

We all must act now!

June 2016

NGO networks' statement following World Humanitarian Summit conclusions

This statement is made by 6 national and international networks (Coordination SUD, ICVA, InterAction, NEAR, VENRO, VOICE) and is based on the declaration of Dr F. Sivignon, President of Médecins du Monde, at the Summit's closing ceremony.

On 23rd and 24th May, some 8,000 representatives from crisis-affected communities, Member States, the private sector, the United Nations (UN) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from around the world gathered for the first ever World Humanitarian Summit. Over two thousand commitments were made on this occasion, which illustrates an unprecedented mobilisation of the international community and its willingness to bring about significant and lasting change for millions of crisis-affected people. We are encouraged by the momentum created by the Summit and call on additional world leaders to join this effort by taking action to achieve real change.

For over two years, we, Non-Governmental Organisations, have been strongly committed to the World Humanitarian Summit process and have taken an active part in this collective movement. Based upon field realities, and our proximity to the populations affected, we have expressed our wish to move from a centralised humanitarian system to an **ecosystem with a wide variety of actors** complementing each other's actions and equally sharing risks.

We welcome the **ever stronger involvement of national and local Non-Governmental Organisations**, who are locally rooted, founded, headquartered and who respond to crises in their communities. We call for their full inclusion in the governance of the humanitarian sector and for the improvement of their access to adequate resources. We therefore applaud the commitment of major aid donors and NGOs to ensure that an aggregated target of 25% of humanitarian funding goes as directly as possible to local organisations by 2020.

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We, **Non-Governmental Organisations, will keep to our commitments** in the spirit of equitable partnerships and support to local and national capacity. We are committed to accountability to affected populations and owe it to them, particularly the most vulnerable, to uphold these important commitments.

Non-Governmental Organisations also have **a critical role to promote compliance with international humanitarian (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL), make practical recommendations to minimise harm to civilians in armed conflict, and denounce violations when they occur**. Little will come of this new ecosystem upon which we pin our hopes if these fundamental norms of humanity are not respected. Ultimately, States are responsible for complying with IHL, and upholding the fundamental rights of individuals. It is especially urgent that those who are currently party to an armed conflict implement measures to minimise civilian harm. All States have a role to reject today's current permissive climate and close the gap between the law and the reality we witness on a daily basis.

Noted at the Summit was the commitment of some States to humanitarian principles. However, the reality in the field is very different, where State actions and policies often undermine the humanitarian response carried out by NGOs. We therefore **expect States to urgently support the implementation of the humanitarian principles** across all areas in which we are involved.

We, Non-Governmental Organisations, intend to hold States and UN actors accountable to their commitments made at the Summit and to be involved in the process of monitoring this new humanitarian architecture for which we hope. We expect commitments to be tracked, and transparently reported upon.

With this in mind, we call on:

The United Nations

1. To define and achieve their collective 'Commitment to Action', exploring how to better include NGOs as equal partners during its development and implementation.
2. To carry out a critical analysis of its internal system and, in particular, reconsider a reform of the UN system and agencies to consistently and effectively uphold the fundamental norms of humanity and to meet the basic humanitarian needs of affected people.
3. To commit to overcome institutional self-interest, and to work in a more effective, inclusive, coordinated and collaborative way.
4. To ensure that national and local NGOs are included in decision-making processes, and integrated into national and international coordination mechanisms.
5. To translate, as soon as possible, the commitments made at the Summit into an inter-stakeholder roadmap for effective and inclusive implementation, together with a robust accountability framework.

Member States

1. To end conflicts using diplomatic tools and political influence to negotiate cessation of hostilities and to ensure sustainable and equitable peace processes.
2. To reaffirm their full adherence to the application of IHL provisions, and seize every opportunity to strengthen it, particularly by adopting a mechanism for reinforcing the protection of civilian and non-combatant populations, including humanitarian workers, and to facilitate humanitarian access, including the movement of supplies and issuance of work permits and visas for aid workers.
3. To work towards the adoption of a political declaration aiming to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.
4. To pursue ongoing initiatives aimed to reform the UN-led coordination and humanitarian response architecture and policies, which encourages agencies to transcend institutional self-interest and work in a more effective, inclusive, coordinated, and collaborative way.
5. To support implementation of the humanitarian principles and to ensure that national legislation is compatible with IHL, IHRL, and humanitarian principles, and that counter-terrorism measures do not undermine efforts by impartial local and international humanitarian organisations to save lives and alleviate human suffering.
6. To safeguard the space for local and national civil society organisations to develop and play an active role in responding to crises affecting their communities.
7. To adhere to, and agree to operate within, the adopted UN accountability framework in order to live up to the commitments made by State representatives in Istanbul.

The outcomes of this Summit will be judged by the impact of our collective willingness for change on the 125 million people affected by humanitarian crises.

List of signatories

