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European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid – Action Plan

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INTRODUCTION: IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON HUMANITARIAN AID

On 18 December 2007, the Presidents of the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission signed the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid¹, thereby committing the European Union to work closely together to apply the EU common vision of humanitarian aid outlined in the Consensus.

The European Consensus underlines the European Union's commitment to upholding and promoting the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and to advocating strongly for the respect of International Law, including International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law and Refugee Law. The objective of EU humanitarian aid is to provide a needs-based emergency response aimed at preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity wherever the need arises if governments and local actors are overwhelmed, unable or unwilling to act.

In paragraph 100 of the European Consensus, the European Commission is tasked with presenting an action plan for practical measures to implement the Consensus. The Consensus commitments extend to the EU as a whole – both Member States and the European Commission. The action plan foreseen in paragraph 100 is annexed to this Commission Staff Working Paper. It has been the subject of close consultation with stakeholders as provided for in the Consensus.

The EU relies heavily on its implementing Partners – the UN, the Red Cross/Crescent Movement and the NGOs to deliver humanitarian aid. In the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the EU explicitly underlined the importance of this plurality of Partners. This partnership approach is fundamental to the implementation of the commitments contained in the Consensus, extending to the actions outlined in the present Action Plan.

ENHANCING AID EFFECTIVENESS: THE EU ACTING TOGETHER AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS

Structure of the Action Plan

The purpose of this Action Plan is to set out a series of practical actions for the European Union's humanitarian donors that taken together form the EU's substantive agenda for implementing a more closely co-ordinated approach. The overall aim is to ensure that the European Union maximises the effectiveness of its contribution to the collective international humanitarian response.

A number of directly-applicable commitments are contained in the European Consensus statement itself, notably commitments relating to the humanitarian principles, 'Responsibility to protect' and on the use of civil protection resources and military assets in response to humanitarian situations. Those important commitments are considered self-standing arising directly from the Consensus declaration, and therefore have not been repeated in the Action Plan.

This Action Plan should therefore be read as a practical complement to the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid – which remains the basic reference text at EU level.

¹ OJ C 25 of 30 January 2008, p.1

Cross-referencing between actions and the related paragraphs in the Consensus has been included for ease of use.

In order to facilitate implementation of the action plan, related actions have been grouped together into six 'action areas':

- area one: advocacy, promotion of humanitarian principles and international law;
- area two: implementing quality aid approaches;
- area three: reinforcing capacities to respond;
- area four: strengthening partnership;
- area five: enhancing coherence and coordination;
- area six: the aid continuum.

Prioritisation and phasing of actions

The initial period of implementation of the Action Plan is foreseen as five years from second-half 2008 onwards. This Action Plan builds on current initiatives and areas of cooperation already underway, for example in context of Good Humanitarian Donorship, donor fora at an international level or bilateral contacts. Much of the expertise for areas contained in the action plan rests with the Partner organisations.

A challenge for the EU is to ensure effective implementation of these actions based on current resources and as such indicative timing has been included in order to allow for phasing of actions over the full period of the action plan. The bulk of actions should be underway by 2009. A number of areas may take longer to put in motion, but this does not necessarily imply that they have a lower priority.

In presenting the Action Plan, the European Commission services have sought to identify areas where EU actions will clearly add-value to current practice. Some measures are matters of detailed practical cooperation, others are rather more strategic. A red-thread running throughout the Action Plan is the aim of underpinning international efforts to ensure an adequate overall humanitarian response (including reforms of the humanitarian system).

Areas of specific political priority, high-importance for operational performance, or areas that appear to require specific additional momentum from EU donors working together, have been highlighted as priority actions. This should not be seen as detracting from the EU's commitment also to implement the additional actions.

Who will implement?

Both the Member States and the European Commission have endorsed the commitments contained in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

The EU as a whole provided 49.6% of total official humanitarian aid in 2006. Its contribution is made up of the Community response (humanitarian aid provided by the Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid) and the provision of bilateral

humanitarian aid directly by Member States. There is currently considerable variation in terms of size of aid contributions, capacity and experience in implementation of humanitarian aid within the EU. One of the aspirations of the European Consensus is to ensure that the EU as a whole is able to benefit from sharing its collective donor and operational experience.

The majority of actions identified in the Action Plan are to be pursued by the Commission and the Member states acting together. These actions are identified for practical purposes in the Action Plan as "EU".

Thus, "EU" is taken to mean:

either,

i) the whole of the EU;

or, in some cases where appropriate, depending on the nature of the commitment,

ii) a variable group of EU donors, including the European Commission, who have a particular interest or experience in a given area.

This should be defined together pragmatically, based on transparency and inclusiveness, whilst recognising resource constraints.

In a more limited number of cases, the Commission has indicated priorities or given an undertaking for specific actions applicable primarily or solely to the European Community's humanitarian aid contribution or operations. These have been identified in the annexed Action Plan as "EC" (standing for "European Community").

The actions contained in the Action Plan are defined specifically from the perspective of EU humanitarian aid donors, however, there is an underlying assumption that implementation of the majority of actions should be pursued in close collaboration with the humanitarian Partners and other stakeholders.

In implementing the European Consensus, the EU should pursue scope for a more coherent, consistent and comprehensive approach to humanitarian aid. So whilst the majority of actions contained in the annexed Action Plan are the primary responsibility of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and of Member States' humanitarian aid departments (with the appropriate involvement of the European Parliament and Partners), some commitments - notably those under action areas one and six - clearly involve other parts of the EU Institutions and Member State governments, for example those with general responsibility for external relations.

ENSURING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION THAT TRANSLATES INTO RESULTS

Monitoring progress, implementation and results

The Action Plan contains, for each action area an indication of the expected overall result. In addition indications of individual outputs per action are given. Taken together, with regular collective review of implementation of the Consensus and the Action Plan, this

should allow the EU to assess its success in meeting its aim of improving the effectiveness of its humanitarian aid.

Ensuring effective implementation and monitoring progress in achieving practical results will be the common responsibility of the Commission (through its Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid) and the Member States, making use of the Council working party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid, and with appropriate input from the European Parliament and Partners. This builds upon the strong dialogue and contacts that have already been established on the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

Reviewing the Action Plan

A formal mid-term review has been included in the Action Plan for 2010 to allow for an assessment of overall progress and for lessons to be drawn.

It is expected that the EU will make full use of its usual institutional channels and of dialogue with Partners to allow for an annual stock take and adjustment of priorities as appropriate.

CONCLUSION

As one of the world's largest humanitarian donors, the Commission - in particular working through its Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) - reiterates its commitment to fulfilling the commitments contained in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and thus to implementing this action plan. Equally the Commission seeks to work hand in hand with the Member States to bring about a more effective overall EU contribution to humanitarian aid. To this end, the Council, and thus the Member States, are invited also to endorse the annexed Action Plan and to engage actively in its implementation.

EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON HUMANITARIAN AID - ACTION PLAN

ACTION AREA ONE: ADVOCACY, PROMOTION OF HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND INTERNATIONAL LAW					
<i>Expected overall result: EU strengthened commitment to ensuring neutral and independent humanitarian action and to protecting humanitarian space</i>					
Consensus Ref.	Action No.	Actions proposed	EU/EC	Indicative timing	Output
<i>Priority actions:</i>					
§16, 97	1	High-level international conference on current International Humanitarian Law issues and challenges for humanitarian aid in practice, linked to reinforced advocacy and awareness raising activities (<i>cf below</i>).	EU	2008	Conference organised.
§16	2	General and case-specific advocacy for the respect of international law, including International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law and Refugee Law through EU policy channels (statements, political dialogue, joint demarches).	EU	ongoing	Specific situations of failure to uphold IHL are raised with responsible parties.
§10, 16	3	Uphold the fundamental humanitarian principles through EU coordinated positions promoting neutral independent and impartial humanitarian action in all relevant international bodies, and reinforce awareness of the application of those principles across governments and institutions.	EU	ongoing	EU statements. EU external action in accordance with humanitarian principles and adherence to UN MCDA/Oslo guidelines.
<i>Additional actions:</i>					
§16	4	Operationalising the EU guidelines on promoting compliance with International Humanitarian Law.	EU	2009	EU Member States agree practical steps for ensuring application of these guidelines. Implementation of EU joint pledges in follow-up to 30 th International Conference of the Red Cross and Crescent.
§10, 16	5	Develop material for supporting improved understanding and awareness of humanitarian principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - draw-up short humanitarian principles 'aide-memoire' for advocacy purposes; - guidance to ensure humanitarian dimension is duly considered in all EU external action; - develop EU training directory/pack (multipurpose and for use with a range of actors) on humanitarian principles and IHL implications for humanitarian assistance to be disseminated through training and workshops within EU institutions; 	EU	2009	Standard material developed and disseminated through varied channels to different audiences, including through incorporation in training activities.

		<p>- further efforts to promote understanding of the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in complex emergencies and the Oslo Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in International Disaster Relief, including dissemination of the Field Handbook;</p> <p>- assess impact of dissemination and awareness-raising activities, including public communication.</p>		2009 on	
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ACTION AREA TWO: IMPLEMENTING QUALITY AID APPROACHES

Expected overall result: Humanitarian needs identified and met more effectively, with increased focus on neglected crises and specific vulnerabilities and results-oriented approaches. Aid delivered to best possible quality standards and with good levels of accountability.

Consensus Ref.	Action No.	Actions proposed	EU/EC	Indicative Timing	Output
<i>Priority actions:</i>					
§27, 31-32	6	Support OCHA in definition of a common methodological framework for needs assessment. Dissemination of results to EU Member States and field experts and partners.	EC	ongoing	OCHA study on needs assessment supported leading to finalisation of common framework and improved common understanding of needs assessment.
§28, 42, 97	7	Rolling programme of sectoral areas for further collaborative work, leading to operational recommendations, with sectoral priorities reviewed regularly:	EC		EC operational guidelines on sectoral issues, which would be available for MS donors to use as appropriate. Increased systematic sharing of expertise.
§35		<p>i) children in emergencies;</p> <p>ii) use of cash and vouchers in humanitarian response;</p> <p>iii) Humanitarian aid funding interventions relating to HIV-AIDS;</p> <p>iv) overview of protection strategies (including protection against sexual and gender based violence) and funding protection;</p>		<p>ongoing</p> <p>2008-9</p> <p>2008-9</p> <p>2008-9</p>	

	v)	gender mainstreaming in Humanitarian Aid, including review of current tools available.		2009-10	
§37-38, 96	8	EU budget review – financial perspectives (mid-term): assessment of adequacy of resources for humanitarian aid in light of increased needs and overall increases in ODA. Long-term trends in need and humanitarian aid as part of the aid continuum to be duly considered in assessing the resources available for Relief.	EU	2009	EC Humanitarian Aid Budget sufficient to make substantial contribution to meeting increased humanitarian needs.
§27-28, 33	9	Annual exchange of info on EU MS humanitarian response policies and intervention strategies, linked to presentation of DG ECHO Strategy	EU	2009 on	Annual discussion in Council that allows for increased synergies between EU donor strategies.
§75-76	10	Review existing studies on the impact of climate change on Humanitarian Aid and make recommendations, ensuring linkage to overall EU approach.	EU	2009	Review completed - contributing to increased understanding of how climate change may affect need for humanitarian aid, with recommendations of how aid approaches may need adapting accordingly.
§97	11	Increase efficiency of EC humanitarian aid governance within the current regulatory framework.	EC	2009 on	Review of possible efficiency gains is undertaken.
<i>Additional actions:</i>					
§27, 31-33	12	Widen dissemination of the EC Global Needs Assessment and Forgotten Crisis Assessment. Review and revise methodology as appropriate.	EC	ongoing	Methodology systematically applied, disseminated and refined to be the best possible index of global vulnerability. Funding decisions are based on assessed need, and balance of response between crises according to need remains in focus.
§34	13	Elaborate diversified approaches and interventions to food assistance and livelihoods support responses in different contexts on the basis of an improved needs assessment analysis.	EC	ongoing	Action taken to adjust policy and financing to contexts and needs.
§47, 97	14	Improve evaluation methodology, dissemination and use and develop methodology to promote joint evaluations and develop user-oriented terms of reference that include standard requirement for assessment of local population views (where field visits included).	EC	2008-9	Evaluation methodology updated and shared with other donors. New Terms of Reference finalised.
§40	15	Review modalities and conditions for EC primary emergency decisions and further increase efficiency of decision-making process for EC financing decisions.	EC	2010	Review undertaken.

§40-41	16	Organise EU expert discussion on how to promote further knowledge of the different tools available and explore value-added of producing a CD-ROM on quality standards in Humanitarian Aid for wide dissemination.	EU	2010	Expert meeting on promotion of quality standard tools, leading to further dissemination of relevant standards.
§40, 43-44	17	EU expert dialogue on measurability (introducing results-oriented management) - leading to the establishment of a set of performance indicators to be integrated as appropriate into Humanitarian Aid funding agreements. This would involve the further development of analytical tools on impact (outcome) of humanitarian interventions.	EU	2011	Common set-of performance indicators and analytical tools on impact developed.

ACTION AREA THREE: REINFORCING CAPACITIES TO RESPOND

Expected overall result: Improved rapid and appropriate response to humanitarian crisis, with international assistance reinforcing local action as first line of response

Consensus Ref.	Action No.	Actions proposed	EU/EC	Indicative Timing	Output
<i>Priority actions:</i>					
§25, 54-56, 97	18	Comprehensive mapping study on logistical capacity and EU support, including stockpiling, procurement and transport to area of final use of humanitarian goods. Discussion on results and recommendations of study and indications of areas that require further support at international level.	EU	2009	Mapping study finalised to be followed by expert meeting and possible operational recommendations. EU support for strengthened logistical capacity of the international humanitarian system.
§53-56, 67,70, 74	19	Explore how to enhance support to capacity building, including in the cluster approach and provisions for reinforcing local capacity. Promote a multi-donor approach to capacity building (partners, non-EU donors and other stakeholders to be consulted).	EU	2009 on	EC evaluation of Thematic Financing completed, feeding in to reflection on capacity-building support. Donors engaged in expert dialogue on capacity building leading to strengthened overall EU support.
§§26, 40-41,45, 97	20	Reinforcement of EU training provision for humanitarian professionals and other actors linked to humanitarian response, with strong emphasis on operational aspects. This should include: - strengthening EU humanitarian aid departments and field staff training strategies, including joint training activities on issues identified as priority;	EU	2010	Review of existing training needs, provision and suitability completed with a view to reinforcement of professional humanitarian operational capacity. Synergies identified and quality joint training initiatives undertaken as appropriate.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conducting a seminar programme aimed primarily at newly acceded EU Member States institutions and civil society; - a review the Network on Humanitarian Assistance (NOHA) Master's programme and other vocational training provision, with possible recommendations for strengthening overall EU support, linking also to local capacity; - linkage to other existing humanitarian training provision, such as UNDAC. 			
<i>Additional actions:</i>					
§40	21	Promote and provide support to International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles.	EU	2010	Improved EU understanding of IDRL and how its implementation can be promoted to facilitate humanitarian operations.
§26, 97	22	Explore with MS the possibility of establishing a short 'twinning/job-shadow' programme in MS humanitarian departments or in the EC for new Member State humanitarian aid officials to reinforce best practice exchange between EU donors.	EU	As arising	Exchange of officials between a number of EU humanitarian aid departments and strengthened contacts across EU.

ACTION AREA FOUR: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP

Expected overall result: strengthened well-coordinated partnerships for effective delivery of aid, expanded donor base, reinforcement of local participation in humanitarian aid design and implementation.

Consensus Ref.	Action No.	Actions proposed	EU/EC	Indicative Timing	Output
<i>Priority actions:</i>					
§20, 29, 67, 73	23	Active EU participation in humanitarian fora (international, regional) and thereby contribute to reinforced dialogue involving broad range of partners and current and emerging donors at the international level.	EU	ongoing	Without prejudice to respective competences and traditions, possibility for EU coordination ahead of major humanitarian meetings used to its full added-value with strengthened common understanding of main messages and priorities for international debate.

§18-20	24	All EU donors to work towards mainstreaming GHD commitments in humanitarian action. Take steps to facilitate the participation of all EU Member States/EC in GHD donor-coordination working methods, including setting-up informal 'GHD-mentoring' between well-established and newer EU donors.	EU	2008-9	GHD principles adhered to in practice by all EU donors and good practices pursued actively through shared learning and peer review. Newer EU donors engaged into GHD.
§43, 46, 53	25	Preliminary review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster-affected communities in Humanitarian Aid operations, leading to a more detailed joint evaluation of the participation of affected populations in EU Humanitarian Aid programmes. Draw up recommendations for strengthening this as appropriate.	EU	2009-11	Review undertaken, followed by evaluation and operational recommendations for consideration by EU donors.
<i>Additional actions:</i>					
§18-19	26	Provide further encouragement to UN, Red Cross Movement and humanitarian NGO partners (including local partners) in application of the Principles of Partnership of the Global Humanitarian Platform.	EU	Ongoing	EU donor advocacy in support of application of the Principles of Partnership, to reinforce explicit EU recognition of the plurality of implementing partners and the need for good operational cooperation and coordination between partners.
§30, 49	27	Establish EC-Partner Policy Liaison Groups	EC	2008	Groups used to provide quality input for key areas of policy implementation under the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.
§97	28	Put in place a Good Humanitarian Donorship 'implementation plan'	EC	2009	GHD implementation plan finalised.
§97	29	Facilitate organisation of humanitarian days in the European Union	EU	2010	Humanitarian days organised.

ACTION AREA FIVE: ENHANCING COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

Expected overall result: better linkages between EU donors and others to improve efficiency of overall EU aid contribution. Strengthened liaison between actors present in the field in response to Crisis. Humanitarian considerations fully taken into account in other related EU policy areas.

Consensus Ref.	Action No.	Actions proposed	EU/EC	Indicative Timing	Output
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<i>Priority Actions:</i>					
§25, 65	30	Support UNOCHA to deploy civil-military liaison officers in situations of crisis, and where most needed EC to consider deploying field experts with appropriate profile to reinforce civil-military liaison.	EU	As appropriate	Civil-military liaison offices in place where needed in all major crises.
§22, 27-28	31	Following endorsement of the mandate of the Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid Working Group (to be convened from 1 January 2009), prepare priorities for regular policy discussion in the group, including on implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.	EU	2008-9	Group established and playing an effective role at centre of EU policy dialogue on humanitarian aid.
§27-28	32	EU donor coordination mid-year review of funding/needs and regular exchange on general funding intentions/patterns through EU level strategy exchange, with appropriate linkage to dialogue with other major non-EU donors through existing international donor coordination mechanisms.	EU	2009	Annual discussion in Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid working group, with improved information flow on donor response to humanitarian needs.
§99, 101	33	Mid-term review of Action Plan and implementation of Consensus – in dialogue with EP and Partners.	EU	2010	Mid-term review exercise finalised with assessment of implementation results and output.
§101	34	Undertake review of EU Consensus implementation and consider successor Action Plan – in dialogue with EP and Partners.	EU	2012	Full-term review with recommendations for future work.
<i>Additional actions:</i>					
§57-60	35	Continued dialogue between EU humanitarian and civil protection actors in accordance with provisions of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.	EU	ongoing	Enhanced understanding of UN MCDA/Oslo guidelines, reinforcement of needs-based approach and strengthened coordination between different actors.
§27-28	36	From the field, EC to reinforce its facilitation role in information sharing, situation analysis and coordination with EU Member States, linked closely to other major non-EU donors as well as to implementing partners, and avoiding duplication with existing coordination mechanisms.	EC	2008 on	Reinforced information-sharing between donors.
§27-28	37	Ensure more regular expert-level dialogue on implementation issues and coordination of EU responses to major humanitarian crises.	EU	2008 on	Improved EU common understanding of operational challenges and better coordination of EU donor response to major and sudden-onset crises.
§65	38	Facilitate launch of dialogue between EU Military Staff and humanitarian Non-	EU	2008 on	Appropriate links established between EU Military Staff and humanitarian NGOs

		Governmental Organisations on their relations in emergencies.			including, as needed, in the field.
§27-28	39	Establish EU humanitarian aid - general overview paper and updated contacts, including field representatives.	EU	2008	Overview and contacts lists established and maintained.
§27, 47, 73	40	Annual meeting of EU evaluation experts to present trends and findings and undertake more joint evaluations (establish a rolling-programme of priorities of common interest led by different donors).	EU	2008 on	EU evaluation experts' network in place, evaluation plans and results shared more systematically and increased number of joint evaluations undertaken.
§72, 95	41	Written guidance and refresher training for EU Member States on reporting to 14 points, where possible together with OCHA on FTS and assess system performance and propose improvements in functioning.	EC	2009	Guidance note and training provided – leading to improvements in recording of humanitarian aid contributions.
§22, 26	42	Establish system for 'humanitarian briefing' (HQ welcome note/field experts) for newly-posted Embassy and Delegation officials in crisis prone countries and regional humanitarian hubs.	EU	2009	Briefing arrangements on humanitarian action for priority Embassy/Delegations in place and maintained.

ACTION AREA SIX: THE AID CONTINUUM

Expected overall result: Humanitarian aid is focussed on emergency response in response to humanitarian needs and linked better with longer-term development and other assistance. Disaster Risk Reduction activities are strengthened and supported increasingly by long-term aid approaches.

Consensus Ref.	Action No.	Actions proposed	EU/EC	Indicative Timing	Output
<i>Priority Actions:</i>					
§22, 75-76	43	Develop an EU strategy on support to mainstreaming of Disaster Risk Reduction in developing countries linked with ongoing projects that include community-based disaster preparedness activities and with EU strategy on climate change, including development of guidance and practical DRR tools.	EU	2008-9	EU DRR Strategy agreed upon, in support of international efforts within the Hyogo Framework for Action.
§22, 30, 77-78	44	Identify rolling list of countries requiring priority LRRD focus in EU support, and exchange best practice examples of LRRD.	EU	2009 on	Priorities list established, best practice awareness increased and reinforced focus provided on EU support to LRRD.
§22, 30, 77-78	45	Review range of transition mechanisms at an EU level and make recommendations for further improvements.	EU	2010	Review undertaken with recommendations considered.

<i>Additional actions:</i>					
§22, 30, 77-78	46	Ensure regular field and HQ co-ordination for LRRD with particular attention to focus countries and reinforced cooperation between humanitarian and development agencies at field level.	EU	Ongoing	More active coordination between development and humanitarian aid actors and national/local authorities to facilitate LRRD (including at a field level in early recovery cluster or ad hoc working group where cluster not in place).
§22, 30, 77-78	47	Finalise and implement a framework for country situation analysis for LRRD to ensure a consolidated response with aim of ensuring LRRD activities are integrated into existing Country Strategies as early as possible through dialogue and coordination with national and local authorities.	EC	Ongoing	Framework established and country strategies integrate support to early recovery allowing smooth and timely 'exit' from emergency relief aid provision.
§22, 26, 30-32 77- 78	48	Promote discussion with Partners on linkage between relief and recovery phase needs assessments: the humanitarian needs assessment framework, Post-Conflict Needs Assessment and Post-Disaster Recovery Damage and Needs Assessment.	EU	2009	Experts/Partners meeting on different needs assessment approaches leading to improved understanding of linkages.
§75-76	49	Promote strengthened EU operational contacts and policy dialogue on Disaster Risk Reduction priorities and best practice to further ensure complementarities, involving humanitarian aid and development experts and partners.	EU	2009 on	EU DRR network with operational focus reinforced.