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"Our changing world and what it means for international humanitarian action"

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International conference organised by the Order of Malta
"Humanitarian diplomacy and International Crisis Management"
Paris-UNESCO, 27-28 January 2011

Address by Kristalina Georgieva

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I am very honoured to address the closing session of this conference on *"Humanitarian diplomacy and International Crisis Management"* organised by the Sovereign Order of Malta in partnership with the French Marine Nationale.

The Order of Malta has a centuries-long established history of engagement in humanitarian activities. And the Commission is proud to have the Order as one of the close and long-standing partners of ECHO, the European Humanitarian Service. The Order has also always played an active role in the societal debates of our times, often acting like a look-out post to anticipate future trends and facilitate the exchange of ideas. As for the French Marine Nationale, it has a long tradition of sea rescue and solidarity and of faring not just the high seas but also the seas of academic debate.

I am therefore particularly glad that their partnership has offered a high-level platform for debate and discussions among professionals about the changing international landscape and the challenges and opportunities this poses to humanitarianism.

The world is indeed changing at a pace and a magnitude that we can hardly grasp. We all have our own assessment and measure and of what this change is about. The best indicator of change is probably to be found in the nature and scale of today's global issues.

- <u>Changing security threats</u>: Since the end of the Cold there have been less wars between countries, but security threats have become more diffuse and complex to tackle: one immediately thinks of 9/11 and of terrorism ; but also of nuclear proliferation, organised crime ; cyber-crime ; illegal trafficking. But the main measure of insecurity is probably the growing number of weak and failing States that have created the conditions of protracted instability, violent crises, and civil conflicts throughout South and Central Asia, the Middle-East and the African continent.

- <u>Changing population trends</u>: In 30 years we will be 9 billion living on this planet; and this demographic boom is accompanied by formidable tensions: between the ageing of rich developed countries and the high fertility rates and youth of the poor developing world; between rural and urban areas. This will exacerbate migratory movements, regular and irregular ones.

- <u>Changing climate</u>: never the environment and the climate of our planet have been put under so much stress by human activities. We have changed the climate but climate is changing our lives: we will experience more extreme weather patterns - drought, floods, storms – than ever before *(e.g. massive floods in Australia after years of drought, devastating rainfalls in Brasil, Xynthia storm that hit France exactly a year ago)*. In many regions of the world access to basic natural resources, water and agricultural land, will become more difficult creating further tensions and "climatic migration".

- <u>Changes in the world economy</u>: developing and emerging countries are now the new drivers of world growth: it is estimated that by 2020-2025 the GDP of the E-8 (8 major emerging economies) will be superior to that of the G-8. The word middle class has tripled in the last ten years – from 200 million in 2000 to 600 million in 2010 with half of it living in emerging countries. But while millions are lifted out of poverty, development remains very unequal with

MDGs remaining out of reach for large swaths of population, the so-called "bottom billion" of Paul Collier.

- Changes in the distribution of power:
We are moving from a world where the international institutions, values and principles have been largely shaped and dominated by the West to one characterised by multipolarism and the "rise of the rest", as famously described by the American lead editorialist Fareed Zakaria. This phase of tectonic adjustment between powers is reshaping multilateralism and international governance, as we have seen with the growing role of the G-20 or the pressure on the UN to reform its Security Council's membership.

- The rising role of non-State actors in world affairs:
    - Citizens who are more empowered than ever as agents of change notably thanks to modern technology: think of Wikileaks, or of the role of Facebook and social networks in street mobilisation from Tunisia to Egypt.
    - NGOs that have mushroomed in all corners of the world as social and political forces.
    - The private sector yield growing power not just in international business and finance but also in societal issues.
    - The global media with their "breaking news" effect whose immediacy and emotional shock waves influence the conduct of diplomacy and politics.

The general point I want to make is that this world which has grown more complex, more interdependent, laboured by contradictory pressures and trends, is a world which is both stronger and more vulnerable. And all this affects the scale and nature of the **humanitarian challenges** we face nowadays.

- The global level of humanitarian needs has gone up: For 2011, the United Nations have launched their biggest ever fund appeal, for a total amount of $ 7,4 billion (over €5,7 billion) a strong evidence of the rising humanitarian needs. In 2010 the European Commission alone disbursed over € 1,1 billion in

humanitarian funding which have benefited directly and indirectly 140 million people.

- <u>Humanitarian contexts</u> have become more complex and difficult:

    - Due to the increased frequency and intensity of <u>natural disasters</u> there are more sudden-onset humanitarian crises and in particular mega-disasters such as the quake in Haiti or the floods in Pakistan. These types of disasters often overwhelm the local and international relief capacity.

    - <u>Man-made humanitarian disasters</u> are still mostly caused by <u>internal civil conflicts</u> with civilian populations increasingly exposed to violence and suffering. This type of conflict is often characterised by a disregard for international humanitarian law and principles by belligerents and a <u>shrinking of the "humanitarian space"</u>. Issues of humanitarian access, safety and protection of both civilian populations and relief staff have become more problematic. In 2009 102 relief workers were killed in action – more than UN peace keepers.

    - There is also an <u>emerging source</u> of humanitarian needs resulting from economic and social impoverishment that humanitarian organisations are not used to address. These mostly concern the most vulnerable people, who have fallen outside all safety nets, whether public services, traditional coping mechanisms or development assistance. The recent food and malnutrition crises caused by the high food and commodities prices are a symptomatic example of this new type of humanitarian crisis.

    - Another defining feature of humanitarian contexts relates to the <u>multiplication of actors</u> involved in relief assistance. Next to the traditional humanitarian NGOs and international humanitarian organisations, there are more NGOs than ever before, from LONGs (my "little own NGO") to big majors. Private foundations and companies play an increasing role. There is also a growing importance of State humanitarianism, either in the form of

direct government-to-government assistance, or the deployment of civil protection and military assets. This multiplicity of actors brings a variety of motivations, interests and practices with a significant risk of "instrumentalising" and politicisation of humanitarian action in contradiction with the humanitarian principles of neutrality and non-discrimination: from proselyte agendas to so-called "*win hearts and minds*" foreign policy strategies.

Such trends and challenges put enormous pressure on the humanitarian system. They can badly affect the effectiveness, coherence and credibility of global humanitarian action. In the face of such evolutions, we simply cannot continue "business as usual"; we need to shift gear and take a more concerted and collective commitment to significant change in the way we conceive of international humanitarian action.

This is why I am personally convinced of the necessity and urgency to (re)build a strong collective **international agenda for humanitarian aid**. We need to focus political attention, to ensure a shared understanding and commitment regarding humanitarian action. The Development agenda has benefited from the formidable political traction of The Millennium Development Goals. It is time to build a renewed **global consensus** on the **goals, norms and principles** for humanitarian assistance.

This shared vision and agenda could be shaped around the following elements:

1) Strengthening global humanitarian funding:

    - We need more global financial resources for humanitarian aid. International humanitarian assistance stood in 2010 at a record high of over €10 billion.

However the global humanitarian financial shortfall also stood at a record high of €3,3 billion. The traditional donors are those whose public budgets are most under strain as a result of the economic crisis. This is particularly the case for the EU which collectively accounts for roughly 40% of world's humanitarian aid. We therefore need to build both commitments and partnerships for humanitarian funding. The emerging donors, who account for about 10% could play a more significant role in sustaining humanitarian financing. I am also a supporter of the private sector and of public-private-partnerships *(; cf announcement of IFRC and Coca-Cola partnership for development of disaster response capacity).*

- We also need <u>better humanitarian funding</u>: by greater equity and predictability in the allocation of funding if we are to avoid creating "darlings and orphans" of relief aid. This means essentially adherence to the <u>principle of funding according to level of needs</u>, and no other consideration.

2) <u>Strengthening the performance and delivery capacity of the humanitarian system:</u>

- <u>To be better prepared to address large scale sudden-onset disasters</u>: Collectively, all relief actors including civil protection, humanitarian organisations and donors need to invest more in disaster response and preparedness: that is, more anticipation in scenario planning and pre-positioning of key relief supplies (notably shelter); improving humanitarian logistics; better training and deployment of expert staff ; greater support to local capacities. I have taken a strong policy initiative to enhance EU disaster response capacity.

- To <u>improve on the spot leadership and coordination</u>: the roles of UN Humanitarian Coordinators, and of UN-led system of clusters are crucial; but they need to be further strengthened. They also need to be supported by the various humanitarian actors with stronger incentives for cooperation for

NGOs and other humanitarian organisations to take part in coordinated and consolidated need assessment, and sector strategies.

- Improve aid effectiveness: There should be greater consensus among donors and humanitarian organisations on baseline requirements in terms of needs assessment, focus on results and accountability. Humanitarian organisations and donors must accept and ensure greater benchmarking of performance, this to ensure that the every €of aid is stretched to the fullest.

3) Strengthening policy cooperation in the management of crises and disasters.

There is a pressing need to "de-compartementalise" policy areas in the management of disasters and crises. People need to get out of their bunkers and reach out to other constituencies.

- There is a compelling case for greater humanitarian-development interaction: Their common objective should be to increase the resilience of vulnerable populations in order to reduce vulnerability and that humanitarian emergencies turn into protracted crises. Adaptation to climate change and natural Disaster Risk Reduction strategies should become a joint priority agenda. Recovery and transition between relief, rehabilitation and development should also become a joint policy objective. This is an area where the European Union, the UN and the World Bank need to take joint international initiatives *(cf. joint disaster and post-disaster needs assessments).*

- The interaction with foreign and security policy offers scope for synergy but it must be properly framed by the respect of mandates and principles. Sticking to the principles of international humanitarian law (impartiality, neutrality and non-discrimination, aid according to needs) is not just a moral consideration. It is the main guarantor of the acceptance and effectiveness of humanitarian aid on the ground. This is why subjecting humanitarian aid to

foreign and security agenda and chain of command would be a political and strategic mistake. It would squander all the value of influence yielded by humanitarian aid as a 'soft power' *(cf. Yemen)*.

Having said that, governments and <u>foreign services</u> can play a useful role in advancing the humanitarian agenda: either to engage other authorities in crisis when humanitarian access and protection of civilians are at stake ; or to support the general promotion and application of International Humanitarian Law which is so badly needed.

<u>Military</u> can also play a useful role in humanitarian contexts by contributing to the provision of relief and/or security in well defined conditions and according to international norms, (the so-called Oslo guidelines and MCDA guidelines). We have many positive stories to tell and build on.

4) *(final)* **Strengthening international humanitarian governance.**

There is no chance to advance a global consensus on humanitarian aid if the governance of the humanitarian system is not changed. The current system is too fragmented and divided between traditional donors and new donors, between donors and humanitarian organisations. New donors tend to act outside the multilateral frameworks while these latter are - in membership and policy direction - largely dominated by western countries.

This creates an unhealthy perception of a divide in the international community with competing systems of norms and practices in humanitarian assistance. This can give rise to "*cultural*" interpretations of humanitarian action that will run against the very universal foundations of humanitarian values and principles.

A first important step would be to broaden the dialogue about international humanitarian action to all donors, traditional and non traditional and emerging ones. Developing regular high level platforms for such dialogue would give greater legitimacy and effectiveness to the humanitarian system. And it would

bring about a better shared understanding and commitment to the fundamentals goals and principles that underpin humanitarian action.

In the face of today's challenges, only by working together we can make a difference to save lives and bring down the costs for our societies. To paraphrase a report from the UK Overseas Development Institute on "diversity in donorship", I would say that *"humanitarian action is the preserve of no one, not of rich industrialised western nations or any organisation, international or non-governmental, but a common pursuit among all nations and all organisations"*.

I am confident this conference will contribute to the advancement of this common pursuit, which is also the advancement of the most treasured values of humanity and solidarity, which provide help and hope for the people in need and for the future of our global civilisation, regardless of nationality, religion, culture, race or political considerations.

Thank you for your attention.