

A value-based vision for reliable partnership

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you today. During this conference, we have heard distinguished speakers presenting very insightful views on the challenges humanitarian aid is facing in today's polarised world.

Allow me to add some reflections from the standpoint of the European Commission.

We are living in an era marked by increasing **fragility**. In recent years, blatant violations of **International Humanitarian Law** have become alarmingly frequent. There are mounting obstacles to delivering aid to those most in need - access is denied, aid workers are killed, hospitals and schools are attacked, children are caught in crossfires.

The number of people forced to flee their homes continues to rise, and the escalating climate crisis further intensifies global humanitarian needs.

In 2025, an estimated **305 million** individuals in the world will **require urgent aid** and protection. This staggering figure reflects the worsening of existing crises worldwide, with profound impacts on those directly affected. Their need is not an abstract statistic. This is real human suffering.

Two core factors continue to drive these humanitarian needs: **conflict** and **climate-related disasters**. Civilians are often the hardest hit in war zones, where disregard for human rights and humanitarian norms is widespread. Meanwhile, the growing frequency and severity of climate

events devastate lives and contribute to dangerous levels of hunger - with famine conditions declared for the first time in years in several regions.

Humanitarian emergencies now affect every corner of the globe. Even in Europe, 15 million people remain in need due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The United Nations estimates that nearly **\$50 billion will be needed in 2025 to respond to these emergencies**. Yet, the gap between available resources and real needs is widening. The cost of inaction would leave millions of people without support.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Collective solutions are the only sustainable path to tackle the complex challenges we face.

*The adoption of the **UN Pact for the Future** sent a clear signal: the global demand for cooperation remains strong. The Pact offers a blueprint for a more just, inclusive, and effective system."*

We also believe, and I am sure we all share this belief, that is always better to prevent crises than to deal with their consequences. Fostering a culture of preparedness and resilience built on an integrated all-hazards approach, a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach is the cornerstone of the **European Union's Preparedness strategy**.

But when a conflict breaks out or a natural disaster hits a country and causes devastating impact and human suffering, the values of humanity and solidarity that underpin humanitarian aid must prevail.

To save lives and preserve human dignity, we must reaffirm **humanitarian principles**. Neutrality, impartiality, and independence are not optional—they are the foundation of trust. Humanitarian aid must reach all those in need, regardless of borders or ideologies.

We need to bridge the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus**. We must tear down the walls between our silos. Humanitarian response cannot exist in isolation.

To build sustainable peace and resilience, we must link our efforts—from emergency relief to long-term recovery and peacebuilding—especially in fragile and conflict-affected regions.

We need to match the scale of the crisis, with predictable, flexible, and long-term **financing**. We must also welcome new partners—philanthropic institutions, private sector innovators—to share this responsibility.

We need to recognise what we already know: that local actors are not just first responders. And need to be effectively empowered.

We need to take fully into account the **climate** challenges in our humanitarian response.

We need to harness technology and **innovation**, responsibly and inclusively.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past 30 years, the **EU has helped deliver aid – worldwide**, reaching the most vulnerable populations.

Collectively, the EU and its Member States — as Team Europe — contribute **nearly one-third of global humanitarian funding**, a share that may soon increase further.

We can and must enhance our contributions. But as stated by **Commissioner Lahbib**: *‘we alone cannot fill the gap left by others — the needs are simply too great. Every nation that values stability and prosperity must play its part.’*

Current crises are **testing the limits** of our current humanitarian system. To remain impactful, the **humanitarian sector must evolve**. It must become more agile, inclusive, and capable of handling increasingly complex emergencies.

Expanding the pool of donors and engaging more countries in the UN-coordinated response is vital. Additionally, building deeper partnerships across governments, NGOs, international financial institutions, and local actors is essential for more united, multilateral responses to crises. And **together, we can restore trust in the power of principled action.**

To reaffirm our commitment, the EU has increased its initial **humanitarian budget for 2025 to EUR 1.9 billion**. This continued investment reflects not only a strategic decision but also a response to our citizens’ strong support — with 91% backing EU humanitarian efforts, according to a recent survey.

The EU will continue to **lead by example**. The EU has long been a leader in humanitarian action, and we will continue to build on this track record.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this context, let mention a concrete example: the **humanitarian supply chain**.

It may sound a technical issue – a **back-office function**. On the contrary, the humanitarian supply chain is of strategic importance. Not only because the humanitarian supply chain - from procurement to delivery - counts for 60-80% of the humanitarian spending. But also because it is **thorough the humanitarian supply chain that solidarity turns in action** to save lives and protect human dignity.

However, the **humanitarian supply chain is under strain**. When violence, weak governance, or climate change hit, the supply chain falters. And when it breaks, we don't just lose goods—we lose lives.

The **need to re-think how humanitarian supply chain works** has become more pressing than ever.

That's why we have launched the **Humanitarian Leadership Group on Supply Chain**, bringing together a wide coalition: donors, international organisations, NGOs, academia, and the private sector.

We are working – in an inclusive manner – **to make the humanitarian supply chain more efficient and effective, more sustainable and resilient**.

Through a series of **workshops**, we are looking at the functioning of the supply chain from various angles - environmental sustainability, procurement, digitalisation, preparedness, and localisation. We are identifying **weaknesses** but also significant **opportunities for synergies**.

We will convene a **High-Level Conference** by the end of this year with the objective to agree on a consistent set of **actions** – and to start

implementing them. Because we need to respond to concrete needs with concrete actions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, I have a very simple message to convey:

As the winds of isolationism whip across the world, the **EU will remain a strong, reliable and committed humanitarian partner**. You can count on us.

Thank you.