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Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection- ECHO

Operational Strategy 2011

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INTRODUCTION

The Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) is responsible for formulating EU humanitarian aid policy and for funding humanitarian aid — including food aid — to victims of conflicts or disasters, both natural and man-made, in non-EU countries. Its mandate is to save and preserve life, to reduce or prevent suffering and to safeguard the integrity and dignity of those affected by humanitarian crises. DG ECHO also helps to facilitate coordination with and among EU Member States on humanitarian assistance and civil protection efforts at EU level.

The importance of humanitarian aid policy has been reflected in the appointment of a Commissioner dedicated to humanitarian aid and crisis response in the new Commission. Civil protection activities were transferred to DG ECHO in the new College's portfolio assignments. The Civil Protection Instrument covers interventions in Member States, as well as in non-EU countries.

Humanitarian aid and civil protection are linked, and are now the responsibility of the same Commission department and Commissioner. However, the annual strategy drawn up under article 16.1 of the Council Regulation No 1257/96 covers only humanitarian aid operations. Civil protection activities are described in the annual work programme for actions to be financed in 2011 pursuant to Council Decision No 2007/162/EC.

1. GENERAL CONTEXT AND OUTLOOK FOR 2011

The 2011 operational strategy is presented in a **global humanitarian context** that is increasingly marked by serious natural disasters and diminishing humanitarian space in many crisis and conflict zones. Government and non-state actors often disregard even the most basic protection afforded by International Humanitarian Law. Meanwhile, the major natural disasters that occurred in 2010, the earthquake in Haiti and flooding in Pakistan, hit some of the most vulnerable people in the world who are generally not well prepared to cope with the impact. This bleak picture is compounded by fragility in many developing countries. This is a result of post-conflict transitional situations, poor governance or collapse of the State's institutions. It generates humanitarian needs among those who are most vulnerable, whose coping mechanisms have been exhausted.

A combination of factors have resulted in **increasing humanitarian needs**, a larger number of refugees and displaced persons, the growing impact of climate change which has generated more demand for humanitarian aid, and the impact of the economic crisis on those most vulnerable. At the end of 2009, the UNHCR¹ estimated that 43 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide due to conflict and persecution, the highest figure since the mid-1990s. This included 15 million refugees, 27 million internally displaced people, and close to 1 million asylum-seekers (pending cases). At the same time, fewer and fewer displaced persons are able (or in many cases willing) to return home, making solutions for their resettlement increasingly important. Based on UNHCR reports, the numbers of those repatriated has continuously decreased since the early 2000s, while resettlement now accounts for an estimated 31 %, compared to 2 % in 2002.

¹ UNHCR, 2009 Global trends on refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced and stateless persons.

In 2010, there was a sharp rise in the numbers of those displaced due to **natural disasters**. In 2009, there were 335 small or medium scale natural disasters, affecting 120 million people, below the annual average for the period 2000-2008. Then in 2010, there were two ‘mega disasters’. First, in January, there was the earthquake in Haiti, then in August, floods in Pakistan. Together, these disasters affected more than 20 million people. According to CRED², by July 2010, 108 million people had already been affected by natural disasters, and the flooding in Pakistan pushed the number beyond 200 million.

The coincidence pointed up the urgent need to boost efforts to mitigate the impact of disasters, but it is equally important to strengthen the capacity to respond to disasters. The Commission is making this one of the strategic initiatives of 2010, to be mapped out in a Communication on the EU’s Disaster Response Capacity due to be adopted in autumn 2010. The main aim will be to improve effectiveness, coherence and visibility by building on the main components of the EU’s response to disasters, i.e. humanitarian aid and civil protection, as well as military support where needed and appropriate. Lessons learnt from Haiti and Pakistan, as well as from natural disasters within Europe during 2010 (storm Xynthia, floods in Eastern Europe, forest fires in Southern Europe) will shape proposals for the way ahead.

The changes in the global environment for humanitarian aid will also be reflected in **three initiatives of strategic importance for DG ECHO** in 2011:

- **revision of the civil protection legislation**, which aims to integrate key elements from the upcoming Communication on Disaster Response Capacity,
- **preparatory work on the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC)** as requested by the Lisbon Treaty,
- **revision of the Council Regulation on humanitarian aid** to bring it in line with policy and institutional developments, and which has to be put in the context of the forthcoming revision of all instruments for external action.

Another **major challenge** for 2011 and the coming years is to **bridge the widening gap** between growing humanitarian needs and the limited funding available. In 2010, the budget had to be reinforced to the limit to provide assistance to victims of ongoing and new crises, especially in view of the need to provide an adequate response at EU level to the mega-disasters in Haiti and Pakistan.

Funding dedicated to humanitarian aid reached almost €1.1 billion in 2010 as a result. Since the response to the two mega-crises will have a spill-over effect into 2011, it is most likely that DG ECHO’s initial budget of €848 million will need to be reinforced early in the year. Several million people already depend on the EU for the most basic humanitarian aid, often for survival. The EU (European Commission and Member States) is already the biggest humanitarian aid donor, currently providing 45 % of official global humanitarian assistance³.

It will need to maintain this level of commitment to helping those most vulnerable. Without it, the gap between humanitarian needs and the resources to meet them will continue to widen. Beyond 2011, there needs to be an adequate baseline budget for EU humanitarian aid, with

² Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters — <http://www.cred.be>.

³ Official assistance is assistance by Governments. Sources: UN-OCHA’s Financial Tracking System — Data for the year 2009.

funding set at a level at least matching spending in 2010, with the flexibility to mobilise additional resources if need be. The upcoming discussions on the new Multi-annual Financial Framework (2014-2024+) will be decisive in securing the resources necessary for the EU to continue to make an adequate contribution to global humanitarian aid.

2. HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES

In 2011, DG ECHO will put particular emphasis on selected horizontal topics, partially defined by field-based operational experience, but equally by external factors such as developments in external relations in general and the implementation of the **Lisbon Treaty**.

Regarding the Treaty, DG ECHO will aim to work closely with a range of EU actors involved in longer-term development work, so as to ensure a smooth transition from relief to development. DG ECHO will also aim to continue its close working relationship in the field with EU Delegations, once the European External Action Service is fully operational. More broadly, DG ECHO will continue to work towards ensuring that humanitarian concerns are properly taken into account in the EU's wider external relations.

Continuing to enhance synergies between humanitarian aid and civil protection operations remains a key priority for 2011. There is already close cooperation in the field during emergencies, and this was mobilised in, for instance, Haiti and Pakistan. However, more training would also be of benefit, and more cooperation will be sought to achieve this.

Many of the overarching policy issues regarding humanitarian aid are reflected in the 2007 **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** and its Action Plan. A mid-term review of the Consensus Action Plan is currently underway. This is an opportunity to take stock of progress so far and to set priorities for the European Union to deliver efficient, effective and appropriate humanitarian aid where it is most needed, and to shape a more strategic approach to global humanitarian challenges. By the end of 2010, the Commission plans to table a Communication on achievements to date, while outlining priorities for future action.

The Consensus sets out the shared objectives and principles that underpin EU humanitarian aid and underlines the need for complementarities between civil protection and humanitarian aid in responding to disasters. The complementarities should be pursued and the synergies further developed.

The relationship between **civil and military actors** in humanitarian aid is one of the issues that was flagged in the Consensus, and it has grown in importance since. The recent natural (mega-) disasters have seen EU military actors more involved in providing direct capacity (Haiti) or by providing support to transport of goods (Pakistan). Recent discussions at the political level have made it clear that military involvement will stay on the agenda. There will need to be more contact between humanitarian and military actors early in the process of managing an emergency, both at policy and operational level.

International Humanitarian Law will stay high on DG ECHO's agenda. Respect for the law and applying it to provide protection for populations in distress will continue to be a focus of DG ECHO's activities on the ground. There will, where appropriate, be funding for implementing partners with a particular mandate for this issue.

Advocacy for protecting **humanitarian space** will be a priority. In protracted conflict, access is being eroded, and those responsible have long ceased to be deterred by humanitarian

agencies' threats of withdrawal. The general lack of security and increased targeting of humanitarian workers remain major sources of concern. According to UN-OCHA statistics, 278 humanitarian workers were victims of security incidents in 2009, against 65 in 1999; 102 were killed (against 30); and 92 kidnapped (20).

Sexual and gender-based violence, used as a weapon of war, is seen in a growing number of cases and is a particularly worrying trend. This is especially the case in Eastern Congo (DRC), which is regularly in the news because of incidents of mass rape and abuse. DG ECHO will continue to work on a systematic framework for dealing with gender issues in general and sexual violence in particular. The issue will be mainstreamed in regional response strategies where necessary.

Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) remains a challenge for humanitarian and development actors, and both are giving the issue more attention. Humanitarian programmes need often to stay in place in parallel to early development interventions to cover the persisting humanitarian needs while recovery, stabilisation and development interventions are being put in place and implemented. Work to improve transition strategies is ongoing, starting from the design of aid, through to implementation, so as to identify best practice that can be shared. In parallel, conceptual work on managing humanitarian needs in fragile states aims to provide a set of references to guide development and humanitarian actors in the programming and delivery of aid. Reinforcing joint assessment missions with all relevant staff so as to promote early recovery after a disaster should facilitate this. Post-Disaster Needs Assessment missions run jointly by the EU, UNDP and the World Bank will have more EU involvement, which should yield clearer, shared assessments and a streamlined division of labour, both within the EU and the international system. The European Commission will equally contribute to further development of the conceptual framework of post-disaster needs missions.

Regarding **humanitarian food assistance and nutrition**, DG ECHO's strategy continues to be based on two main pillars, the advancement and roll-out of operationally-centred policy initiatives and effective and efficient management of budget allocated for food assistance and nutrition.

Funds will remain stretched, given growing needs, the rising number of vulnerable people lacking food, and the persisting effects of the economic and financial crisis. DG ECHO will further develop its policy on nutrition in emergencies and contribute to developing an overall nutrition policy, through raising awareness of this sector in the EU's external aid. The implementation and further dissemination of its humanitarian food aid policy will go on so as to ensure the most adequate response in each given context. In the same vein, the European Commission will go on participating actively in negotiations for a reformed Food Aid Convention. The aim is to modernise this international agreement so as to reaffirm the donor community's commitment to address the food aid challenges of the 21st century and focus on providing appropriate and effective humanitarian food assistance. DG ECHO will maintain close contacts with other Commission services and instruments to identify concrete opportunities to link relief, rehabilitation and development regarding food security aspects.

Logistics are of critical importance in humanitarian funding planned for 2011. An increasing amount of funding is being earmarked especially for flight operations, be it through ECHO Flight or through implementing partners such as UNHAS or NGO consortia. This trend shows the extent to which safe, reliable local air transport which respects the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality is increasingly difficult to come by. DG ECHO will reinforce its

activities in this area, both on an analytical level as well as within its operation and capacity-building programmes. There are many opportunities for knowledge transfer and synergies between humanitarian and civil protection actors in logistics. Support to common humanitarian services is an area that requires a strong multi-donor approach and DG ECHO will continue its advocacy to help achieve this.

Given the scale and record number of natural disasters in 2010, **disaster risk reduction** and adaptation to **climate change** will be a clear focus for humanitarian funding in 2011 (see section 3.2 below). Mainstreaming of risk reduction into overall operations will be a specific focus (e.g. in Pakistan), clearly reflecting the political prerogative to go beyond 10% of funding for humanitarian aid to be dedicated to risk reduction. DG ECHO is exploring the scope for common approaches for humanitarian aid operations and civil protection financial support within the EU.

A new approach regarding **rationalisation of the humanitarian aid decision-making** should enter into force as of 1 January 2011. The idea is to reduce the number of financing decisions prepared by DG ECHO, while fully respecting the Financial Regulation and the legal basis, as well as DG ECHO's strategic and needs-based approach. The goal is to improve efficiency in DG ECHO's working methods while maintaining expertise, flexibility and transparency.

Following the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the Commission will in late 2010 table a Communication on the **European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC)**. This is intended to enable European citizens to make a contribution to aid efforts and to show their support with those affected by disaster. The Communication will be mainly a stocktaking exercise, and in 2011, the European Year of Volunteering, DG ECHO will prepare a legislative proposal to set up EVHAC.

DG ECHO's communication and information activities will focus on the Commission's priorities in humanitarian aid and civil protection for 2011 as outlined above. The aim is to improve the visibility, as well as public understanding of the ways in which the EU supports those affected by crises with humanitarian aid and civil protection.

3. OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

3.1. General principles and priorities reflected in the budget allocation

The Commission is committed to delivering humanitarian aid to those with the **greatest needs** in non-EU countries. There has to be a balance between interventions in existing long-term crises on the one hand, and responses to new disasters on the other. Allocation methodology must achieve two things: first, it must accurately pinpoint the greatest needs to ensure funds are allocated appropriately; and second, it must set aside a reserve to cope with new disasters. Once needs have been assessed at a global level, factors such as the exact nature of the needs, access to beneficiaries and absorption capacity have to be analysed to enable funding to be allocated appropriately.

To identify specific regions/countries for intervention, DG ECHO follows a two-pronged approach. One relies on evaluations conducted by experts in the field and the respective geographical units of the European Commission's humanitarian service. There is specific analysis regarding food and nutrition. A resource allocation model is currently being fine-tuned.

This analysis by experts in the field and headquarters provides a first-hand account of crisis pockets, and insight into the nature and depth of needs. DG ECHO experts conduct such assessments for every crisis as objectively as possible, in close cooperation with implementing partners.

In parallel, a global evaluation is carried out centrally. This compares countries, so as to rank priorities for DG ECHO. This global evaluation has two dimensions. First, the vulnerability and crisis indexes of the **Global Needs Assessment (GNA)** categorise 139 developing countries that have recently experienced a crisis (caused by conflict, natural disaster, or the presence of a large number of refugees or displaced people) and the extent to which their populations are vulnerable (derived from national indicators). Second, a **Forgotten Crisis Assessment (FCA)** attempts to identify crises that have been overlooked or neglected by the international humanitarian community and/or the global media. DG ECHO's country desks offer guidance here. Both types of assessment are valuable tools in determining impartially and independently where Commission aid is most likely to be needed. They also facilitate fair, consistent allocation of resources across continents.

Following the trend over the last three years, almost half of DG ECHO's budget is spent on countries which the Global Needs Assessment identifies as extremely vulnerable. In 2011, extremely vulnerable countries or territories will receive humanitarian and food aid worth **71%** of the planned budget. Where allocations are made for aid in countries identified as being of medium or low priority, this may be because they experience disasters after the publication of the needs assessment.

Using the GNA methodology, DG ECHO identified 10 crises in 12 countries as 'forgotten' for the purposes of allocating 2011 funding. This classification is understood to mean the regions have been exposed to protracted crisis situations, resulting from conflict; the cumulative effect of recurring natural disasters; or a combination of both. Very low media coverage, lack of donor interest and lack of political commitment to solve the crisis mean a lack of humanitarian intervention. Forgotten crises often involve minorities, or specific groups within a country which is not necessarily considered as being in crisis. This is why national indicators used to define the vulnerability index or the level of public aid may not reflect the specific situation of the cohorts that DG ECHO may pinpoint as being in need of aid..

Among the ten crises identified as priorities for 2011, nine were identified as forgotten in 2010:

- Bangladesh: Rohingya refugees and the Chittagong Hill Tracts crisis;
- Burma (Myanmar): Inter-ethnic conflict;
- Thailand: the related Burmese refugee situation;
- Colombia: civilians affected by internal armed conflict;
- The conflict in the north of Yemen as well as the refugees from the Horn of Africa;
- Algeria: Sahrawi refugees;
- Central African Republic: Internal armed conflict;;
- Nepal: Bhutanese refugees;

- India: civilians affected by regional conflicts (Kashmir, north-east India, Naxalite movement).
- Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan: A newly-identified forgotten crisis caused by violence from the Lord's Resistance Army. A continuing series of attacks is aggravating the situation of populations that were already vulnerable, without attracting sufficient media or donor attention.

At this stage, 10% (€55 million) of the planned geographical humanitarian and food aid budget allocation is being earmarked for these 10 forgotten crises.

Some of these crises are becoming **chronic**. For most of them, there is no solution in sight. Other crises which DG ECHO previously identified as 'forgotten' are no longer on the list considered vulnerable in this way, either because the situation changed (as in the case of the Lao Hmong refugees in **Thailand** who were involuntary repatriated in 2010) or because international media and donors have given them more attention, due to significant developments (**Haiti, the Sahel Region** and Somali Refugees in **Kenya**).

Offering to fund assistance also ensures more attention to the respect of international humanitarian law. DG ECHO aims to ensure there is enough funding for as many crisis situations as possible, and that there is a swift, efficient, comprehensive response.

DG ECHO's funding of the 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.

Accountability and transparency vis a vis the European taxpayer and the ultimate beneficiary is ensured by the process of setting priorities, providing humanitarian aid, reviewing and refocusing areas for funding as necessary, and ceasing activities when appropriate. According to a Eurobarometer survey (2010), an overall majority of citizens (58%) and a relative majority in all Member States think that humanitarian aid is more efficient when provided by the EU through the European Commission.

The general budget earmarked for DG ECHO for 2011 is €848 million, of which €598 million is for humanitarian aid in countries and territories⁴ on the budget lines for humanitarian aid, food aid and Dipecho.

The graph below shows the percentage of the planned budget for each region and the instrument supporting DG ECHO's activities. As in previous years, **sub-Saharan Africa** will be the region in which the bulk of the budget will be programmed (47%) given the consequences of natural disasters (e.g. droughts) and recurrent complex emergencies in the region.

⁴ Humanitarian aid, food aid and disaster preparedness activities.

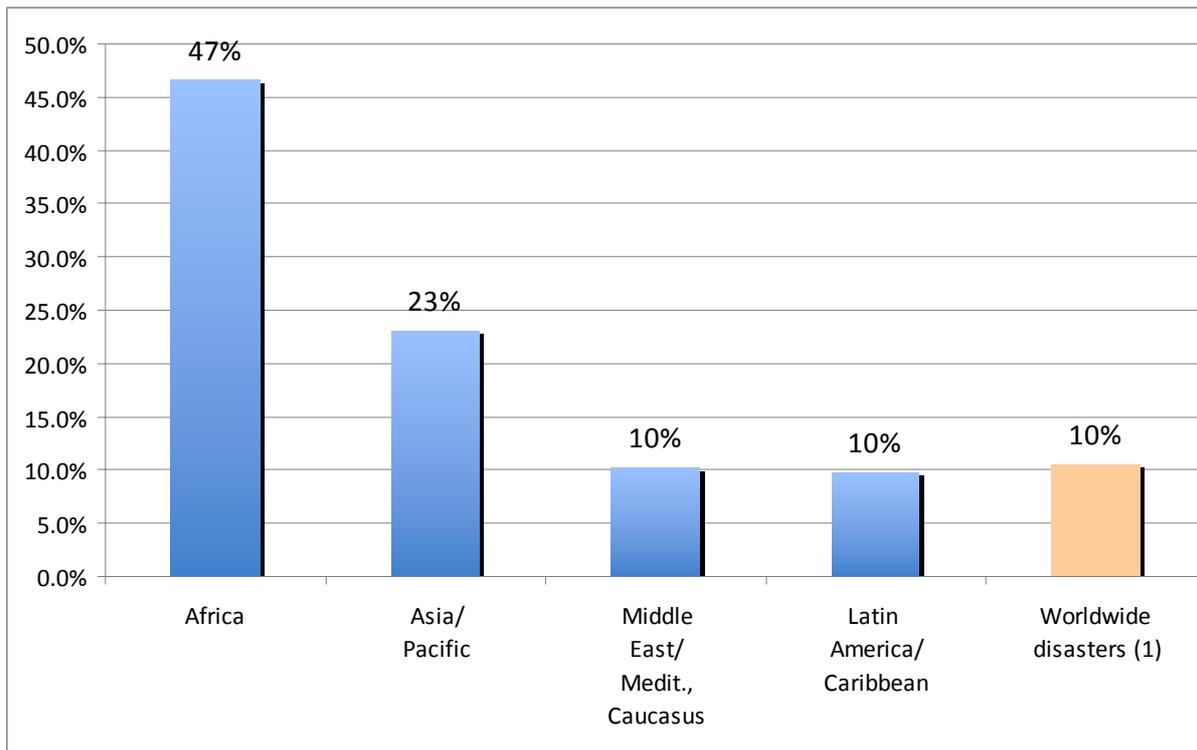


Figure 1 — Budget planned in 2011 by region

(1) includes technical assistance, enhanced response capacity, worldwide geographical allocations

At this stage, 18% of the budget remains unallocated, to allow scope for changing priorities and newly-emerging needs. In the event of a major new disaster in 2011, the Commission can ask the Budgetary Authority to release funds from the Emergency Aid Reserve included in the Commission's section of the EU budget, that is over and above the original humanitarian aid budget.

The chart below shows budget programming by type of intervention. Particular attention will be paid to **disaster risk reduction (DRR)**, for which 10% of the 2011 budget has been earmarked. DG ECHO has numerous means at its disposal to implement such activities: these include the disaster preparedness budget line, as well as the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in its humanitarian response. In 2011, DG ECHO will continue to implement DIPECHO programmes launched in 2010 in Southern Africa, Central Asia, South-East Asia and in Central America. New DIPECHO programmes will be launched in South Asia, South America, Pacific and the Caribbean. Mainstreaming is based on activities related to the following sectors: infrastructure support, capacity-building and training, advocacy and public awareness, small-scale mitigation, mapping and data computerisation, early warning systems, education, facilitation and coordination, institutional strengthening and climate change adaptation activities.

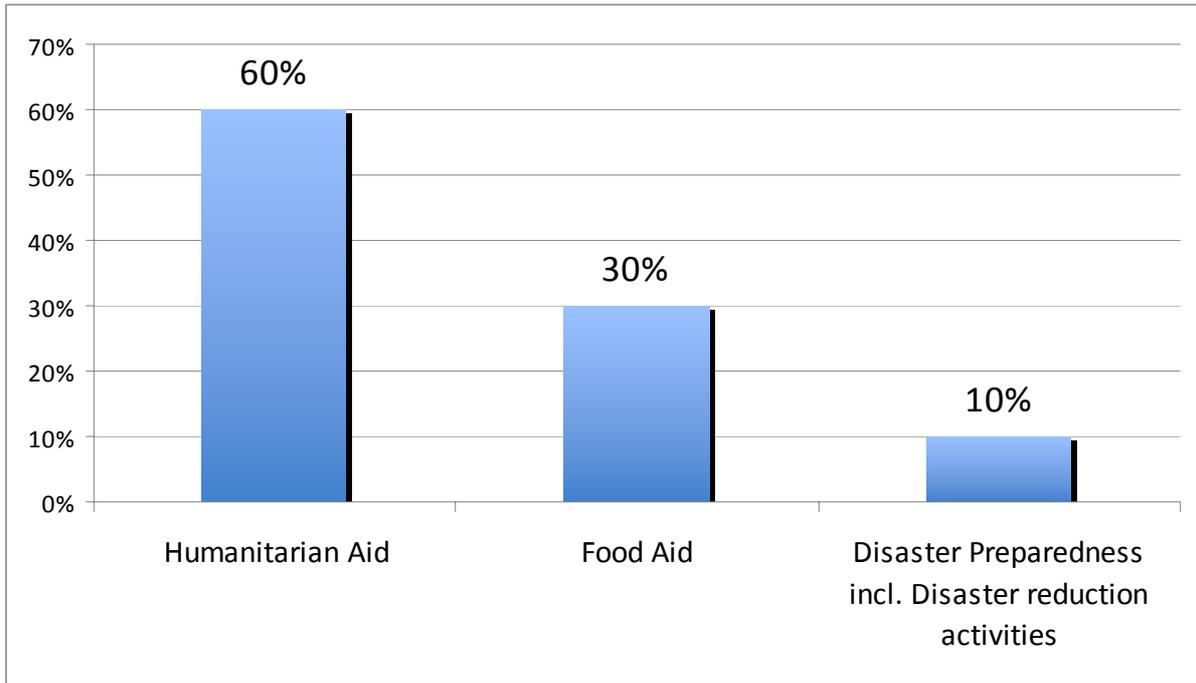


Figure 2 — Budget planned in 2011 by type of intervention

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

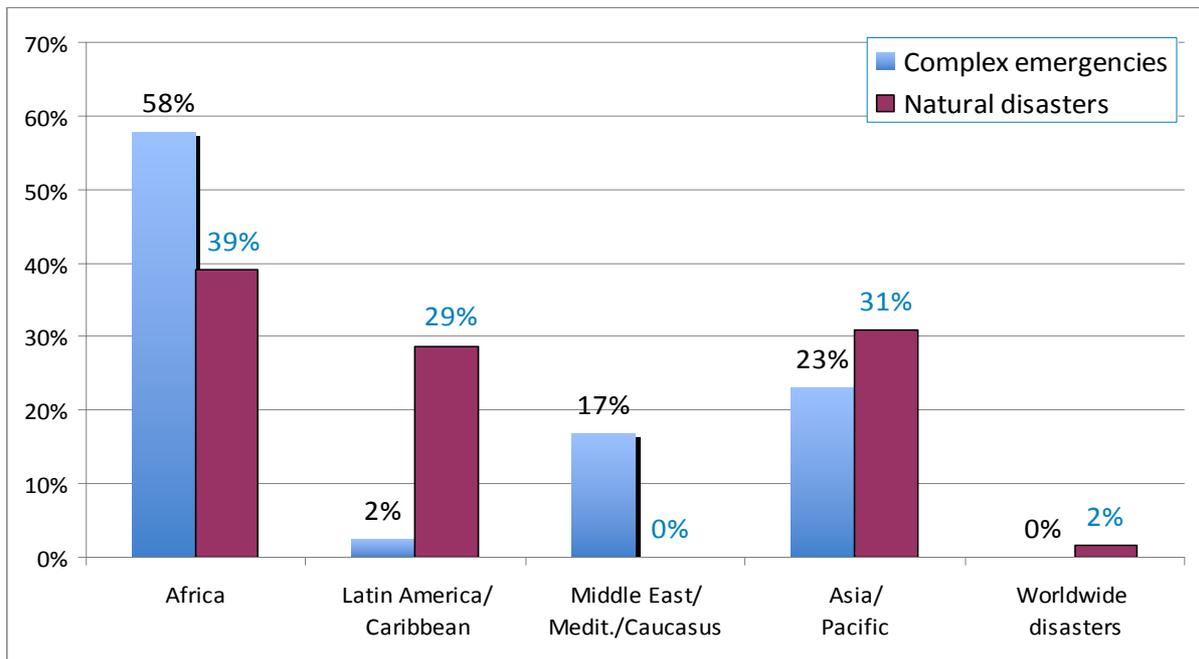


Figure 3 — Budget planning: response to complex emergencies and natural disasters

3.2. Africa

3.2.1. Sudan and Chad

Sudan

With over 6 million people in serious need, Sudan is expected to remain one of the Commission's largest humanitarian interventions, in a year likely to be marked by political uncertainties, notably the referenda on the future of the South, the end of the interim Comprehensive Peace Agreement period and the absence of a peace agreement in Darfur. These political challenges will, in all likelihood, carry humanitarian implications in terms of needs, and of constraints on the response capacity.

The humanitarian situation in Sudan is multi-faceted and must be addressed in its totality, using both financial means and advocacy. In Darfur, insecurity and administrative impediments are increasingly restricting access and reducing humanitarian space. It is extremely difficult to conduct needs assessments and deliver aid in accordance with humanitarian principles, especially to remote and conflict-affected areas. Despite ongoing efforts, there is a need for stronger advocacy by the international community in defence of the humanitarian space and humanitarian principles. The South, the East and the Transitional areas⁵ remain seriously under-developed, with indicators well below humanitarian thresholds. In 2010, needs have increased in the South, with food insecurity and ongoing displacements triggered by inter-tribal fighting, rebel groups (LRA), and competition for scarce resources. Throughout the country, costs are being driven up and the quality of programmes is being challenged by logistical constraints, a low level of local capacity, and limitations of access.

The bulk of funding in 2011 will be dedicated to life-saving and life-preserving activities for the several million displaced people, refugees, returnees, host communities and nomads, whether in Darfur, in the South or in the Transitional Areas. In Darfur, unless there is a significant improvement in the operating environment, the level and type of assistance will be critically dependent on the capacity to manage the physical and financial risks linked to humanitarian operations whilst ensuring a positive impact for the beneficiaries. Assistance will be increasingly focused on the delivery of items (food and non-food), basic access to water, health services and nutrition in certain camps and urban settings and, when conditions allow, in remote and conflict areas. In the South and Transitional areas, priority will be given to the preparation for a rapid response to new emergencies, including a possible deterioration in security linked to the referenda, and to enhancing communities' resilience to natural disasters. The geographic focus will be on areas and populations vulnerable to conflict and emergencies and exposed to high levels of malnutrition, promoting as much as possible a multi-sector approach integrating health services, nutritional programs, water and sanitation and food aid and food security programmes. Support to partners in their attempts to maintain a safe and principled implementation of operations will continue through the funding of common services such as air transport, assessments, security training, coordination, and the reinforcement of an advocacy and communication strategy aimed at defending humanitarian space and humanitarian principles.

⁵ Transitional Areas refer to Abyei, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan

Chad

The 250,000 Sudanese refugees and 170,000 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Eastern Chad are likely to continue to be dependent on humanitarian aid in 2011, in the absence of any improvements in the situation on the ground and in neighbouring Darfur. In the context of the withdrawal of MINURCAT, the UN peace-keeping mission in Chad and Central African Republic (CAR), security, which was already a major constraint in 2010, may limit humanitarian relief efforts, restricting access to beneficiaries and reducing the number of partners on the ground. In contrast, in the South, refugees from CAR have been able to reach a level of self-sufficiency, thanks to a successful LRRD⁶ strategy. In the Sahel belt of Chad, 1.6 million people affected by drought will take several years to overcome the food crisis which has depleted their assets and dramatically worsened their nutritional status. The risk of floods and epidemics remains high all over the country.

The Commission's humanitarian response in Chad will have a dual focus. In the East, the provision of basic and life-saving services will help, if security conditions allow it, to bring vulnerable populations (refugees, IDPs, returnees and host populations) closer to self-sufficiency. In the Sahel belt, the focus will be on treating malnutrition and helping populations recover from the 2009-2010 food crisis, whilst establishing a basis for better preparedness and prevention. The support provided will mainly consist of multi-sectoral assistance (protection, food security and nutrition, health, water and sanitation, shelter and non-food items) to approximately 2.1 million beneficiaries. At country level, DG ECHO will continue to promote effective humanitarian coordination, emergency preparedness and response, including maintaining a capacity to assist newly arrived refugees, and supporting partners in terms of access, by means of advocacy and support to logistics and transport.

3.2.2. *Central Africa*

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Despite its abundant resources and a measure of political stabilisation, the humanitarian situation in DRC has become more fragmented, largely on account of localised conflicts and government and MONUSCO⁷ activities to counter rebel groups. While there has been gradual stabilisation in some parts of North Kivu, the situation has considerably worsened in other parts of the province, as well as in South Kivu, the Haut and Bas Uele districts of Province Orientale and, in a new development since the end of 2009, in the West of Equateur Province. This is fundamentally a protection crisis, where the overriding humanitarian problem for civilians remains generalised insecurity, caused both by rebel groups and by regular forces. Gender-based violence is widespread, 1.8 million people remain displaced, the harvest has dropped off due to insecurity-related access difficulties; and vulnerable populations are suffering from lack of access to adequate water and sanitation and medical care. Of particular concern is the aggravated humanitarian situation of the population affected by the activities of the Lord Resistance's Army (LRA) in North-West DRC, which has now become a sub-regional forgotten crisis. The reintegration of returnees from Tanzania and Zambia and preparations for the return of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi adds strains to local structures which are already highly stretched, causing localised tensions. In the non-conflict affected areas, malnutrition rates are above emergency thresholds as a result of the financial

⁶ **Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development**

⁷ **UN Stabilisation mission in DRC**

crisis, high food prices and low prices for minerals, the backbone of the economy in many central provinces.

DG ECHO intends to address urgent needs arising from population movements in conflict zones and life-threatening situations in non-conflict areas. Funding will focus on the restoration of food security and livelihoods, improvements in basic social services and protection activities, especially for survivors of gender-based violence. Activities will be closely coordinated with development cooperation instruments. Finally, the Commission will continue to defend the humanitarian space and promote respect for humanitarian principles through advocacy, coordination and active support for humanitarian logistics, in particular through ECHO Flight.

Central African Republic (CAR)

The humanitarian context in CAR is characterised by "shifting pockets" of emergencies in a highly vulnerable context of chronic poverty, high levels of malnutrition, structural collapse, and lack of access to basic services. The North continues to be affected by fighting between rebel groups and government forces and by cross-border insecurity with Chad and Sudan; the South East is suffering from a wave of attacks by the LRA; and in the South West, Congolese refugees who fled from violence in Equateur Province at the end of 2009 could not return. There are 223,000 IDPs and refugees and a further 1.4 million residents who are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

Donor interest is rather low, there are relatively few partners on the ground, and delivery of humanitarian aid is hampered by security constraints and logistical problems. CAR has become a forgotten crisis and the humanitarian crisis situations within the country are steadily worsening. In response to this very serious situation, DG ECHO will strengthen its commitment to CAR, by addressing the needs of refugees, IDPs and highly vulnerable groups, both in existing situations and in new emergencies. DG ECHO will also seek to enhance access to populations in need by encouraging the presence of humanitarian agencies in the most critical areas, and will support humanitarian logistics services and promote coordination. Disaster preparedness will be actively promoted and there will be ongoing engagement in the LRRD process in areas which have already been earmarked for future reconstruction by development actors.

Burundi/Tanzania

DG ECHO's main intervention will continue to be assistance for the 27,000 Congolese refugees living in camps in Burundi and the 61,000 Congolese and 37,000 Burundian refugees in camps in the North-East of Tanzania. Assistance will be provided by provision of food, health and other relief items, protection and repatriation process. DG ECHO will continue its phasing out of support for the local population in Burundi, thanks to a successful LRRD strategy with DG Development and other development actors and instruments. Limited support may be required to consolidate the LRRD approach and to respond to new small-scale emergencies, given the vulnerability of the country.

ECHO Flight

Given the logistical and security-related access problems in a number of countries, the Commission implements a flight service focusing on Central Africa (DRC and neighbouring

areas) and Kenya. The ECHO Flight operation provides an efficient and reliable service to enable safe and accountable implementation of humanitarian projects in remote regions, which would otherwise be inaccessible. The service will continue to be closely coordinated with other humanitarian air services and to avoid any duplication and competition with safe, viable commercial airlines.

3.2.3. *Horn of Africa*

Ethiopia

Food insecurity caused by drought is a major factor in people's vulnerability. While the population still has to overcome the consequences of the 2008/2009 drought, DG ECHO will strive to save lives and to reduce livelihood erosion including that resulting from the impact of detrimental coping strategies. Humanitarian needs are acute in the areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, and agriculture. However, in light of reported improvements in food security in 2010 in most parts of the country, including southern pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, and the good perspectives for 2011, DG ECHO, which is working very closely on the ground with the EU Delegation, will be able to reduce the volume of its support. Food assistance and nutrition inputs will continue to be provided to the most vulnerable, with a specific focus on reducing under-nutrition of children below the age of five. Support will be provided to farmers and agro-pastoralists affected by consecutive droughts, as well as to the animal health service delivery system. Water, sanitation and hygiene will be promoted while maintaining a capacity to respond to epidemics outbreaks. Access limitations imposed by the Government, especially in the Ogaden/Somali Regional State and restrictions on nutritional emergency response programmes are expected to remain a challenge. Whenever feasible, opportunities for LRRD will continue to be explored and disaster risk reduction (DRR) will be mainstreamed in all operations, especially those implemented in the arid and semi-arid lands.

Kenya

In the Dadaab camps more than 290,000 refugees, mainly coming from Somalia, live in extremely precarious conditions and rely entirely on external assistance. The focus of DG ECHO's funded actions will be on addressing their most pressing needs, mainly in the water and sanitation, health/nutrition and possibly shelter and non-food items sectors, as well as on contributing to general food distribution. DG ECHO also intends to promote innovative cash-based projects in the camps, and will continue advocating for addressing the needs in the education and protection sectors. As to the arid and semi-arid lands in Kenya, where malnutrition rates are above WHO⁸ emergency standards, DG ECHO will support nutrition and livelihood activities, focusing on treatment and surveillance. Actions aimed at sustaining the early recovery from the past severe droughts will also be supported in the sectors of food, water and livestock health and management. Opportunities for LRRD will continue to be pursued, especially in the sectors of food security and livelihood. Health, nutrition and hygiene education will continue to be mainstreamed.

⁸ UN-World Health Organisation

Somalia

With nearly two million people in need of humanitarian assistance, Somalia remains one of the most serious humanitarian crises worldwide. Depending on access and implementation capacities of partners, DG ECHO will continue to focus on life-saving activities in the South-Central zone where most of the humanitarian needs exist, while extending such support to other pockets of related vulnerabilities (IDPs/host communities) in urban areas of Puntland and Somaliland. Additional support to pastoralist and agro-pastoralists communities of Puntland and Somaliland, where aid support has been boosted in 2009/2010 to address the effects of repeated rain failures, will also be considered. Whilst DG ECHO will continue to focus on the core issues of health and nutrition, support to IDPs, water, sanitation and food security, attention will also be given to the mainstreaming of community based drought-preparedness and disaster risk reduction initiatives.

Uganda

It is expected that the large majority of the remaining IDP camps will be closed in 2010, particularly in the north-central Acholi region. Given the continued reduction of humanitarian needs and the extensive array of recovery and development programmes envisaged, DG ECHO will continue to phase out its funding. Support may also be requested for the drought prone north-eastern region of Karamoja as well as the some 150,000 refugees, mainly from DRC.

Djibouti

Even if the overall food security situation has slightly improved thanks to a good rain season, DG ECHO intends to consolidate the impact of the interventions started in 2010 before phasing out, allowing rural populations to recover and improving their food consumption levels.

3.2.4. Southern Africa and Indian Ocean

Zimbabwe

As the Government of National Unity (GNU) enters its second year, some progress has been noted, but the challenge of reversing economic and structural collapse remains. The rehabilitation of the social, public health and education services is seen as a key priority area, whilst the restoration of the delivery of basic services remains critical for building confidence. Humanitarian needs are generalized over the entire country, with rural and peri-urban populations the worst hit. A short-term strategy has been developed which includes all Commission funding instruments and of which humanitarian action is an important pillar in what all stakeholders agree to be a transitional phase. The most urgent needs that DG ECHO will continue to address are currently in the health and water and sanitation sectors. The collapse of services in these two sectors has resulted in a series of epidemic outbreaks sweeping the country (cholera, measles, typhoid). The challenge is therefore to continue to progress towards the LRRD process and to trigger an exit strategy for humanitarian aid. The food security sector has shown improvements as a result of the economic liberalization measures of 2009, though access to food is still difficult for those without access to foreign currency. DG ECHO intends to phase out completely from this sector.

The 10 countries of Southern Africa have the highest HIV and AIDS prevalence rates in the world. As HIV and AIDS is a factor of vulnerability, it needs to be taken firmly into account in any assessment of emergency needs undertaken in the region, including the link between HIV and AIDS and nutrition.

3.2.5. *West Africa*

The Sahel

The countries of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) and the Sahel region of some neighbouring countries (Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo) face a serious problem of chronic and acute under-nutrition mainly but not exclusively due to drought, food insecurity and poverty. Under-nutrition remains the major cause of infant mortality and suffering in the Sahel. DG ECHO emphasises the need to follow a multi-sector approach linking improved food and nutrition security, action to strengthen the functioning of health services to diagnose at an early stage and take mitigating action, as well as better access to treatment. The overall response requires close co-operation between humanitarian and development aid actors, through co-ordinated disaster risk reduction actions. DG ECHO's approach will continue to be based upon three pillars. First, improving the knowledge base of the multi-sector causes of under-nutrition and measures to improve nutrition early warning systems; second, treatment, notably through the support for innovative, pilot and replicable activities to demonstrate that under-nutrition can be tackled successfully and sustainably; third, advocacy and awareness building to put under-nutrition higher up the agenda for priority action by government and development partners in close coordination with development actions implemented with funding from the European Development Fund, the Food Security Thematic Programme and the Food Facility. The dialogue with the local authorities and development actors will be intensified in order to ensure that food and nutritional security are recognized as focal sectors in the programming of future EU development co-operation with the relevant countries.

Liberia

While the transition from humanitarian aid to development has registered considerable progress in the health sector and with no further funding being needed, DG ECHO will focus on post-conflict recovery and rehabilitation through the provision of basic services such as food security, water and sanitation. Close co-ordination with development actors will further facilitate the phasing out of humanitarian aid in a coherent and consistent manner.

3.3. Middle East, Mediterranean countries and Caucasus

3.3.1. *Middle East*

Occupied Palestinian Territories

Isolation and fragmentation by the Israeli Authorities of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), caused by systematic restrictions on movement, evictions and recurrent destruction of physical assets, continues to have a strong impact on the livelihoods of the Palestinian population. In this protracted crisis, access of the Palestinian people to basic services such as health, education and water is still severely hampered. LRRD is extremely hard to implement in this particular context. Protection of civilians will be a key horizontal theme for DG ECHO support for populations living in the areas mostly affected by the Israeli occupation: Gaza,

East Jerusalem, Area C, and those adjacent to Israeli settlements and the Barrier, including the so-called *Seam Zone*. DG ECHO will keep intervening in the sectors of livelihood, water and sanitation, health, psychosocial activities, protection and coordination.

Lebanon

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are denied some fundamental civil rights, including ownership of property, full access to employment and access to public services. The lack of full socio-economic rights is causing livelihood insecurity. DG ECHO intends to support Palestinian refugees in sectors of health, livelihood, water and sanitation, shelter and protection as well as advocacy activities. There is some scope for LRRD in Lebanon, notably in the health sector that DG ECHO intends to fully support.

Iraqi crisis

The humanitarian situation in Iraq continues to slowly stabilise despite a high level of violence and a large number of displaced persons: IOM⁹ estimates that approximately 2.76 million people are currently displaced inside Iraq, and UNHCR¹⁰ has registered 223,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular in Syria (165,000), Jordan (32,000) and Lebanon (8,000). Access and security problems in Iraq remain acute, which makes the delivery of humanitarian aid particularly difficult. Following an improved government response and an LRRD strategy based on capacity building support to the authorities to re-establish basic health and educational services, the Commission will gradually reduce its humanitarian aid support inside Iraq but will maintain its efforts towards refugees. Protection will remain the priority, with basic service provision for the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees.

Yemen

The humanitarian situation in Yemen deteriorated again in 2010 as the country faces a series of complex emergencies. It is estimated that, following the so called "sixth war", there are now over 340,000 displaced people in the Northern Governorates. While the overall situation in parts of Southern Yemen is increasingly volatile, with continued violent demonstrations and attacks against security forces, the number of arrivals of people leaving the instability and the violence of the Horn of Africa also continues to grow, with an estimated number of 174,000 refugees in the country (of whom 165,000 are Somalis). DG ECHO will support protection and assistance actions in favour of populations affected by the internal conflict and of the refugees. LRRD will be difficult to achieve in the North until the security situation stabilises and the displaced population is able to return to their place of origin or decide to settle. Concerning the refugees actions aimed at enhancing their livelihood in urban areas will be considered.

3.3.2. *Mediterranean countries*

Sahrawi refugees

A forgotten crisis requiring a political solution, the situation of Saharawi refugees remains unchanged, with basic maintenance of their living conditions and limited hope for improvement, notably in the health sector. DG ECHO assistance will continue to focus on

⁹ International Organisation for Migration

¹⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

basic service provision in the sectors of food aid, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, shelter and basic non-food items. While an LRRD approach appears difficult to implement in present circumstances. DG ECHO will continue advocating for sectoral coordination, local capacity building, mid-term programming and the reliability of food aid flows.

3.3.3. Caucasus

DG ECHO has been slowly phasing out its activities in the Caucasus over the last year. However, as conflict flares up from time to time and as a significant IDP population remains, a further protection programme for this target group will be considered.

The Caucasus being disaster prone, disaster risk reduction will remain high on the agenda together with potential response to natural disasters.

3.4. Asia and the Pacific

The region is prone to a wide range of natural catastrophes: typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, floods and landslides, which often affect very vulnerable high density populations. Vulnerabilities exist not only in remote areas, often inhabited by ethnic minorities, but also in urban areas. Exposure of the poorest populations has been increasing due to negative consequences of climate change, particularly in coastal areas and the Pacific islands.

DG ECHO intends to continue its involvement in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) throughout the region and, when appropriate, DRR measures will be mainstreamed into the response to natural disasters and complex crises. DG ECHO will continue to explore innovative DRR initiatives in the region and to coordinate with DRR programmes run by other services of the European Commission and other donors, in order to identify opportunities for effective LRRD.

3.4.1. Central Asia and South West Asia

Kyrgyzstan

The situation in Kyrgyzstan will need further monitoring beyond the current humanitarian aid programme. It appears that harassment of the Uzbek ethnic minority has continued, triggering emigration to other countries, in particular Russia. While it is to be hoped that the ethnic conflict will not flare up again, the country remains rather unstable due to the lack of full control of the central government over the South.

Afghanistan

The constantly changing security situation and consequences of extensive military operations, aggravated by years of drought and recurrent small scale disasters, give rise to continuous humanitarian needs. In 2011, the first priority will be to respond to the consequences of the conflict, notably by supporting people affected by internal displacements as well as supporting the return process of refugees from Pakistan and Iran. Response to natural disasters will also be prioritised when the added value is clearly identified and the coping capacity of the authorities exhausted. DG ECHO will address new humanitarian needs where security and access allow partners to intervene. The aim will be to meet beneficiaries' needs for shelter, food, water, sanitation and hygiene education, with protection and DRR as first cross cutting priorities.

Even though the health sector has been the subject of an LRRD process for quite a while, DG ECHO needs to tackle, when relevant and notably in remote areas, health emergencies with a particular focus on acute malnutrition and disease outbreaks. DG ECHO will intensify its efforts towards a coherent LRRD approach that takes into consideration the challenges of the specific situation, as well as the importance of involving local communities. Coordination and reinforcement of the humanitarian space will still be high on the agenda. Therefore, DG ECHO will continue its support for security coordination and for humanitarian flights to access remote locations.

Pakistan

Pakistan has been severely affected both by internal conflicts in the North and the tribal areas and major flooding in most of the country during the summer of 2010.

The consequences of the large population displacements in Khyber Pakhtunkwa (KPK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Area on internally displaced persons, people returning to their areas of origins, host families and other conflict affected people will be targeted by DG ECHO. Furthermore, DG ECHO will have to continue supporting the needs linked to the large scale flooding which started in July 2010 and affected almost all provinces of Pakistan. In KPK, both affected by conflict and by the flood, the response will have to be as comprehensive as possible.

Protection of civilians, security for humanitarian workers, access to beneficiaries and respect for the humanitarian space are major concerns in the context of Pakistan. DG ECHO will focus its interventions on basic humanitarian needs' response such as protection, food assistance, basic health services, water and sanitation, shelter and non-food items and may engage in support to basic livelihood activities. LRRD with other Commission's services and other donors will be of paramount importance, bearing in mind the needs for immediate early recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction after both the internal displacements and the floods. Pakistan being a very disaster prone country, as proven once more by the 2010 flooding, disaster risk reduction will remain a priority together with a potential response to natural disasters.

3.4.2. Central South Asia

Bangladesh

DG ECHO remains concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation of unregistered Rohingya refugees and where access is possible, DG ECHO will continue providing a minimum level of humanitarian assistance to this population, with an emphasis on protection, while advocating a durable solution.

Furthermore, some of the most vulnerable victims of recent natural disasters in Bangladesh are still in need of emergency relief and assistance to recover their subsistence livelihood. A coordinated LRRD approach for the post-emergency situation will be promoted.

India

Increasing violence in the Kashmir valley and in the State of Chhattisgarh is having a heavy impact on local populations, who often have no access to psycho-social support, medical assistance, or protection. DG ECHO intends to continue supporting the most vulnerable of the

conflict affected households. Opportunities for LRRD in this context will depend on access, itself linked to the intensity of the conflict.

Nepal

In its current fragile post-conflict situation, Nepal's problems need to be addressed more through a development than a humanitarian approach. DG ECHO's humanitarian aid is being phased out, maintaining an emphasis on basic health, water and sanitation. LRRD is facilitated by the resumption of development cooperation. DG ECHO intends to continue financing food aid for the (currently 77,000) Bhutanese refugees living in camps, whilst encouraging a comprehensive solution for them.

Sri Lanka

Despite the end of the conflict in May 2009, the humanitarian situation remains precarious for over 280,000 people displaced in its final stages. The return and reintegration of IDPs is ongoing, albeit with widespread unmet humanitarian and protection needs still expected in 2011. DG ECHO intends to continue providing a distinct added value both in terms of assistance and advocacy for humanitarian principles. DG ECHO also intends to continue its support to the (currently 75,000) Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu in India.

3.4.3. South East Asia and Pacific

Myanmar (Burma) – Thailand

Humanitarian needs are expected to remain significant in Myanmar in 2011, especially among the ethnic minorities living in the Eastern border areas as well as the stateless Rohingya population in Northern Rakhine State. In addition, parliamentary elections scheduled for 7 November 2010 may lead to increasing tensions between the government and various ethnic groups, especially their armed factions, which could result in new displacements of civilians. The continued engagement of humanitarian donors will remain critically important. In the Burmese refugee camps in Thailand, the need for continued humanitarian assistance will also remain. This should however be coupled with increased efforts for improved beneficiary targeting in the camps, on the one hand, and with advocating a durable solution for the refugees, on the other.

3.5. Latin America and Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions in the world most vulnerable to natural disasters but also the region where inequality is highest, with macro-economic indicators masking the real socio-economic situation of the majority of the population. The region is affected by a range of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions. Besides, the impact of climate change is increasingly noticeable with recurrent droughts, floods and spells of cold weather. These sudden and slow onset disasters cause important losses both in economic and social terms. Furthermore, due to the recurrent nature of these disasters, the local population's coping capacity is progressively being reduced, which implies that external assistance is required more often.

DG ECHO intends to continue its involvement in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) throughout the region and, when appropriate, DRR measures will be mainstreamed into the response to natural disaster and complex crises. DG ECHO will continue to explore innovative DRR initiatives in the region and to coordinate with DRR programmes run by other services of the

European Commission and other donors, in order to identify opportunities for effective LRRD.

Colombia

There is no end in sight for the armed conflict in Colombia which continues to generate some 300,000 new IDPs every year. At the same time, more rural communities in conflict-affected areas end up in confinement or are blockaded by illegal armed groups. Civilians are increasingly victims of mine and remnants of war: incidents, intimidation, threats, rapes, selective killings, as well as child recruitment (according to UNICEF up to 14,000 child soldiers are enrolled in different armed groups). It is expected that there will be a strong need for continued assistance and protection activities in favour of IDPs, especially from the most recently displaced communities (less than 12 months). Close attention will also have to be given to rural communities facing restrictions on movement and lacking access to basic goods and services, in particular women, children and the elderly, as well as indigenous and Afro-Colombian people. Some 500,000 Colombians living as refugees primarily in Ecuador and Venezuela will also need continued support.

Haiti

DG ECHO will support the response to the aftermath of the earthquake of January 2010 through multi-sectoral assistance, throughout the country, thus reaching directly and indirectly the affected population. Despite some recent progress in the implementation of the transitional shelter strategy (as of August 2010 close to 10% of the transitional shelter had been built) and the recent mobilization of the Haitian Interim Reconstruction Commission, it is estimated that a significant number of earthquake-affected people will remain highly vulnerable in camps and spontaneous settlements throughout 2011. In case of further natural disasters, their situation may well become even more precarious. DG ECHO will remain active in providing support for the displaced populations particularly as far as shelter situation is concerned.

Efforts to reduce malnutrition and make available obstetric care to reduce mortality and morbidity will need to be resumed and strengthened, as implementation was disrupted by the earthquake and the target population increased as a result of internal displacement. This will also allow the consolidation of malnutrition and obstetric care data and a deeper understanding of the problems and appropriate strategies, facilitating a proper transition with long term development donors.

4. DELIVERY, COORDINATION AND CONTROL OF HUMANITARIAN AID

Humanitarian aid is often delivered in emergency situations in which access to beneficiaries is difficult due to logistical or security constraints. To make sure that public funds are well used under these circumstances, the Commission pursues an active relationship with its stakeholders and has put in place various monitoring and coordination mechanisms.

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 enables 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 enhanced to maximise complementarities.

Relations with partners

The Commission implements its humanitarian aid mandate by funding about 200 partners including 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. DG ECHO 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 in the new Commissioner's portfolio. It will adopt a comprehensive approach linking the actors and stakeholders of both constituencies.

4.2. Coordination of humanitarian funds

Various mechanisms are in place to ensure the funds implemented by ECHO and those of other humanitarian actors in response to crises:

- With EU Member States by regular meetings in the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA). This includes coordinating on overall strategies and on responses to specific crisis situations; ECHO situation reports are shared with Member States and also contribute to coordinating the overall response to crises
- With the European Parliament (DEVE Committee) by regular exchanges of views and exercise of the right of scrutiny, particularly on the urgency procedure, so as to allow the Commission to respond swiftly to urgent humanitarian needs,
- When a disaster strikes or while tracking humanitarian operations, Commission experts in the field also keep actively abreast of funds being considered or made available by other organisations, including other donors and agencies in both the private and public sectors;
- Regular discussions on the overall state of funding compared to UN Consolidated Appeals requirements take place with OCHA, the UN agency for humanitarian aid, under the auspices of Good Humanitarian Donorship.
- An IT application has been developed to collate information on humanitarian aid contributions from EU Member States (14points application). This gives details of

Commission and Member State humanitarian aid provided, by year and by recipient country. This system is shared with OCHA, via their *Financial Tracking System*.

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 DG ECHO signs with NGOs and international organisations¹¹ defining the requirements for financial credentials and expertise of implementing partners;

- Project monitoring through a network of DG ECHO field experts (technical assistants) worldwide.
- Regular field visits to projects by geographical desks, auditors and DG ECHO 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 DG ECHO;
- Regular evaluations are undertaken, focusing on major country operations, partners and thematic issues. The results of these are posted on DG ECHO'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 audit.
- 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

DG ECHO'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.

¹¹ Mainly IFRC, ICRC and IOM

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 Council¹².

Finally, specialised committees of the Budget Authority exercise control over financial management in European Commission services and organise annual hearings with the Commissioners concerned to decide whether to approve the annual accounts.

5. CONCLUSION

The frequency of natural and man-made disasters is increasing, as is their intensity and severity. The Haiti earthquake, the floods in Central Europe and Asia, the forest fires in Portugal and in the Russian Federation, the oil spill in the US and the floods in Pakistan are recent examples of this trend.

From an operational point, 2011 will be a challenging year: in addition to the many protracted crises, DG ECHO will have to deal with the spill-over effect of the two major disasters in 2010, namely Haiti and Pakistan, as well as the consequences of the tsunami in Indonesia.

On the policy side, main challenges will be to prepare for the revision of the Humanitarian Aid regulation, the setting-up of the EVHAC and the new legislation for Civil Protection.

Since 2007, the European Parliament has consistently called on the Commission to reinforce its response capacity to disasters through the creation of a European Civil Protection Force.

The next months will be important if the EU is to live up to its ambitions in this respect. The communication on the EU's disaster response capacity will form the basis for strengthening this. At the same time, the discussion on the new Multiannual Financial Framework could pave the way for giving the EU the resources needed to respond adequately to the more frequent, more serious disasters with which we are now confronted.

¹² The annual report 2007 is published on <http://eca.europa.eu/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/1569525.PDF>.