



Council of the
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COHOM 160
EDUC 302
CSDP/PSDC 591
ENV 799
CLIMA 285
PROCIV 76
CONUN 171
COTER 158
COAFR 283
MAMA 169
RELEX 1018

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU
Work Programme Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
(COHAFA)
1 July – 31 December 2024

On behalf of the Presidency, delegations will find in annex the work programme of the Hungarian Presidency for the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) from 1 July to 31 December 2024.

HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU

WORK PROGRAMME

WORKING PARTY ON HUMANITARIAN AID AND FOOD AID (COHAFA)

1 JULY – 31 DECEMBER 2024

1. According to the latest Global Humanitarian Overview, 300 million people around the world need humanitarian assistance and protection, due to conflicts, climate emergencies and other drivers. The ever-widening gap in humanitarian funding is stretching our aid system to its limits. Although a number of crises have emerged and intensified over the past few years, other crises must not be overlooked. Consequently, maintaining the dialogue on forgotten crises is our collective obligation, while keeping humanitarian crises that have emerged/intensified in recent years on the agenda.
2. Due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and other armed conflicts, the aftermath of the COVID-19 restrictive measures, the debt crisis and the disruption in global value chains and climate change, a staggering 735 million people, representing over 9% of the world's population, were facing hunger by 2022. Building on the work of the French Presidency, we aim to adopt Council conclusions focusing on local solutions and empowering communities.
3. To further strengthen the strategic coordination role of the COHAFA Working Party, in line with the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Trio priorities, the Hungarian Presidency will organise a director-level meeting as well as joint meetings with other working parties.
4. In the aftermath of the European elections and the set-up of the new European Commission, the strong role of the Council has never been more significant to increase the collective impact of the EU and its Member States.

I. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. FORGOTTEN CRISES

5. Over the past decade, humanitarian needs have skyrocketed, driven by an increasing number of natural disasters, conflicts, and other emergencies. In 2010, the humanitarian funds managed by UNOCHA totalled USD 11.64 billion. Today, that figure has surged to over USD 48.6 billion. Despite this significant increase in funding, the resources available have not kept pace with the growing needs. Projections indicate that by 2029, global humanitarian needs will reach an astonishing USD 100 billion. Alarmingly, the global donor community is expected to be able to assist only around a quarter of those in need, leaving millions without the aid they need.
6. The attention of the international community, the media and the public is predominantly focused on high-profile crises, which are often given priority due to the level of needs but also their geopolitical implications and strategic importance. As a result, many other crises, which have been ongoing for years, if not decades, fail to receive the attention and resources they desperately need. These forgotten crises affect millions of people, leaving them in prolonged suffering without adequate support or visibility.
7. In its May 2023 conclusions on addressing the humanitarian funding gap, the Council expressed deep concern over the growing gap between estimated needs and funding, including in forgotten crises. The Hungarian Presidency, in collaboration with the preceding Spanish and Belgian Presidencies, acknowledges the imperative of addressing these forgotten crises. We are committed to raising awareness of forgotten crises on the global stage and to prioritising them within international discussions and aid agendas in a needs-based approach. Our strategy involves spotlighting one such crisis during each COHAFA meeting.

8. Through this maintained focus on forgotten crises, we will spotlight these crises and advocate to foster a more inclusive and comprehensive humanitarian response that leaves no crisis forgotten and no person behind. We will also discuss how the EU and its Member States deliver emergency and humanitarian aid in these cases taking into consideration all overlying factors.

2. **EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES**

9. According to the ‘Stop the War on Children’ report (2022), nearly one in six children and adolescents worldwide are living in areas affected by conflict. There are increasing numbers of attacks on schools, learners and education personnel depriving children of access to a safe and quality education. Globally, a staggering 78 million children who are out of school due to the devastating impacts of war, climate disasters and forced displacement. These children are not only missing out on essential learning opportunities but are also facing significant disruptions in their development and well-being. The situation underscores the urgent need for global efforts to protect and prioritise the education of children in these vulnerable and crisis-stricken regions, since the onset of the crisis.
10. Following up on the Portuguese Presidency of 2021 that highlighted this issue, the goal of the Hungarian Presidency is to bring this critical issue to the forefront during COHAFA meetings with the relevant UN organisations and DG ECHO. We aim to highlight the importance of providing localised assistance and fostering strong cooperation with local actors and affected communities. By focusing on these aspects, we can ensure that aid efforts are not only more efficient but also more culturally sensitive and sustainable. By advocating for these strategies in our discussions with international bodies, we seek to focus on more inclusive and context-specific humanitarian responses to ensure that aid reaches those in need more directly and addresses the root causes of their vulnerabilities, ultimately fostering a more resilient local population.

3. GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

11. The Hungarian Presidency, in collaboration with the CODEV-PI Working Party, will address global food security through a Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus perspective. We commend the principles laid down in the Council conclusions adopted during the French Presidency in 2022. Since then, circumstances have deteriorated, calling for a renewed approach. In particular, more emphasis will be put on enhancing local resilience and capacities, prioritising the empowerment of local communities, and promoting a transition towards localised solutions. This approach acknowledges the evolving challenges of food insecurity, conflict and development, and emphasises the importance of adapting strategies to meet the needs of local contexts.
12. Furthermore, our efforts will align with the deliverables of our recent workshop held on 15 May 2024, where key stakeholders gathered to discuss practical solutions and effective cooperation. By incorporating key principles such as promoting local solutions, empowering communities, and prioritising nutrition, technology and water management, we aim to strengthen the comprehensive framework established by the Council conclusions of 2022. This will enable us to better address the interconnected challenges of food insecurity, conflict and development, ultimately enhancing global food security and resilience.
13. Our Council conclusions will also focus on access to local populations, aid efficiency, fragmentation of responses, climate adaptation, and resilience-building efforts, particularly in fragile regions and regions affected by armed conflicts. By building upon the conclusions of previous Presidencies and fostering collaboration within Team Europe, we seek to consolidate a comprehensive framework that addresses the interconnected challenges of food insecurity, conflict and development, ultimately enhancing global food security and resilience.

4. PROMOTING LOCALISATION IN HUMANITARIAN AID, INCLUDING FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

14. Localised aid is crucial in humanitarian efforts as it ensures that assistance is tailored to the specific needs and contexts of affected communities, fostering more effective and sustainable outcomes. In crisis situations, local actors, including faith-based organisations (FBOs), often play a critical role due to their deep-rooted presence, close links with other humanitarian actors notably as implementing partners, and trusted relationships within communities. They could provide essential services like alphabetisation, social support, and healthcare, based on their capacity and skills, particularly in regions where governmental structures are weak or absent. Their immediate response and effective delivery of aid during emergencies make them invaluable partners in humanitarian relief efforts. The role of localisation and of local actors in humanitarian aid could be further discussed within the COHAFA framework. Therefore, reflecting on their involvement could offer insights into how to maximise their contributions and synergies with other partners, accountability as part of the humanitarian community, and enhance the overall effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.

5. ANTICIPATORY ACTION

15. Anticipatory action is a strategic tool for the humanitarian community, given its critical role in addressing the funding gap, so building on the work of the German and Czech Presidencies in 2020 and 2022 respectively we would like to carry on the discussion on this topic.
16. Natural disasters are intensifying due to climate change, and despite numerous analyses indicating that at least half of these disasters can be predicted, only 1% of them are anticipatory actions implemented to reduce the impact of disasters. This lack of proactivity highlights the urgent need for the international donor community to shift the focus towards anticipatory action, in addition to traditional humanitarian responses.

17. The widening funding gap further underscores the importance of proactively anticipating disasters. Investing in anticipatory action can save both lives and livelihoods, protect development gains and reduce humanitarian needs. By mitigating the impacts of predictable disasters through anticipatory action, resources can be preserved and reallocated to other pressing humanitarian needs. This approach not only enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid but also helps to bridge the funding gap that hampers many humanitarian efforts.
18. By scaling up anticipatory action, we can significantly reduce the needs created by disasters. This strategic shift towards anticipation allows us to transform our response to humanitarian crises, ensuring that we are optimising the use of available resources and by making aid efforts more effective and efficient in reaching those in need.

II. WORKING METHODS

19. Due to the increasing workload in the humanitarian field, we need to update COHAFAs working methods, which were agreed upon in 2015 during the Latvian Presidency, to ensure COHAFAs remains the main forum for strategic coordination within the EU.
20. To enrich the discussions around some relevant agenda items and priorities, the Hungarian Presidency will continue the good practice of inviting speakers and briefers with diverse expertise and from a large spectrum of organisations, where appropriate. In the same spirit, the Presidency will consider joint meetings with other working parties such as CODEV-PI and COTER. Consequently, this approach helps ensure the appropriate reflection and collaboration between experts concerning fragile contexts, food security and triple nexus.
21. Taking into account possible unforeseeable events, the Hungarian Presidency might consider updating common messages and proposing new Council conclusions.
22. Given the unpredictable nature of crises, the Hungarian Presidency may adjust its programme, where necessary, in particular bringing up discussion on emerging humanitarian crises that require COHAFAs attention and a coordinated Team Europe approach.

23. The Hungarian Presidency aims to focus on the thematic priorities mentioned above during the COHAFA meetings while maintaining a balance between thematic and regional topics. Additionally, we plan to address critical issues of key importance in our humanitarian efforts.
24. The Hungarian Presidency aims to strengthen COHAFA's strategic coordination role. To achieve this, we plan to hold a working party meeting at directors' level and organise more focused, condensed sessions with special emphasis on coordination. Specifically, we intend to conduct these meetings over two half-days, starting in the afternoon and finishing with a morning session the next day.
25. We will organise a joint meeting with the CODEV-PI Working Party in Budapest to further enhance collaboration and coordination. Additionally, we intend to host a side event focusing on fragility in the Sahel region, aiming to draw attention to this issue and explore possible solutions. The Hungarian Presidency is organizing a study tour to Egypt to gain an overview of the extensive partnership between the EU and Egypt. The primary focus will be on Global Gateway and development projects, but we will have a look on Egypt's role in mitigating humanitarian crises in the region as well.

III. COHAFA RELEVANT MEETINGS

- COHAFA meeting – 10-11 July
- COHAFA/CODEV-PI meeting, Budapest, 18-19 July
- COHAFA meeting – 11-12 September
- COHAFA meeting – 14-15 October
- Formal COHAFA directors' level meeting – 11 November
- COHAFA meeting – 17-18 December

IV. INDICATIVE CALENDAR OF MAIN HUMANITARIAN EVENTS

July

1-3 July: UNHCR 90th Standing Committee (Geneva)

September

3-6 September: UNICEF Executive Board's second regular session (New York)

12-13 September: UNHCR 91st meeting of the Standing Committee (Geneva)

10-24 September: 79th Session of the UN General Assembly / The Summit of the Future

October

14-18 October: UNHCR 75th plenary session of the Executive Committee (Geneva)

15 October: EU-IOM Senior Officials Meeting (Brussels)

22-24 October: Anticipation Hub: Anticipatory Action Global Dialogue Platform (Berlin)

28-31 October: 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent 'Navigate uncertainty – Strengthen humanity' (Geneva)

29-30 October: 4th meeting G20 DRR WG (Belem)

TBC: ICRC Policy Forum (Geneva)

November

1 November: Ministerial Meeting G20 DRR WG (Belem)

4 November: IOM 35th Session of the Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance (Geneva)

11-24 November: COP 29 United Nations Climate Change Conference (Baku)

18-22 November: WFP Second Regular Session of the Executive Board (Rome)

26-29: IOM 115th Session of the Council (Baku)

December

3 December: Ad hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the announcement of voluntary contributions to the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for 2024 pledging conference (Geneva)

TBC: Food Assistance Convention 19th session (London)

TBC: Senior Officials Meeting on Ukraine (Brussels)

V. HUNGARIAN COHAFA TEAM

COHAFA Chair: Mr István Gyula SOÓS

COHAFA Deputy Chair: Mr Kristóf PÉCZELI

COHAFA Deputy Chair / Hungarian delegate to COHAFA: Ms Blanka UJVÁRI

COHAFA co-delegate: Ms Dóra DÖME
