forced to leave their homes and seek protection in more peaceful neighbourhoods and regions or across the borders.

Inside Syria it is estimated that 3 million people are affected by the crisis of whom 2.5 million need assistance including 1.5 million who are displaced. The insecurity and volatile situation on the ground prevent the delivery of aid at times of intense fighting. Access is challenging and accurate needs assessments are limited. The range of humanitarian actors seems to be increasing as the UN and the Syrian government have recently agreed on the possibility to extend authorisation to work in Syria to 90 local NGOs. However, the translation of this process into real action on the ground remains to be seen.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries since April 2012 has increased sevenfold. By 14 September, almost 250,000 refugees were being assisted. New camps are being built in Jordan (2) and Turkey (4) to accommodate the new arrivals. Despite all these efforts, the capacities of governments and the international community to respond to the needs are under strain.

The Commission will continue to adapt its strategy to the ever-changing situation in Syria and the affected neighbouring countries. A stronger Commission presence will be established. The Commission will continue focusing on the most pressing needs: emergency health assistance, shelter (winterisation), protection, food assistance, water and sanitation as well as psychosocial support to the most affected people in Syria and neighbouring countries.

Yemen

The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate during 2012. Despite the implementation of the political transition process, with the election of the new President, the day-to-day living conditions of the Yemeni population have not improved.

The country's fragmentation continued in 2012: There is still some division in the armed forces between those loyal to the ousted President and supporters of President Hadi. In the north, control of the Houthis is contested by opposing tribal leaders and Salafist Muslims.

The Commission, through multi-sector assistance, will continue to support children affected by acute malnutrition, food-insecure people, IDPs and refugees.

3.3.2. Mediterranean countries

Sahrawi refugees

For the 37th year in a row, Sahrawi refugees are stranded in the Algerian desert with few prospects for self-reliance. Pending a political solution to this forgotten crisis, the refugees are still almost entirely dependent on external humanitarian assistance. The basic needs that will continue to be addressed are the provision of dry and fresh food, water in sufficient quantity and of adequate quality, health and nutrition, shelter, and basic medicines. In such a protracted context, the potential for LRRD is very low. The Commission will further encourage inter-sector coordination, optimal complementarity of donor funding, local capacity-building, and a permanent logistics and supply chain to ensure continuous delivery of aid to the most vulnerable Sahrawi refugees throughout the year.

3.4. Asia, Caucasus and the Pacific

3.4.1. Central Asia and Caucasus

Both the Caucasus and Central Asia are vulnerable to natural disasters. Disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction are therefore an important component of the Commission intervention in the region. Implementation of actions launched under the 2012 DIPECHO Action Plan for the South Caucasus and Central Asia will be completed in 2013.

Vulnerabilities also continue to exist in the region due to poverty and harsh climatic conditions. Following difficult weather conditions in Tajikistan, with serious effects on the livelihoods of rural communities, a Humanitarian Implementation Plan of €2 million was adopted in April 2012. The assistance aimed at ensuring food security for the most vulnerable, to help them bridge the gap until the next harvest season, and to build their resilience. The situation will be closely followed in 2013.

In the Caucasus and Central Asia, the possibility to intervene through small-scale interventions and the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) will be maintained. If necessary, additional measures may be taken to respond to any new humanitarian crisis.

3.4.2. South Asia

3.4.2.1. South West Asia

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a complex and protracted crisis. The country is affected by an on-going internal armed conflict pitting national and international forces against armed opposition groups (Taliban). The epicentre of the fighting, which used to be in the south and east of the country, is spreading to other regions, particularly the north. This is the 34th year of conflict in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is also prone to natural disasters. It has limited means and mechanisms in place to mitigate risks and respond to emergencies. The level of resilience to shocks at community level is low and has been eroded over the past few years, particularly in remote regions. The country is regularly affected by floods, epidemics, earthquakes, landslides, periods of extreme temperature, sandstorms and droughts. On average, more than eight significant natural disasters occur every year.

There is widespread and significant displacement caused by the conflict and natural disasters. 5.7 million former refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002, leaving 2.7 million Afghans predominantly in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran. Internally Displaced People (IDP) figures are on the rise (413,000 war-induced IDPs in mid-2012). These are

higher figures than in 2011. There is also some displacement due to poor economic conditions.

Pakistan

Humanitarian challenges from both natural and man-made crises continue to confront Pakistan. These humanitarian crises have largely gone unnoticed by the international media in 2012 and therefore turned into forgotten crises. The recovery from devastating floods in 2010 and 2011 is still on-going. The conflict-affected population including 365,000 IDP's, as well as Afghan refugees remaining in Pakistan, continue to require international assistance and protection. In addition, given the frequency of natural disasters over the last decade, some form of significant natural disaster cannot be excluded in the course of 2013.

Bangladesh

To deliver basic life-saving humanitarian aid to the unregistered Rohingya population, the Commission will adopt a comprehensive approach encompassing the treatment of acute malnutrition and the provision of basic health and water services in and around the camps, including the most vulnerable populations living in the surrounding area, to the extent access is granted. Protection activities remain a challenge. In parallel, discussions are ongoing with key stakeholders to find a durable political solution to this protracted crisis.

The 2012 monsoon had a significant humanitarian impact on communities living in South East Bangladesh (Bandarban, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar district). Some of the most vulnerable people affected will require further assistance during 2013, to recover from the destruction caused by flash floods and their impact on livelihoods and shelter. The Commission intends to focus on rehabilitation of shelters and livelihood support that mainstreams DRR. A co-ordinated LRRD approach for the post-emergency situation will be pursued with development actors. In areas where water-logging has had a longer term impact on livelihood and on the nutritional status of the most vulnerable, further support to tackle acute malnutrition will be needed.

India

The focus of activities will be on alleviating emergency needs arising from the prevailing situation in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the protracted crisis in districts of central India affected by the Naxalite insurgency, particularly in the states of Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh, as well as, depending on access and partners' capacity, in the North-eastern states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland. Priority sectors will be livelihood, access to medical services, psychosocial support, and protection. In addition, emergency needs in central India stemming from malnutrition and localised food insecurity will be addressed.

Nepal

Negotiations for a comprehensive solution to the issue of the 48,000 refugees from Bhutan still living in camps are on-going, under the third country resettlement programme initiated in 2007. The Commission will continue to contribute, in co-ordination with the EU Delegation in Kathmandu, by funding food assistance.

Sri Lanka

Humanitarian needs still exist, particularly in the return areas in the north. However, due to security concerns, the Commission was unable to assess these in detail in the second half of 2012. Therefore, no initial allocations are proposed at this stage. The current situation will be reviewed as soon as the conditions allow. There is still scope for LRRD to be continued.

DIPECHO South Asia

South Asia is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world, exposed to a variety of hydro-meteorological and geological hazards. Some of these are transboundary, with hazard events in one country having a direct impact on a neighbouring country. The inadequate management of natural resources and the environment often induces or exacerbates these natural disasters, with a particularly negative impact on the most vulnerable populations. Over the period 2001-2011, it is estimated that in South Asia, 525 natural disasters caused approximately 224,000 deaths, affected more than 641 million people, and displaced more than 17.3 million. The overriding objective of the 7th DIPECHO action plan will be to strengthen the resilience of South Asian rural populations living in areas most affected by natural disasters, and those highly vulnerable to earthquakes, notably in urban settings, by increasing the preparedness and the response capacities of local communities and authorities.

3.4.2.2. South East Asia and Pacific

Burma/Myanmar – Thailand

2012 saw positive developments along the eastern border of Myanmar, where a number of ceasefires were concluded with ethnic groups. This is expected to open up former conflict areas for humanitarian assistance and could pave the way for an eventual voluntary return of refugees from Thailand. In Rakhine State, violence between the Muslim (Rohingyas) and Buddhist Rakhine population in June 2012 affected over 100,000 people, with 64,000 still living in camps outside the main town. The main challenge will be for people to return to their former villages and for humanitarian access to be restored. In Kachin State, the internal conflict continued to displace civilians, and provision of humanitarian aid remained challenging due to access restrictions.

In 2013, the Commission will continue to focus on areas inhabited by ethnic minorities in the regions described above in Myanmar. Apart from the eastern border, Kachin and Rakhine States, Chin may also benefit from food aid during the lean season. Information management and coordination are also priorities. In Thailand, continual assistance to the Burmese refugee camps will be coupled with improved beneficiary targeting and advocacy for durable solutions.

DIPECHO Pacific

While all Pacific Island States have a similar profile in terms of exposure to disaster risk, there is a varying degree of risk and coping capacity. The DIPECHO Action Plan for the Pacific is primarily intended to strengthen resilience and will focus on the most vulnerable local communities in disaster prone areas in these countries and on institutions involved in disaster risk reduction. For Papua New Guinea, an engagement would depend on the availability of implementing partners and the ability to define an exit strategy. The focus on the three priority countries does not exclude support to regional initiatives benefiting other parts of the Pacific.

3.5. Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is one of the world's most disaster prone areas. It is also a region where internal conflicts, such as the one in Colombia with its large forced displacement crisis, coexist with new forms of organised criminal violence that cause very high levels of mortality, forced displacement and acute humanitarian needs. Moreover, the LAC region has the highest rate of inequality worldwide, with macro-economic indicators masking the real socio-economic situation of the majority of the population, rampant urbanisation (80%), the world's highest crime rates, and protracted poverty.

In 2013, the Commission will continue to provide emergency response to natural and man-made disasters, while strengthening local capacity and fostering regional exchanges to promote effective disaster risk reduction. In addition, support will be available under the Small Scale and the Epidemics instruments, available in the region since 2008, allowing for an efficient, effective, and rapid response to different disasters and better preparedness and response to epidemics. Moreover, the drought management initiative, which began in 2011, will continue throughout 2013 in Central and South America as a resilience-boosting exercise benefitting communities in several countries.

Colombia

Despite growing political ambitions and economic growth, Colombia still faces the serious consequences of its internal armed conflict. The total Colombian population of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) has reached more than 4.3 million.

The Colombian government has recently endorsed legislation on reparation for the victims of the conflict and restitution of illegally appropriated land, but the implementation of this legislation is associated with considerable difficulties. It recently confirmed the initiation of peace talks with the main rebel group FARC. In the meantime, 2012 saw the intensification of the conflict in certain areas of Colombia in combination with serious delays in the delivery of government assistance to newly displaced IDPs.

The Commission emergency assistance and protection will continue to be provided to conflict-affected populations who do not receive adequate assistance from the authorities. Assistance to IDPs will focus on recently displaced populations and those rural communities facing restrictions on movement and/or access to basic goods and services. Particular attention will be paid to the most vulnerable groups: women-headed households, children, the elderly, indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. In Ecuador and Venezuela, the Commission will provide humanitarian assistance and protection to Colombians seeking asylum, who have not yet received formal refugee status, as well as to recognised refugees. The limited interest of the international donor community in this forgotten crisis is nowadays aggravated by the global economic crisis.

Central America

Central America is one of the most disaster prone regions in the world in terms of recurrence of hazards, their severity and scope and the significant potential for occurrence of major disasters which cause human and financial losses.

More than four million people have been affected in the past 20 years. At the end of 2012, a transition from the La Niña climate phenomenon to El Niño is likely. Scientific institutions forecast that in 2012-2013, El Niño-related events may aggravate the situation and jeopardise food security.

Geological events and more specifically, earthquakes generate the most significant economic losses (two earthquakes in El Salvador in 2001 affected a total of 1.5 million people). The region is also prone to volcanic eruptions with more than 30 active volcanoes.

The 2012-2013 DIPECHO Action Plan for Central America started in July 2012 and will be implemented until the end of 2013 with the principal objective of reducing the impact of disasters in the Central American region.

The drought management initiative in the "dry corridor" of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador) ends in December 2012 and a second phase is envisaged to start in early 2013, to consolidate drought management practices in the region

that increase resilience and preparedness, and ensure adoption by local actors and national decision-makers.

The organized criminal violence in Central America—particularly in the “northern triangle” of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala— and Mexico, has reached unprecedented levels. It will be vital for the Commission to continue monitoring the situation and further assess the humanitarian consequences, to position itself regarding this phenomenon.

South America

South America is also disaster-prone, exposed to a panoply of natural hazards due to its geography, geology and climate. The "El Niño" and "La Niña" phenomena lead to warming and cooling in the eastern and central Pacific, provoking regular floods and droughts. The Andean region is particularly vulnerable to earthquakes causing significant loss of human life and physical damage, while many volcanoes are active. The vulnerability of the people most at risk of natural disasters continued to increase in recent decades, and climate change has further aggravated the situation. The Commission will continue to monitor the situation closely in South America and provide emergency assistance when required and when national/local capacity is overwhelmed.

Implementation of the Commission support following the severe floods and landslides of March-April 2012 in four countries (Peru, Ecuador, Paraguay and Bolivia) will continue until June 2013. Implementation of the 8th DIPECHO Action Plan for South America will start in April 2013 and will aim to increase the preparedness and resilience of communities and local/national institutions to face natural disasters. The Commission will also continue to identify opportunities for effectively linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) and to promote the integration of disaster risk reduction in response operations.

The second phase of the regional drought management initiative, being implemented in Bolivia, Paraguay and the "dry corridor" of Central America since 2011 in order to strengthen resilience, is envisaged to start in early 2013; it will aim to ensure an appropriate phase-out and handover to development actors through the development and ownership of best practices and tools by institutional actors, development partners and local communities.

Caribbean

In the Caribbean, the Commission will continue to provide emergency assistance when required. Experience has shown that funds are most likely to be requested to respond to the damage caused by hurricanes, tropical storms and floods. The Atlantic storm season officially lasts from June to November, but in recent years has demonstrated a tendency to last longer. The Commission will continue cooperation with other Commission services and donors who support programmes for prevention and disaster risk reduction in the region. Particular attention will be paid to LRRD. In certain vulnerable regions, there is only a limited number of partners, who tend to concentrate on their own linguistic zone, thus often rendering regional cooperation difficult.

The DIPECHO Caribbean Action Plan is expected to start during the three first months of 2013. It will further strengthen communities' resilience and preparedness capacity and foster exchange of experience within the region. The new priorities likely to be included are stock building, safe hospitals and schools, earthquake preparedness and urban disaster preparedness. The Commission will continue to strengthen its support for disaster preparedness while maintaining its capacity to provide a rapid response in emergencies.

Haiti

The Commission's response in 2013 will take into account the remaining and still significant humanitarian needs following the earthquake, with 390,000 people still displaced in camps

and delays in implementing LRRD. The Commission will continue to actively explore links to the extent possible between its humanitarian operations and development actions.

One of the Commission's priorities in 2013 will be to further reduce the number of displaced people in camps, through a process of safe relocation, taking into account an integrated approach in terms of services provided (housing, protection, wash and sanitation, livelihood). Where no relocation solution can be found, the Commission will support camp management and provision of basic service delivery for the most vulnerable camps and displaced populations. The Commission's approach for 2013 complements DG DEVCO's €46.5m neighbourhood reconstruction programme.

On-going efforts will be pursued to integrate the cholera response mechanics into the health system at national and departmental levels, while maintaining a response capacity in case of major outbreaks. To avoid an increase in maternal mortality, the Commission will help bridge some key gaps in the country's emergency obstetrics care strategy, while authorities and development donors ensure the sustainability of essential services. In the nutrition sector, the Commission will support a strengthened advocacy strategy for the integration of the management of acute malnutrition in the health sector, based on lessons learned from past nutrition interventions. The EU programme for the Millennium Development Goals in Haiti (€20m), focusing on food security and nutrition, has been coordinated to enable the Commission to have an exit strategy from the nutrition sector.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) across all sectors with specific targeted actions will be prioritised. Integration of DRR in humanitarian response operations will be further strengthened to foster resilience in communities and institutions. A focus on urban disaster preparedness and capacity building of the National Disaster Management System, in close collaboration with development actors, will be pursued. Stronger links have been developed with other services of the EU in disaster risk reduction which are slowly integrating it in their development programming. The strengthening of advocacy on LRRD as part of the Commission strategy will continue during 2013.

3.6. Worldwide intervention tools

3.6.1. Small Scale response to disasters

Small-scale disasters may affect a relatively limited number of people, but they have a serious negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved. They often occur in remote or isolated areas, and are likely to be "silent disasters" in that they do not feature in global news coverage and thus rarely trigger an international alert, despite the serious humanitarian needs they generate locally. In addition, in the context of larger disasters, even in countries with relatively developed disaster management capacity, there are sometimes gaps in the national response: needs that are not covered that may be related to social inequality, physical isolation, under-reporting of events or inadequate local capacity. A recurrence of even small shocks can push vulnerable populations into a spiral of further vulnerability and destitution. This is true for countries that appear relatively well-off from a macro-economic perspective, but where inequity and vulnerability are concentrated in given geographical areas (rural, remote, urban shanty towns) or social groups (for example, indigenous or ethnic groups). The objective of the Small Scale Response (SSR) tool in 2013 is to provide rapid humanitarian assistance to victims of natural or man-made disasters where a small scale response is adequate to cover unmet needs and enhance preparedness. Actions will also aim to strengthen the capacity of local communities and authorities to respond to emergency situations caused by disasters, and increase resilience by incorporating disaster preparedness to the extent possible.

3.6.2. Epidemics

Epidemics pose great risks to the health, lives and livelihoods of people in developing countries. Communicable diseases that have appeared or reappeared in recent years have demonstrated their epidemic potential and their capacity to significantly exceed national resources and boundaries, causing major, even regional emergencies.

Factors that contribute to the growing high burden of endemic and epidemic-prone diseases include the concurrent existence of complex emergencies due to natural disasters, climate change, and conflict. Such crises result in increased vulnerability to infectious diseases alongside reduced ability of countries to respond to public health risks, especially if existing health systems were already poorly resourced. Vaccination coverage in developing countries is generally low and the risk of transmitting infection is thus increased. To reduce morbidity and mortality in disease outbreaks, early and effective action is required. Preparedness and response capacity are intimately linked, as effective response is only possible with a good degree of preparedness.

3.6.3. Support to the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)

Most small-scale emergencies are responded at local or national level. The Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, supported by International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), are often best placed to provide an immediate response, being rooted in the local community and mobilising community members as volunteers. The Commission will continue to support the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) through earmarked contributions. Funding is provided for relief activities as well as preparedness for imminent disasters, in the context of small-scale emergencies for which an appeal is unlikely to be launched.

3.7. Complementary activities

3.7.1. Enhance Response capacity

Humanitarian needs continue to increase beyond the budgets available⁴, driven principally by the consequences of climate change and population growth. Consequently, the global humanitarian system needs to be strengthened to deliver more cost-effective humanitarian responses, allowing for better and broader humanitarian coverage.

It is for this reason that the Consensus states that: "... *supporting the development of the collective global capacity to respond to humanitarian crises is one of the fundamental tenants of our [EU] approach.*" Also, through the endorsement of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, the Commission agreed to "*allocate funding to strengthen capacities for response.*"⁵ Enhanced Humanitarian Response Capacity funding through this 2013 Decision is in line with the ERC Guidelines⁶ developed by the Commission following extensive consultations with fellow donors, humanitarian partners and other humanitarian actors throughout 2008 and 2009. These Guidelines identify both the overall objective, the main identified 'gaps' in the global humanitarian system, and key criteria on how EU funding should be applied to ensure the maximum impact.

⁴ For natural disasters, an average of 270 million people are reported as affected each year (IFRC 2009 World Disaster report). Projections for climate-related natural disasters alone, thus excluding events such as earthquakes, show this rising to as much as 375 million by 2015 (Oxfam : Right To Survive report).

⁵ GHD principle 18, but also principle 8 on strengthening the capacity of affected countries and local communities and principle 10 to support and promote the central and unique role of the UN.

⁶ See http://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding/grants_contracts/capacity_en.htm

The 2013 decision will seek to respond to the major gaps but while focussing in particular on enhanced global humanitarian architecture. This overall rationale includes the need to strengthen the capacity of the humanitarian system to deliver more efficient and effective forms of assistance, including in the areas of food assistance and nutrition.

Consequently Enhanced Response Capacity funding will strengthen the global humanitarian preparedness and response capacity of humanitarian partners by increasing the effectiveness and reinforcing the capacity of international humanitarian organisations and non-governmental organisations to assess, analyse, prepare and respond to humanitarian crises, including in the food assistance and nutrition sectors.

3.7.2. Policy support

The increasing scale of humanitarian needs requires the most effective use of the limited resources available. The diversity of actors and approaches requires clear guidance regarding the best approaches to be taken in order to meet the needs of the beneficiaries. The need for policy products to improve coherence, quality and efficiency applies both directly to EU funding, as well as more broadly to global approaches to humanitarian funding. This need exists for both sector policy areas (such as WASH, and Health) and horizontal policy areas (such as Gender), as well as overall humanitarian principles (such as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and Civil military coordination. Such broad application requires drawing upon specific expertise from dedicated centres of excellence, and informed best practice in humanitarian aid delivery.

In order to improve the coherence, quality, effectiveness and overall impact of EU funding, the Commission is developing a range of policy products. To ensure the highest quality for these products, the engagement of expertise in the areas concerned is required and reinforced networking between humanitarian NGOs signatories of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the Commission.

3.7.3. Information and communication

Effective communication about the values and impact of humanitarian aid and civil protection is the key to the continuing deployment of relief assistance in saving lives and alleviating suffering. The actions launched relate to public information and awareness actions in accordance with the fifth indent of Article 4 of Council Regulation (EC) N° 1257/96 of 20 June 1996. Such actions are also in conformity with the last indent of point 97 of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

The Consensus envisages communication, on the impact and importance of European humanitarian aid and civil protection, to the European public.

The European Union is one of the most important humanitarian aid and civil protection actors in the world yet the role and the magnitude of the humanitarian work of the EU remains somewhat unrecognised by European citizens. Therefore there is a need to further increase the awareness, understanding and support on the part of EU citizens for humanitarian aid issues and the role which the European Union plays in the field as the EU and its Member States feature among the world's biggest humanitarian aid donors.

Consequently, the broad objective of the Commission's communication work is to boost understanding, in the European Union and globally, of the importance of humanitarian aid and of the concrete contribution made by the European Union as one of the world's leading donors of humanitarian aid.

The approach for humanitarian aid and civil protection aims at enhancing awareness, knowledge, understanding and support for EU humanitarian aid policy and actions among the EU citizens through the partnership between the Commission and humanitarian actors.

The Commission will also step up its web-based approach in order to reach the widest audiences possible. Close cooperation with partners will be pursued with the aim to improve the EU's visibility as the leading humanitarian donor.

Regional information officers in the field are an integral part of the communication approach, as well as the European Commission Representations in the Member States in Brussels, in the Member State capitals and in the field.

3.7.4. Training initiative NOHA

The Network on Humanitarian Action (NOHA) is the first network of 9 universities at European level that **provides education (teaching and research) and training in humanitarian action**. It has maintained a strong relationship with the Commission since its inception in 1993. It will celebrate its 20 anniversary in spring 2013. NOHA produces 175 Masters Graduates each year.

The Commission aims to increasingly shift the focus of the network to the provision of other educational products and to a much more results-oriented approach focusing on added value for the humanitarian aid environment. In a parallel development over the last years, the EU has developed a vision of its humanitarian agenda and priorities which came into focus in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

Member States and the partners of the European Commission agreed that the promotion of training activities should be part of an overall approach to reinforce global aid. Moreover, the Action Plan of the Consensus commits the European Union to the "*reinforcement of EU training provision for humanitarian professionals and other actors linked to the humanitarian response...*" to contribute to an "*improved ... response to humanitarian crises*" and to achieve improved accountability to aid recipients. The Commission is committed to the implementation of those principles which underpin the vision of the European Union.

The Commission's relationship with NOHA was modified to reflect this evolution of the EU humanitarian agenda. Where NOHA was once viewed a source of postgraduate students, the Network is increasingly functioning as an educational platform, "*to further educate the humanitarians of tomorrow and to refresh the humanitarians of today*" and to inform the humanitarian debate and policy formulation in the European Union, in particular in The European Commission.

4. DELIVERY, COORDINATION AND CONTROL OF HUMANITARIAN AID

4.1. Ways and means of delivering aid

Experts in the field

The Commission manages its humanitarian activities from its headquarters in Brussels via a network of more than 40 field offices all over the world. Following the post-tsunami action plan of 2005, the network has been consolidated with multi-sectoral rapid response teams, which enable field experts to be dispatched rapidly in response to new crises to carry out needs assessments and to help coordinate activities in the field. The network has been reinforced in response to the recent increase in the number of large-scale disasters. Cooperation with teams deployed via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism will be further enhanced to maximise complementarities.

Relations with partners

The Commission implements its humanitarian aid mandate by funding projects proposed by around 200 partners. They include European non-governmental organisations, United Nations Agencies, other international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Organisation for Migration, and specialised agencies from Member States.

Having a diverse range of partners is important, as it allows comprehensive coverage of an ever-growing list of needs in different parts of the world and in increasingly complex situations. Grants and contributions are decided on the basis of the best proposals covering the needs of those most vulnerable. Partner organisations make a commitment to highlight the origin of EU aid.

The Commission is also committed to improving the overall quality and coordination of the humanitarian system response. The Commission supports capacity-building for its implementing partners, whether international organisations or NGOs, to enable them to respond quickly and efficiently to emergencies.

The Commission will also continue to make full use of the possibilities offered by the merger of Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid, linking the actors and stakeholders of both constituencies.

4.2. Coordination and exchange of information

Various mechanisms are in place to ensure coordination and exchange of information crisis response and humanitarian aid activities in general

- Member States and the Commission meet regularly in the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA). Exchange of information on overall strategies and on responses to specific crisis situations features regularly in the agendas of COHAFA;
- Situation reports (SITREPS) are shared with Member States. SITREPS contribute to the development of shared assessment and understanding on the situation on the ground and thus contribute to the overall coordination of the EU response;
- Exchanges with partners both at headquarters and at the field take place regularly;
- EDRIS (European Disaster Response Information System) collects data on Commission and Member States' humanitarian aid activities;
- At international level, the Commission continues to participate in well-established *fora* such as the Good Humanitarian Donorship and the OCHA and ICRC Donor Support Groups;
- Regular exchanges of views on the EU's response to crisis take place in the European Parliament (DEVE Committee);

The Commission will engage in discussions with the stakeholders (Member States, humanitarian organisations, etc.) once the Humanitarian Aid Strategy is adopted.

4.3. Monitoring of use of funds

Correct implementation of EU-funded operations is ensured by several layers of checks and monitoring, at internal level and by external actors.

Internal controls

The main aspects of the control strategy developed by the Commission include supervision and monitoring procedures and ex-ante/ex-post controls.

- Strict selection and quality control mechanisms for partners under the Framework Partnership Agreement that the Commission signs with NGOs and international organisations⁷ defining the requirements for financial credentials and expertise of implementing partners;
- Appraisal of project proposals and project monitoring through a network of the Commission field experts (technical assistants) worldwide;
- Regular field visits to projects by geographical desks, auditors and the Commission management;
- Obligation for partners to produce reports after the end of each operation to justify their expenses. A thorough analysis of these reports and checks on eligible expenditure are carried out by operational and financial desk officers at the Commission;
- Regular evaluations are undertaken, focusing on major country operations, partners and thematic issues. The results of these are posted on the Commission's website, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/evaluation/introduction_en.htm
- EU-funded humanitarian aid activities implemented by external parties (partners and contractors) are subject to financial and audit systems;
- DG ECHO has an internal audit capacity. This provides an independent and objective opinion on the quality of the internal control systems and assists the Director General and management in controlling risks and monitoring compliance.

The monitoring mechanisms listed above should not be seen in isolation. Each contributes to providing reasonable assurance on the legality of transactions and their general compliance with relevant rules.

External controls

The Commission's operations and its financial management are further audited by the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors. The mission of the Internal Audit Service is to audit the Commission's internal control systems. The European Court of Auditors audits EU finances. Its observations and recommendations are published in its annual and special reports to the European Parliament and the European Council⁸.

Finally, specialised committees of the Budget Authority exercise control over financial management in European Commission services and organise annual hearings with the Commissioners concerned leading to the approval of Commission's annual accounts.

5. CONCLUSION

The humanitarian community is having to face the combined impact of several trends: natural disasters that over time tend to increase both in number and intensity; the impact of population growth in developing countries on scarce natural resources, while pushing people to live in high risk areas vulnerable to natural disasters; the persistence of many protracted

⁷ Mainly IFRC, ICRC and IOM

⁸ The annual report is published on <http://eca.europa.eu/portal/pls/portal>.

crises, often as a result of lasting unresolved conflicts; and the impact of the economic and financial crisis on the most vulnerable.

As the world's leading humanitarian donor, the EU has a key role to play in tackling the impact of these challenges on the most vulnerable populations. In order to do so, it must ensure that the necessary resources are made available and used in the most efficient way and equip itself with an adequate response capacity. To this end it is important that the Commission preserves its core capacity to deliver and maximises the impact of its efforts by getting humanitarian and disaster preparedness aspects embedded in other policy areas.

Country/Region	Specific Objective 1		Specific Objective 2		Specific Objective 3	Specific Objective 4	Specific Objective 5		TOTAL			
	Man-made crises		Natural Disaster		Small scale / Epidemics	DIPECHO	Transport and Complementary					
	23 02 01 Humanitarian Aid (in EUR)	23 02 02 Food Aid (in EUR)	23 02 01 Humanitarian Aid (in EUR)	23 02 02 Food Aid (in EUR)	23 02 01 Humanitarian Aid (in EUR)	23 02 03 Disaster Preparedness (in EUR)	23 02 01 Humanitarian Aid (in EUR)	23 02 02 Food Aid (in EUR)	23 02 01 Humanitarian Aid (in EUR)	23 02 02 Food Aid (in EUR)	23 02 03 Disaster Preparedness (in EUR)	TOTAL
Africa	166.700.000	54.300.000	20.000.000	93.500.000			10.000.000		196.700.000	147.800.000	0	344.500.000
Middle East and Mediterranean countries	94.000.000	11.000.000							94.000.000	11.000.000	0	105.000.000
Asia and Pacific	70.000.000	31.500.000	0	7.500.000		15.400.000			70.000.000	39.000.000	15.400.000	124.400.000
Latin America and Caribbean	11.000.000	2.000.000	15.000.000	4.000.000		20.519.000			26.000.000	6.000.000	20.519.000	52.519.000
Worldwide					9.000.000		20.800.000	5.200.000	29.800.000	5.200.000	0	35.000.000
Emergency Operational Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	96.051.000	50.187.000	0	146.238.000
TOTAL	341.700.000	98.800.000	35.000.000	105.000.000	9.000.000	35.919.000	30.800.000	5.200.000	512.551.000	259.187.000	35.919.000	807.657.000
TOTAL BY OBJECTIVE	440.500.000		140.000.000		9.000.000	35.919.000	36.000.000		807.657.000			

Country/Region	Allocations for 2013 (in Euro)			
	23.0201 Humanitarian aid	23.0202 Food aid	23.0203 Disaster Preparedness	TOTAL
CENTRAL AFRICA, SUDAN & CHAD	132.700.000	42.300.000		175.000.000
Sudan & South Sudan	50.000.000	30.000.000	0	80.000.000
Chad (East and south)	11.000.000	0	0	11.000.000
Chad (Sahel)	8.000.000	4.000.000	0	12.000.000
Central African Republic	7.000.000	1.000.000	0	8.000.000
Democratic Republic of Congo	46.700.000	7.300.000	0	54.000.000
Echo-Flight	10.000.000	0	0	10.000.000
EAST, WEST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA, INDEAN OCEAN	64.000.000	105.500.000	0	169.500.000
Djibouti	500.000	1.500.000	0	2.000.000
Ethiopia	11.000.000	13.000.000	0	24.000.000
Kenya	10.500.000	10.000.000	0	20.500.000
Somalia	15.000.000	25.000.000	0	40.000.000
Zimbabwe	1.000.000	2.000.000	0	3.000.000
Sahel - Regional - (Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania and Sahel regions of neighbouring countries)	12.000.000	38.000.000	0	50.000.000
West Africa (Mali crisis)	10.000.000	10.000.000	0	20.000.000
West Africa (Ivorian crisis)	4.000.000	6.000.000	0	10.000.000
MEDITERRANEAN & MIDDLE EAST	94.000.000	11.000.000	0	105.000.000
Occupied Palestinian Territory	24.000.000	11.000.000	0	35.000.000
Syrian Crisis	20.000.000	0	0	20.000.000
Iraq Crisis	7.000.000	0	0	7.000.000
Yemen	33.000.000	0	0	33.000.000
Algeria / Tindouf	10.000.000	0	0	10.000.000

Country/Region	Allocations for 2013 (in Euro)			
	23.0201 Humanitarian aid (in €)	23.0202 Food aid (in €)	23.0203 Disaster Preparedness	TOTAL
CENTRAL ASIA & SOUTH WEST ASIA	52.000.000	20.000.000	0	72.000.000
Afghanistan	30.000.000	0	0	30.000.000
Pakistan	22.000.000	20.000.000	0	42.000.000
SOUTH ASIA, SOUTH EAST ASIA & PACIFIC	18.000.000	19.000.000	15.400.000	52.400.000
Bangladesh	2.000.000	9.000.000	0	11.000.000
Burma/Myanmar (Thailand)	12.000.000	7.000.000	0	19.000.000
India	4.000.000	2.000.000	0	6.000.000
Nepal	0	1.000.000	0	1.000.000
South Asia	0	0	12.600.000	12.600.000
Pacific	0	0	2.800.000	2.800.000
LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN	26.000.000	6.000.000	20.519.000	52.519.000
Central & South America	0	0	12.019.000	12.019.000
Colombia	11.000.000	2.000.000	0	13.000.000
Regional - LAC (Drought Initiative)	0	4.000.000	0	4.000.000
Haiti	15.000.000	0	0	15.000.000
Caribbean	0	0	8.500.000	8.500.000
WORLDWIDE	9.000.000	0	0	9.000.000
COMPLEMENTARY OPERATIONS	20.800.000	5.200.000	0	26.000.000
Enhanced Response Capacity	15.800.000	5.200.000	0	21.000.000
Policy Support	2.300.000	0	0	2.300.000
Information and Communication	2.000.000	0	0	2.000.000
NOHA	700.000	0	0	700.000
Emergency Operational Reserve	96.051.000	50.187.000	0	146.238.000
TOTAL	512.551.000	259.187.000	35.919.000	807.657.000

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