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# 2016 WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

## FRENCH NGOs CALL FOR CONCRETE RESULTS AND MAKE COMMITMENTS

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The gathering of the international community set for 23 and 24 May aims to have a mobilising and unifying impact on global humanitarian aid issues. This meeting is an important opportunity to gather political decision-makers, aid actors and institutional partners in order to define priorities together.

The UN Secretary General's report published on 9 February highlights the challenges facing all actors invested in humanitarian aid: there are currently 60 million people considered to be displaced or refugees because their life was threatened by a conflict and by violence; natural disasters caused the death of 53,000 people and the displacement of 74 million victims between 2012 and 2014.

Since we are aware that these challenges can only be tackled collectively, French NGOs are responding to the appeal made by the Secretary General to endorse "**One humanity: Shared responsibility**".

In the perspective of the World Humanitarian Summit, with its stated goal of transforming the humanitarian system, we request that the decisions taken during the Summit are firmly rooted in humanitarian principles. We would also like to remind those present of our expectations of political decision-makers, partners and donors for changes to be effective and significant.

We also promise to those we come to help that the humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality will be at the heart of our endeavour.

# OUR DEMANDS...

## Signatory NGOs call on:

### **1. States and political decision-makers: to assume their responsibility and maintain a response to crises based on the humanitarian principles**

We recognise that States bear the primary responsibility to respond to the needs of their population.

However, we bear witness to the fact that, despite clear and widely accepted provisions on the humanitarian imperative and access to aid for populations in distress, humanitarian action in complex crises is increasingly challenged by certain States or *de facto* authorities, who threaten the safety of humanitarian workers and restrict or hinder access to humanitarian aid for affected populations. We support the initiatives committed to during preparatory discussions at the World Humanitarian Summit, aiming to strengthen the principle of humanity and the dignity of people in humanitarian responses.

In particular, signatories call on States and political decision-makers to:

- Promote the principle of neutrality in all aspects of humanitarian operations. During complex crises, such as armed conflicts or situations of acute civil unrest, States directly involved in the conflict should systematically and voluntarily hand over coordination of the response to actors or mechanisms that are both independent and respectful of this principle. They also have a duty to reaffirm their commitment to allow humanitarian aid to be delivered unhindered, and to ensure the protection of populations and humanitarian workers.
- Pursue ongoing initiatives aiming to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations Security Council in cases of mass atrocities, and in particular calling for a new rule whereby 'Permanent 5' States relinquish their right to veto on issues related to humanitarian response and access in complex crises.
- Reaffirm their full and complete adherence to the provisions of international humanitarian law and seize every opportunity to strengthen it, particularly by adopting a mechanism for reinforcing the protection of humanitarian workers; and work towards the adoption of a political declaration aiming to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

### **2. Countries donating to humanitarian aid: to maintain funding based on the principles for an independent humanitarian action**

Currently, in complex crises, humanitarian principles are too often flouted, the needs of people affected are not met and humanitarian actors are not sufficiently accountable to populations. While humanitarian funding has increased overall, humanitarian needs have far outpaced available resources, leaving huge gaps in the humanitarian response. At the same time, many small-scale crises are unable to generate media or political attention and remain underfunded and overlooked by States and donors.

In complex crisis cases, humanitarian aid can be used by various political or military actors to benefit their own agendas, putting humanitarian actors at risk of being

perceived as biased actors or as supporting various political interests. Recommendations from the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative should be fully implemented by donors in order to provide more predictable, flexible and effective funding in the response to crises.

Signatories call on donor countries to:

- Ensure that, with the aim of maintaining the independence and impartiality of agencies delivering aid on the ground, parties to the conflict are not in a position to entirely or too significantly finance humanitarian appeals related to the crises in which they are taking part, and that instead they direct their financial contribution towards other non-dedicated and rapidly available funds, so as to systematically combine these funds with other sources of finance. The contribution of donors that are at the same time parties to a conflict is respected, but should not hinder the application of humanitarian principles and should not in any way open the door to bilateral or specific conditions that would link humanitarian support with military strategy, in breach of the principle of neutrality.
- Promote and discuss the development of an independent pool fund modelled on the "Start fund"; this would be distinct from the UN, easily accessible by national and international NGOs and managed by a consortium of them.
- In situations of protracted crises, commit to long-term predictable funding in order to ensure that adequate and uninterrupted humanitarian aid is provided and to improve the link between humanitarian and development actors.
- Simplify overly complex funding mechanisms by aligning and harmonising donor procedures in order to help all actors, particularly national NGOs, have access to these funds.
- Increase the share of direct funding from institutional actors to national civil society organisations, by providing more training to these organisations so that they are able to meet the criteria imposed by donors; and include a significant percentage dedicated to indirect costs that will contribute to the funding of their structure.

### **3. Operational partners: to promote local partnerships and an independent coordination for more effective humanitarian action, founded on the principles and adapted to the local context**

Current crises are increasingly complex and result in a myriad of needs and vulnerabilities. They require effective coordination to ensure that aid benefits the most vulnerable people as a priority.

Unfortunately, specific mandates of some UN agencies may disrupt or complicate the coordination of aid, slowing down the humanitarian response rather than facilitating it.

We reaffirm that having a reinforced coordination body, effectively detached from any political or military body, is essential to maintain humanitarian action founded on the principles.

The response to chronic crises has too often involved an increase in emergency aid in such a way that humanitarians become the first providers of basic services (healthcare, food, protection, etc.) among populations.

This approach, however, does not reduce vulnerabilities or develop local capacities. Neither does it meet the long-term needs and aspirations of populations.

Certain population groups, women, children, the elderly or people with disabilities, as well as hard-to-reach people, are often the most at risk. The humanitarian system has yet to prioritise finding appropriate and inclusive ways of enabling these people to receive the aid they need, as humanitarian principles demand.

We consider that local and regional NGOs are key actors that can guarantee a long-term presence and effectively bridge the gap between what are known as emergency and development responses. Partnership and synergies with international actors should be enhanced.

Signatories call on operational partners to:

- Evaluate the objectives achieved by the transformative agenda in its reform of the international humanitarian aid system, in order to inform reflection and decision-making on the future architecture of this aid.
- Within the framework of the revision of UN humanitarian agencies' mandates, propose that OCHA, as the emergency response coordinating body, be given full independence by separating it from other UN bodies during complex crises; and that it be granted full authority to coordinate all complex crises, including cases of displaced populations.
- Improve capacity building of local organisations involved in humanitarian response, particularly by strengthening their understanding of, and adherence to the humanitarian principles, as an essential step to ensuring that a more decentralised and flexible response can be provided. This must be a priority for all humanitarian actors, donors, UN agencies and experienced organisations.
- Make concrete commitments during the Summit to promote the participation of the most vulnerable people, including women and people with disabilities, and make a political commitment to a roadmap for the adoption of international guidelines and standards enabling the inclusion of these people in humanitarian aid.

# OUR COMMITMENTS...

## Signatory NGOs commit to:

### 1. Using humanitarian principles as a guide and a driving force for their action

Humanitarian principles are founded on a common understanding that humanitarian action is guided by a will to reach out to populations living in situations of crisis or other vulnerable situations and to help them in their time of need - no matter their culture, ethnicity, disability, age, sex or religion.

Nowadays, the work of humanitarian NGOs takes place in an environment where aid is becoming increasingly political and where the model of independent humanitarian action based on principles is difficult to establish. This politicisation of aid tends to make access to vulnerable and isolated populations complicated, and also makes it difficult to protect humanitarian aid workers and their mission (please refer to the "Declaration of Principles" drawn up by French humanitarian NGOs).

Signatories commit to:

- Respecting, promoting and applying humanitarian principles as well as making them a part of their internal policies.
- Signing the "Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and for NGOs" and applying this to their action.
- Denouncing obstacles to principled humanitarian aid.
- Encouraging other stakeholders, including their partners, to sign up to these principles and to apply them to their work.
- Systematically denouncing serious attacks upon humanitarian staff and their mission, and promoting better protection of humanitarian aid workers.

### 2. Working for a coherent and effective integration of humanitarian action into the global aid system

Our world is facing an unprecedented number of different crises. This means that all stakeholders in the aid sector need to re-think their positions and agree on an approach which is coherent with the commitments taken in 2015, notably the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on tackling climate change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and the commitments made at the conference in Addis Ababa on Financing for Development.

Although different stakeholders work in different ways, effective and integrated aid should be founded on a common understanding of context, and needs of affected populations.

Signatories commit to:

- Ensuring that their strategy and action help towards reaching the objectives laid out in international and global frameworks.
- Basing their decisions on a concerted approach with the participation of all stakeholders involved in issues relating to aid, and sharing with them analyses of context and needs assessments, unless the context renders it impossible.

- Ensuring that humanitarian aid does not create dependency and does not compromise long-term investment aimed at making affected populations more resilient.
- Improving the continuum between emergency situations and development by offering a united, complementary response.

### **3. Promoting the role of local stakeholders for a complementary context-adapted response**

Local stakeholders (civil society, local authorities, etc.) are the first to be affected by humanitarian crises and are often the first to respond. They are a driving force and a key resource in humanitarian response thanks to their geographical proximity and their knowledge of the local context. They also help guarantee the success and sustainability of initiatives aimed at making affected populations less vulnerable in the long term.

Signatories commit to:

- Promoting the involvement of local stakeholders (institutions, national NGOs, communities, etc.) in their responses, unless the context renders it impossible.
- Respecting the Principles of Partnership<sup>1</sup>, promoting them to all stakeholders present and referring to these in all partnership agreements.
- Strengthening capacity-building amongst local stakeholders, notably regarding meeting the needs of vulnerable populations and dealing with institutional donors as well as respecting humanitarian principles.
- Including local services and skills when planning their responses, unless the context renders it impossible.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/Principles%20of%20Partnership%20English.pdf>

## **Signatories :**

<i>ACTED</i>	<i>Action Contre La Faim – France</i>
<i>Alima</i>	<i>CARE France</i>
<i>Coordination SUD</i>	<i>Handicap International</i>
<i>Medair</i>	<i>Médecins du Monde</i>
<i>Première Urgence Internationale</i>	<i>Secours Catholique - Caritas France</i>
<i>Secours Islamique France</i>	<i>Solidarités International</i>
<i>SOS Villages d’Enfants France</i>	<i>Triangle Génération Humanitaire</i>

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Coordination SUD is the French national platform of international solidarity NGOs, registered as a non-profit association under the French law 1901. Founded in 1994, it brings together more than 160 NGOs active in the fields of humanitarian aid, development assistance, environmental protection, the defense of disadvantaged people’s human rights and international solidarity education and advocacy. Coordination SUD fulfills a dual mission of supporting the professionalisation of French NGOs and representing their positions to public and private institutions in France, Europe and around the world. It takes part in activities at the European level with Concord, the European NGO confederation for relief and development, and the International Forum of Platforms, which brings together more than 1800 NGOs.