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General Guidelines on Operational Priorities for Humanitarian Aid in 2021

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The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) of the European Commission manages humanitarian aid to the victims of conflicts or disasters, both natural and man-made, in third countries. The mandate of DG ECHO is to save and preserve life, to reduce or prevent suffering, and to safeguard the integrity and dignity of people affected by humanitarian crises by providing relief and protection. By taking early action and a focusing on preparedness, DG ECHO seeks to preserve livelihoods and build the resilience of affected populations. DG ECHO also facilitates coordination on humanitarian assistance with, and among, EU Member States humanitarian departments and agencies. The overall priority is managing aid in the most effective and efficient way possible so that the EU funded assistance has the maximum effect, whilst respecting the principles of international law and the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity, non-discrimination and independence.

DG ECHO is also responsible for the management of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism that covers interventions in Member States, as well as in third countries¹ and the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 of 15 March 2016 on the provision of emergency support within the European Union². This Regulation lays down the framework within which Union emergency support may be awarded through specific measures appropriate to the economic situation in the event of an ongoing or potential natural or man-made disaster. This kind of emergency support can only be provided where the exceptional scale and impact of the disaster is such that it gives rise to severe wide-ranging humanitarian consequences in one or more Member States and only in exceptional circumstances where no other instrument available to Member States and to the Union is sufficient. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic is leading to an unprecedented loss of life in the European Union and causing untold hardship for the people of Europe, the Commission proposed³ to activate the emergency assistance support in accordance with Article 2 of Regulation 2016/369 and to amend some of its provisions to address the special needs of the COVID-19 outbreak. The three instruments, humanitarian aid, civil protection and emergency support, are linked and under the responsibility of the same Commissioner.

The document is drawn up under Article 16(1) of Council Regulation No 1257/96⁴ and therefore covers humanitarian aid operations for the year ahead. The document does not cover DG ECHO's activities in the field of civil protection, which are instead described in the annual work programme for civil protection actions to be adopted on the basis of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

¹ Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, as amended by Decision (EU) 2019/420 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2019 - OJ L 77 I, 20.03.2019, p. 1.

² OJ L 70, 16.3.2016, p. 1.

³ Proposal for a Council Regulation activating the emergency support under Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 of 15 March 2016 and amending its provisions in respect of the COVID-19 outbreak Brussels, 2.4.2020 COM(2020) 175 final

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid (OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1).

2 GENERAL CONTEXT AND OUTLOOK FOR 2021

Humanitarian crises have steadily increased in complexity and severity over the last decades, and this trend is expected to continue in 2021. Conflict remains the main driver of humanitarian needs, while natural disasters are increasing in intensity and scope exacerbated by climate change, also causing significant needs. At the same time, the interaction of climate and conflict risks is aggravating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, particularly for the most vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas. The COVID-19 global pandemic has further worsened the situation, sharply increasing the number of persons in need.

Overall, more than 405 million people across the world are in need of humanitarian assistance⁵ and protection – and more funding than ever before is required to respond. Syria and Yemen remain the world's most severe, large-scale humanitarian crises, with significant implications for neighbouring countries⁶.

The United Nations' (UN) humanitarian appeal for 2020, currently amounting to an unprecedented record of USD 39.76 billion, was only 25% funded as of mid-year. This funding requirement includes the Global Response Plan for COVID-19, last updated in July 2020 and amounting to USD 10.3 billion. The most underfunded emergencies to date (less than 20 % funded) are, Haiti, Colombia, Venezuela country response plans as well as DRC, Burundi, South Sudan refugee response plans and Horn of Africa and Yemen refugee and migration plan.

In today's protracted conflicts, insecurity often prevents the delivery of aid where help is most needed. Access and the protection of the most vulnerable continue to be challenged due to widespread and growing lack of compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the humanitarian principles. The percentage of civilian victims in conflicts has dramatically increased, and the security of humanitarian personnel has remained a critical challenge. 2019 was the most violent year on record for humanitarian workers, with 483 workers attacked, 125 killed, 234 wounded and 124 kidnapped⁷.

Protracted violence continues to force people to flee from their homes. At the end of 2019, almost 80 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide by conflict and violence, according to the UN Refugee Agency⁸. The global number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has reached again an all-time high with more than 50.8 million people displaced in their own country⁹. In 2019, over two thirds of the world's refugees came from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Syria, Colombia, and DRC continue to be the most affected by conflict related internal displacement. Only over 300 000 refugees returned to their country of origin, demonstrating the protracted nature of the majority of today's conflicts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created extraordinary and unprecedented challenges for the humanitarian response system. At present, the direct and secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have increased humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable populations. Travel and access restrictions due to the pandemic have been a major cause of concern as regards response capacity, unimpeded movement of humanitarian workers within and across countries and the free flow of life-saving assistance, medicines and equipment.

⁵ [Global Humanitarian Overview](#), July 2020 Status Report, UN OCHA

⁶ <https://www.unocha.org/where-we-work/current-emergencies>

⁷ [UN OCHA, statement on World Humanitarian Day 2020](#)

⁸ [UNHCR Global Trends Report 2019](#)

⁹ [IDMC Global Report on internal displacement \(GRID\) 2020](#)

Humanitarian crises tend to affect the most vulnerable the hardest, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, women and children. Children can be particularly vulnerable especially when their education is disrupted. Half of the world's out-of-school children live in contexts affected by crisis and conflict¹⁰, and more than half of refugees of school age are out of school¹¹. The education challenges have increased due to COVID-19, with an estimated 1.29 billion children in 186 countries affected by school closures as of May 2020¹² and strong impact on the most vulnerable. Integrated and innovative solutions are needed to ensure that children have equitable access to quality learning in all contexts and at all stages of education.

Girls living in conflict-affected countries are more likely to be out of school. Girls and women also face a much greater risk of gender-based violence, including early marriage and pregnancy. Prevention of and response to sexual- and gender-based violence, which affects women, girls, men and boys, are still not treated as a priority from the earliest stages of emergencies. Humanitarian response often lacks sufficient mechanisms and funding to ensure that it is addressed comprehensively. Due to discrimination and environmental, physical, economic and social barriers, people with disabilities are more likely to be excluded in emergency responses and humanitarian services. People with disabilities also face additional threats and vulnerabilities.

According to the 2020 Global Report on Food Crises¹³, more than 135 million people across 55 countries experienced acute hunger requiring urgent food, nutrition and livelihood assistance in 2019. The worst food crises were, in order of severity, Yemen, South Sudan, and Afghanistan and more than half of the population affected (73 million) live in Africa. In addition, high levels of acute and chronic malnutrition in children living in emergency conditions remained of concern. Conflict continues to be the key driver of food insecurity.

While global humanitarian needs are dramatically increasing, funding is not. It is therefore essential to identify and focus on main priorities and respect the guiding principles, on which the EU's humanitarian budgetary allocations are determined. In 2021, EU humanitarian aid will remain focused on supporting those most in need following sudden-onset, protracted and forgotten crises¹⁴. Encouraging humanitarian actors to achieve greater efficiency is also essential.

In 2021, the EU will continue supporting the UN's central role in coordinating the international response to emergencies, in the spirit of effective multilateralism and collective solutions to global challenges.

¹⁰ Commission Communication on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises, COM(2018) 304 final, 18.05.2018

¹¹ [2019 UNHCR report Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis](#)

¹² <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

¹³ [The 2020 Global Report on Food Crises](#)

¹⁴ The methodology used to that end is supported by the Index for Risk Management – INFORM.

3 PRIORITIES

3.1 HORIZONTAL THEMATIC PRIORITIES: IMPROVING AID EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY OF OPERATIONS

Aid effectiveness and result-oriented actions remain priorities in 2020. With renewed impetus for the Grand Bargain and the endeavour to achieve significant progress five years after its launch, 2021 should deliver on a variety of commitments, such as potential simplification of reporting, flexibility and less earmarking and further progress in multi-year programming. Achieving progress on the donor side, with a leading role for DG ECHO as member of the Facilitation Group, will allow for better “negotiations” with implementing partners to obtain necessary reforms, in particular related to coordinated needs assessment and reduced management costs. The introduction of an enhanced Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC 2020) reinforces (among others) the linkages between humanitarian needs overview (HNO) and humanitarian response plans (HRP) and increases the focus on inter-sectoral nature of needs. It will require particular attention, in terms of reviewing the lessons learnt and supporting the process, to ensure that positive elements are encouraged while addressing potential weaknesses.

DG ECHO is committed to continuing piloting Programmatic Partnerships with a selection of NGO partners and envisages launching pilot Programmatic Partnerships with UN agencies and International Organisations. These will contribute to enhancing developed strategic partnerships with DG ECHO partners, which represents an important stepping-stone towards relevant Grand Bargain commitments. The first contributions to Country Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) in 2020 will be closely monitored in 2021 in order to evaluate their added-value and possible lessons learnt for the future.

Aid effectiveness and efficiency will also be pursued through the dissemination, implementation and updating, where necessary, of existing policies. In this context, DG ECHO intends to further assess its approach to humanitarian transport and logistics. At the same time, systematic monitoring and reviews by the Commission's humanitarian experts, as well as the use of key results indicators, will ensure that EU-funded operations are implemented in accordance with standards and provide a more comprehensive picture of DG ECHO's results, performance and resources needed.

DG ECHO will also continue supporting the development of innovative solutions and approaches in cooperation with a wide range of actors, including the private sector and the scientific community. In this regard, making use of digital technology enhancing cost-effectiveness and sharing of all relevant data to facilitate coordinated assessments, response analysis and delivery of assistance, will be of particular importance. Innovative financing methods that seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our response or to harness private capital on a commercial basis will also be examined in this context. The EU's research and innovation programmes¹⁵ offer opportunities to harness technological innovation, technical skills and expertise, and foster their active involvement in humanitarian contexts. DG ECHO will seek to build on the promising example of the Horizon Prize for Affordable High Tech for Humanitarian Aid to promote the sharing and scaling of innovative practices amongst donors and humanitarian implementers.

¹⁵ See European Innovation Council (EIC) Horizon 2020 Prizes on [Affordable High-Tech for Humanitarian Aid](#), [Early Warning for Epidemics](#) and [Blockchains for Social Good](#).

DG ECHO will further promote the integration of environmental considerations in humanitarian aid sectoral policies and interventions, even short-term emergency ones, based on the ‘do no harm’ principle – a principle that takes into consideration the negative effects of aid. As the environmental crisis deepens, humanitarian actors are faced with a collective responsibility to ensure that response does not further contribute to harming the environment in which people live and ultimately their health and well-being. In 2021, DG ECHO will additionally support capacity building to mitigate the environmental impacts of humanitarian response. Reducing the environmental and climate change impact of humanitarian aid operations funded by the European Union would contribute to the objectives of the European Green Deal¹⁶.

Thematic policies

Over the years, the Commission has developed a number of policies/guidance documents in areas such as protection, gender, health, food, shelter, disability, etc. These documents outline the Commission’s position on key international frameworks and standards and provide concrete recommendations to its implementing partners on programming. The overall objective is to ensure quality, coherence and accountability of EU funded humanitarian operations.

In line with previous years, the overarching priority of EU humanitarian aid operations will be to provide for protection and to meet the lifesaving needs of affected populations, with a focus on the most vulnerable.

Protection and focus on the most vulnerable

Systematic violations of the **International Humanitarian Law** (IHL) have been consistently on the rise. In some armed conflicts, violations of IHL are widely reported as strategic methods of warfare. Such methods have long-term humanitarian consequences. The continued prevalence of breaches of IHL and of the humanitarian principles have made protection a prime challenge in today's humanitarian contexts in particular in armed conflicts involving non-State actors.

In 2021, DG ECHO will continue making protection a priority in its humanitarian assistance, in line with the provisions of the Commission’s Staff Working Document ‘Humanitarian Protection: Improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises’¹⁷. The Commission will also support existing good practices and engage in advocacy for compliance with IHL.

Humanitarian crises have a different impact on women, girls, boys and men. Their differentiated needs and specific vulnerabilities during and in the aftermath of crises need to be addressed accordingly. A response that does not integrate gender and age considerations risks not reaching those most in need, or even inadvertently doing harm.

DG ECHO will continue mainstreaming gender and age across all sectors, and advance the implementation of the approach to **gender and gender-based violence** in humanitarian crises outlined in the Staff Working Document ‘Gender: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance’¹⁸ and the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker¹⁹. This work is in line with and contributes to the implementation of the EU’s strategic approach and action plan on Women, Peace and

¹⁶ European Green Deal: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

¹⁷ SWD(2016)183, 23.05.2016. – [Staff working document \(PDF\)](#)

¹⁸ SWD(2013)290, 22.7.2013. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/Gender_SWD_2013.pdf

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf

Security²⁰ and the (still to be adopted) new EU Gender Action Plan II 2021-2024. In 2021, the EU will also remain an active member of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence in Emergencies initiative, which will adopt a new Road Map in 2020²¹. In operational terms, DG ECHO will continue to support prevention and response to sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) through targeted actions.

Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by natural and man-made disasters. They also face multiple barriers in accessing humanitarian services, such as water, shelter or food and may have specific protection needs. In 2021, DG ECHO will continue work to ensure the implementation of the Operational Guidance on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations²² of 2019 and in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Children make up more than half of all people affected by humanitarian crises and many of them miss out on **education**. Yet, education is crucial if people are to develop their skills and achieve their potential and for the protection and healthy development of all girls and boys. It can rebuild their lives, restore their sense of normality and safety, and provide them with opportunities for a better future. DG ECHO is committed to continue providing Education in Emergencies (EiE) assistance across the world, in line with the Commission Staff Working Document on Education in Emergencies in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations²³, and to retain the indicative target rate of 10% of the humanitarian budget as in 2020. The overall aim of this assistance is to restore and maintain access to safe, quality and inclusive primary and secondary education during humanitarian crises for the most vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, to promote protection and capacity development, and to support out-of-school children and young people to quickly enter or return to quality learning opportunities.

Sectoral policies

DG ECHO will continue prioritising a **basic needs approach**; an integrated multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral approach to programming that aims to meet/contribute effectively to the basic needs of affected populations. Addressing people's needs in a coordinated and demand-driven way puts people back at the centre of interventions, especially where beneficiaries are empowered to make choices and tailor the assistance to meet their individual needs.

In this regard, and in line with the Grand Bargain commitments, DG ECHO will continue encouraging the use of **cash transfers**. Cash transfers provide affected populations with the dignity of choice, flexibility and more control over their own lives. In particular, DG ECHO will continue encouraging the use of **multipurpose cash transfers**, i.e. cash transfers used by beneficiaries to meet their basic needs.

In order to strengthen transparency, accountability and to reflect improvements in the light of field experience, DG ECHO is in the process of revising its Guidance Note to partners on the Delivery of Large-Scale Cash Transfers.

DG ECHO's humanitarian **food assistance and nutrition** continues to represent about one third of the EU's annual humanitarian aid budget, making the EU one of the world's major donors in this sector. In the area of **food assistance**, DG ECHO will continue providing assistance adapted to the needs of different groups and each specific crisis situation, including

²⁰ [EU Comprehensive Approach on UNSCR 1325 and 1820](#)

²¹ <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>

²² https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/2019-01_disability_inclusion_guidance_note.pdf

²³ Commission Staff Working Document on Education in Emergencies in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations, SWD(2019) 150 final/2, 19.7.2019.

the choice of the most appropriate interventions and delivery modality, be it cash, vouchers or essential food items during critical times, or livelihoods protection activities, in full respect of the “do no harm” principle. DG ECHO will continue supporting funding for **nutrition** in emergencies as well as the development and the wide use of tools and innovative approaches to ensure efficient and effective programming. Nutrition outcomes are multifaceted. This is why DG ECHO promotes a multi-sectoral and integrated approach to address Severe and Moderate Acute malnutrition and continues to encourage stronger coordination between humanitarian and development approaches. DG ECHO closely follows the recent developments and changes in the nutrition sector to be able to adapt the provision of nutrition services, to build resilient communities and to reach the highest number of malnourished cases. The EU humanitarian nutrition approach²⁴ is the guiding document for the provision of nutrition interventions to the most vulnerable population groups.

DG ECHO’s **health assistance** will remain a core sector of humanitarian aid interventions. The overriding objective of DG ECHO’s health assistance is to limit excess preventable mortality, permanent disability, and disease associated with humanitarian crises. DG ECHO is increasingly faced with the need to respond to complex health crises. Ebola and the COVID-19 pandemic have stretched the international community and demonstrated that health crises have an impact that goes far beyond immediate health needs, affecting livelihoods and compromising the survival of the most vulnerable. DG ECHO will continue to fund needs-based, high-quality and context-specific health services to people affected by crises, in accordance with General Health Guidelines and the Health Technical annexes²⁵. By adopting an integrated response, DG ECHO endeavours to support people as they struggle to emerge from crises.

The EU humanitarian approach to **shelter and settlement (S&S)** acknowledges the increased needs for humanitarian shelter and settlement interventions and their importance for efficient and effective post-disaster responses and anticipatory actions. Shelter is of central importance to providing protection, strengthening health and re-establishing livelihoods. Promoting locally appropriate shelter solutions as well as delivering S&S services in urban contexts, reinforcing local capacity and ownership and recognising the environmental element of any S&S humanitarian action will continue to be the most important elements of DG ECHO interventions in this area, in accordance with the Shelter and Settlements guidelines²⁶.

As one of the largest donors in humanitarian **Water and Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH)**, DG ECHO has contributed significantly to improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene services for people affected by humanitarian crises. The primary objective of the WASH policy is to save lives and alleviate the suffering of populations facing severe environmental health risks and/or water insecurity in the context of humanitarian crises. Systematic quality control and respect of the international quality standards as well as systematic performance monitoring are core aspects of DG ECHO’s WASH policy²⁷.

Humanitarian logistics is one of the sectors where further policy development is foreseen, including on reducing costs as well as CO₂ emissions. In 2021, it is foreseen that DG ECHO will further examine its approach to humanitarian transport and logistics, building on

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/nutrition_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/health2014_general_health_guidelines_en.pdf

²⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/shelter_and_settlement_guidelines.pdf

²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/WASH_policy_doc_en.pdf

consultation and policy development undertaken in light of the Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics within EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Action 2013-2017²⁸.

Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and cross-cutting issues.

Given the protracted nature of the majority of humanitarian crises, there is a strong consensus among the international actors to improve and strengthen the link between humanitarian and development aid and, where relevant, peace actions. Without compromising the humanitarian principles, DG ECHO's support aims at contributing to longer-term strategies to build the capacity and resilience of the most vulnerable people and address underlying reasons for their vulnerability. DG ECHO will continue coordinating with relevant development and peace actors, to shift the work culture towards more systematic and up-front coordination between humanitarian, development and peace actors in headquarters and on the ground. This includes such coordination, among EU institutions, EU Members States and other relevant organisations including the World Bank to find opportunities for complementarities and jointly contribute to strengthening resilience and building sustainable peace. This work will continue to be based on the specific conditions in each context, beyond the original six pilot countries (Chad, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan and Uganda)²⁹, and in line with a principled humanitarian response.

The programming process of both the geographic and thematic envelopes and of the non-programmed envelopes with the rapid-response pillar under the future single new neighbourhood and development cooperation instrument (NDICI), including on activities linked to Team Europe, will provide an opportunity to further strengthen implementation of the nexus in complementarity with DG ECHO's actions.

In relation to COVID-19, the EU has responded to the needs arising from the global pandemic according to the priorities of Team Europe and the Council's recognition that an enhanced humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach is key to addressing the current global health crisis³⁰. The Team Europe response is global, focusing on vulnerable groups and addressing three priorities:

- Emergency response;
- Support to health, water/sanitation and nutrition systems, and
- Support to socio-economic recovery that helps partner countries to “build back better” by focusing on a sustainable, green, digital, just and resilient recovery.

DG ECHO will continue to adapt its humanitarian operations to factor in the pandemic situation and resulting needs in order to reach the most vulnerable populations.

Close to 80 million people are **forcibly displaced** worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalised violence, or human rights violations. The Commission Communication 'Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance'³¹, outlines a development-led approach to forced displacement. Its main objective is to strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of both the displaced and their host communities through a multi-actor approach

²⁸ <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2c0ab9b4-358a-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1>

²⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/com_2018_774_fl_report_from_commission_en_v4_p1_998566.pdf

³⁰ [Joint Communication on the Global EU Response to COVID-19](#) and [EU Council Conclusions on Team Europe](#)

³¹ COM(2016) 234 final: "Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance Forced Displacement and Development".

from the outset of displacement crises. Both development and humanitarian actors will continue the implementation of the approach in an ever-increasing number of countries.

Also in 2021, DG ECHO will continue strengthening its efforts to raise the awareness of the situation of vulnerable IDPs. Through its support to the work of the High Level Panel on internal displacement, the EU will engage in the discussions on improving the response and finding durable solutions for this specific caseload.

Displacement related to adverse impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters is becoming an increasingly important challenge. DG ECHO will continue its operational and policy engagement on this topic.

The **Global Compact on Refugees** is a multilateral framework aiming at more sustainable and dignified response to the needs of refugees, in line with the EU approach to forced displacement and development. In 2021, efforts will be underway to support this global framework and all relevant stakeholders, including implementation of commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum of December 2019.

Scaling up **social protection systems** has been identified as one of the core avenues to enhance the resilience of vulnerable populations, provide more-durable solutions and enable quick and efficient humanitarian assistance in response to sudden-onset disasters. While building national social protection systems has traditionally fallen under the remit of development, the humanitarian community can play an important role in aligning with and complementing these efforts in supporting the creation of shock-responsive social protection systems and safety nets, including through cash transfers, for the most vulnerable.

In 2018-19, Commission services (DGs ECHO, DEVCO and NEAR), developed a Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (SPaN)³². In line with the Guidance, DG ECHO will continue to engage with development actors to support the development of shock responsive social protection systems whenever feasible.

An increasing number of people in need of humanitarian assistance are seeking refuge in cities. Given the high population density, the crises affecting **urban** centres tend to have a much more severe impact as demonstrated by the number of casualties resulting from urban warfare or from disasters, such as the recent Beirut explosion. A reinforced dialogue with actors central to urban settings, such as local authorities or city planners is required to ensure an efficient and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. In this context, in 2021, DG ECHO will continue to advocate for greater attention to humanitarian needs, preparedness and resilience in urban environments. Area-based approaches and other analysis tools will be further explored to better assess and respond to urban crises.

Preparedness for response and early action

The focus of DG ECHO is on where its humanitarian mandate and expertise provide maximum value-added: preparedness for response and early action. This way, DG ECHO contributes to the Sendai Framework Priority 4 –enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction³³.

³² <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sp-nexus>

³³ <https://floodresilience.net/resources/item/sendai-framework-priority-4-build-back-better>

Similarly, it responds to the Grand Bargain commitments for early action, to strengthen national and local responsibilities for preparedness, to respond earlier and better to make humanitarian assistance "as local as possible, as international as necessary".

The core objective of DG ECHO funded preparedness interventions is to strengthen the capacity of in-country preparedness and response systems to act as locally and early as possible. To this end, a system approach should be adopted, contemporarily focussing on communities and national and local governments in order to achieve sustainability.

Preparedness should not be considered as a separate policy sector. In fact, it is an essential element of all DG ECHO's humanitarian policies. Accordingly, preparedness applies to any type of crisis, thus including any type of risk such as natural hazards, epidemics, conflicts and violence.

DG ECHO consistently integrates a risk analysis into its needs-based approach to preparedness. Understanding and anticipating potential risks is critical to act early and intervene before a crisis hits or a situation deteriorates, thus reducing suffering and humanitarian needs. Concurrently, DG ECHO adopts a people-focused approach to preparedness, prioritising assistance according to their vulnerabilities and risk exposure.

In 2021, further efforts will be made to advance a risk-based approach and preparedness and promote anticipatory actions, particularly in those countries most affected by climate change and in conflict and fragile states. Alongside, DG ECHO will further engage with development and resilience actors to achieve more sustainability in humanitarian action and coherence and continuity with other Commission actions, thus contributing to the Humanitarian Development Peace (HDP) Nexus objectives.

Additionally, DG ECHO will seek further synergies with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) to engage with, and support, local and national government structures and response systems, including the use of specific tools such as the Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Missions.

3.2 OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES REFLECTED IN THE BUDGET ALLOCATION

3.2.1 General methodology

In line with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union³⁴, the Humanitarian Aid Regulation³⁵, and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid³⁶, and acting on the basis of the relevant financing decision (Commission Implementing Decision financing humanitarian aid operational priorities from the general budget of the European Union) adopted by the Commission, DG ECHO is committed to providing relief and protection to populations affected by natural or man-made disasters. The process leading to the allocation of funding is supported by ECHO's funding allocation methodologies, the INFORM Risk and Severity Indexes, the Forgotten Crises Assessment (FCA).

³⁴ Article 214

³⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid (OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1).

³⁶ Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission (OJ C 25, 30.1.2008, p. 1).

The analytical preparatory work serves as basis to draft DG ECHO's Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs), which provide detailed information on the operational priorities identified by DG ECHO.

DG ECHO however constantly re-appraises humanitarian crises as they evolve. If the need for humanitarian assistance diminishes, often due to the start of rehabilitation and development activities, DG ECHO winds down its humanitarian work. A high priority is given to closely coordinating humanitarian aid and development activities as part of the *nexus* approach. The exit strategy for all areas of humanitarian interventions is reviewed twice a year; first, when funds are initially allocated, secondly, during a mid-term review. The latter is an opportunity to review priorities for remaining funds in accordance with evolving needs.

3.2.2 Index for Risk Management – INFORM and Crisis Assessment

The INFORM Risk Index identifies countries at risk from crises and disasters that could overwhelm national response capacity. It analyses three dimensions of risk at country level:

- **Hazard & Exposure,**
- **Vulnerability,** and
- **Lack of Coping capacity,** grouping 191 countries based on a five-level risk assessment approach: very high, high, medium, low and very low risk countries³⁷.

Of 51 countries most at risk from humanitarian emergencies (INFORM Very High and High Risk) identified in April 2020, 16 are at very high risk. These countries are Somalia, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Yemen, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Niger, Syria, Sudan, Iraq, Mozambique, Cameroon, Libya, Nigeria, and Uganda³⁸.

DG ECHO will also integrate the INFORM Severity Index in its needs assessment analysis as of 2021. This index allows measuring and comparing the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally, and on a common scale³⁹.

3.2.3 Forgotten Crises Assessment

The Forgotten Crises Assessment seeks to highlight severe humanitarian crises where affected populations are receiving **no or insufficient international assistance due to the lack of humanitarian funding**, and which receive little to no international media attention. As an established principle, the EU as a global, principled donor allocates at least 15% of the initial annual humanitarian budget to forgotten crises. The following crises were identified through the 2020-21 assessment:

Asia:

- Afghanistan regional crisis (incl. Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan)
- Myanmar: conflict and displacement in Kachin and Northern Shan States
- Pakistan food crisis
- Philippines: armed conflict in Mindanao
- Rohingya regional crisis

³⁷ The INFORM Risk Index Methodology is available at: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Methodology>

³⁸ The INFORM Risk Index Mid 2020 is available at: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Results-and-data/moduleId/1782/id/386/controller/Admin/action/Results>

³⁹ The INFORM Severity Index page is available at : <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity>

Africa:

- Sahrawi refugees in Algeria
- Burundi regional refugee crisis
- Central African Republic regional crisis (CAR, Cameroon, Chad)
- Conflicts and violence in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger)
- Conflict and violence in the North West/South West regions of Cameroon
- Sudan: food and nutrition crises, internal conflict
- Southern Africa regional crisis

Latin America and Caribbean:

- Colombia: internal armed conflict
- Haiti: food and nutrition crisis
- Central America: Food insecurity and violence (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico)
- Venezuelan and Haitian refugee crisis in the Caribbean

Europe:

- Conflict in Ukraine

3.2.4 Other considerations

DG ECHO aims to fund as many crises as possible with the available budget and ensures a swift, efficient, comprehensive response. Whilst funding allocations are based on needs assessment and co-ordination with other donors, certain factors that are outside of DG ECHO's control may reduce the volume of aid that can effectively be delivered to the beneficiaries. Two factors, in particular, should be mentioned: the extent to which implementing organisations are present and have the capacity to respond in a given crisis zone ('absorption capacity') and the linked problem of access restrictions caused either by insecurity or administrative impediments.

DG ECHO also aims at ensuring that proper needs assessment and monitoring take place and only operates in 'remote management' where absolutely necessary and justified by humanitarian imperatives.

Restrictions faced by partners are most prevalent in areas of conflict, a marked absence in the rule of law or due to political and administrative impediments. They can also be due to politically-motivated obstruction from governments or *de facto* authorities.

3.2.5 Operational objectives and budget planning

The general EU budget earmarked on the budget lines for humanitarian aid/food assistance and disaster preparedness is EUR 1 415 988 995⁴⁰. This amount is to be used to finance humanitarian aid operations aiming essentially at:

- (a) providing humanitarian aid to vulnerable people affected by natural disasters, man-made crises or exceptional situations or circumstances comparable to natural or man-made disasters, which have entailed or are likely to continue entailing major loss of life, physical and psychological or social suffering or material damage;
- (b) providing the initial response to cover the immediate needs of the most vulnerable in the days and weeks after a large scale emergency or a sudden-

⁴⁰

Draft Budget 2021 proposed by the Commission, excluding allocation for technical assistance

onset humanitarian crisis, as well as humanitarian assistance for response and disaster preparedness to populations affected by disasters where a small scale response is adequate, and to populations affected by epidemic outbreaks;

- (c) supporting strategies and complementing existing strategies that enable local communities and institutions to better prepare for, mitigate and respond adequately to natural disasters by enhancing their capacities to cope and respond, thereby increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability;
- (d) increasing awareness, understanding of and support for humanitarian issues, especially in Europe and in third countries where the Union is funding major humanitarian operations through public awareness and information campaigns;
- (e) improving the conditions for delivering humanitarian aid by supporting transport services to ensure that aid is accessible to beneficiaries, including by means of medical evacuation of humanitarian staff where the unavailability of such transport services could adversely affect the timely and effective provision of assistance to beneficiaries;
- (f) increasing the coherence, quality and effectiveness of humanitarian aid through e.g. the development of innovative approaches, methodologies, tools, the support to capacity building, coordination and preparedness development of innovative approaches, methodologies, tools, the support to coordination and preparedness;
- (g) contributing to the resilience of populations and communities in need.

DG ECHO will maintain its broadened **regional approach** with regional responses in certain Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs). A regional approach presents the substantial advantage of lending added speed and flexibility to EU humanitarian assistance, as well as simplification/streamlining among HIPs.

The following sections provide details on how DG ECHO will support humanitarian and food assistance to vulnerable people affected by man-made crisis and/or natural disasters, and on Disaster Preparedness operations (DIPECHO).

3.3 WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Food and Nutrition crisis in the Sahel

During 2020, persistent and intensified conflicts, insecurity, forced displacements, state of emergency measures and climatic shocks have further exacerbated food insecurity in the Sahel. Before the impact of the COVID-19, 17.2 million people were already in need of emergency food assistance between June and September. The most affected country is Nigeria with in the Northeast more than 7 million people in need of emergency food assistance and part of the estimated 1.2 million people living in hard-to-reach areas at risk of famine. Compared to the 2019 lean season, food insecurity has increased by 213% in Burkina Faso, 142% in Mali, 93% in Cameroon, 71% in Niger and 59% in Chad. Twenty regions in Niger, Mauritania, Chad and Nigeria are in emergency about acute malnutrition and at least 2.5 million children under five require emergency lifesaving malnutrition treatment.

The COVID-19 pandemic further increases needs. According to the WFP Global Response to COVID-19 (June 2020), the pandemic could drive a further increase of 135% of acute food insecurity in West and Central Africa. A similar exercise has been conducted on Severe

Acute Malnutrition, showing that the combination of conflicts, food crisis and COVID-19 could increase the number of Severe Acute Malnourished children by 20% to 35%.

The fourth consecutive year of food and nutrition crises has seriously reduced the resilience of the most vulnerable populations. The conflicts affecting the Sahel countries have forcibly displaced more than 6.5 million people and severely impacted their livelihoods as well as those of local communities. This is changing the scale and scope of the food assistance from addressing recurrent but timely bound crisis (hunger gaps) to massive and persistent high level of food insecurity of people forcibly displaced.

In 2021, there is no prospect for a significant decrease in the number of acutely undernourished children as the reasons for undernutrition are many-fold. While the management of acute malnutrition by national system is progressing, sustainable prevention interventions are only implemented on a small-scale basis. Resilience-building efforts are being jeopardized by the impact of the on-going armed conflicts. Therefore, continued strong humanitarian engagement is required in the Sahel region.

Humanitarian efforts to address the food and nutrition crisis will continue to focus on most vulnerable populations and in areas with no national capacity as follows:

- Nutrition support to help reduce excessive morbidity and mortality of children under five;
- Provision of adequate food assistance to populations facing severe food insecurity;
- Support to enhancing preparedness and response capacity in high-risk areas.

This response will complete other dimensions of the humanitarian response with multi-sectoral emergency assistance and protection for populations affected by conflict, emergency response to epidemics and natural disasters as appropriate.

Interventions will primarily cover vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria. In addition, disaster risk reduction will be supported.

Central Sahel crisis

In 2020, the humanitarian situation continued the trend of deterioration of recent years in the North and Centre of Mali and in bordering regions in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The region is experiencing a sharp rise in the number of security incidents and community conflicts triggering population movements and a rising number of forcibly displaced people. Non-state armed groups attack frequently national armed forces and villages in the region, counteractions by military actors and inter-community violence are in sharp rise in Mali and Burkina Faso. There is a lack of respect for IHL by all parties to the armed conflict. This results in ever-greater civilian casualties, forced displacement, and protection needs. The expansion of armed conflicts has disrupted the local economy and livelihoods and has been shrinking state's presence, leading to a rise of needs in basic services, particularly in water, sanitation and hygiene, health and education sectors (more than 4 000 schools and 360 health centres are closed or affected by the insecurity).

Humanitarian needs across the three countries are massive and all indicators show a deterioration of the situation: in 2020, the total number of people in need is 10.1 million, compared to 7.67 million in 2019 (+ 31.5%); the number of IDPs and refugees increased to 1.71 million from 1.28 million in 2019 (+ 34%).

In Burkina Faso, due to violence spreading across western, northern and eastern regions of the country, there has been a 10-fold increase of IDPs from 90 000 in January 2019 to 980 000 in July 2020, the fastest growing displacement crisis in Africa. Mali has 4.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 368 000 forcibly displaced people (refugees,

returnees and IDPs). In Niger, the deterioration of the security situation in its western regions has also increased, showing a trend similar to the one faced by Mali and Burkina Faso, with a number of attacks targeting the armed forces and diminishing the humanitarian space. Forced displacement (refugees, returnees and IDPs) has reached half a million people for the first time in 2020.

In this context of extreme fragility, the COVID-19 is exacerbating the needs in all sectors, not only in health.

In 2021, the assistance will focus, apart from the food and nutritional crisis, on conflicts and their consequences. We will continue to tackle an already unprecedented multifaceted crisis before the COVID-19 pandemic with the provision of emergency multi-sectorial assistance (such as protection, Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), healthcare, education in emergencies) to the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations, refugees, IDPs and host and local communities, in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

In addition, enhancing preparedness and response capacity in high-risk areas is also foreseen, as well as emergency response to epidemics and natural disasters as appropriate.

Lake Chad Basin crisis

The security situation mostly deteriorated across the Lake Chad Basin (affecting Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad), uprooting thousands more people and prolonging displacement and adversity faced by millions of civilians across the region with more than 5 million people uprooted from their homes. Some 13.5 million people face food insecurity at “crisis” or “emergency” levels and more than 2 million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition and require life-saving treatment. The recurrent attacks and insecurity as well as security measures have restricted free movement. Farming, trade, transhumance and other activities are affected, depriving millions of people of their means of survival and limiting access to basic services. The violence has also forced many schools to close. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravates this emergency context and needs.

In Northeast Nigeria the situation is even more complex with 10.6 million people in need, including around 2.5 million displaced, 1.2 million people inaccessible to humanitarian actors, an observed 54% increase in food insecurity compared to 2019, and risks of famine for people unable to access assistance.

Epidemic outbreaks are frequent in the Lake Chad region, linked to poor health care coverage and lack of access to clean water and sanitation. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravates the current situation, with further heightened risks for the most vulnerable population groups, such as women, elderly and people with chronic medical conditions or children at risk of malnutrition.

Moreover, a strong deterioration of the security/humanitarian situation is observed in Northwest Nigeria, which faces the worst public health indicators of the country and in the Lake province

In 2021, humanitarian efforts will continue to focus on the following priority areas: multi-sectoral emergency assistance and protection for populations affected by conflict (IDPs, refugees, returnees, local population and host communities) including in hard-to-reach areas.

Food assistance remains the top priority, followed by support to shelter, nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene and support to enhance preparedness and response capacity in high-risk areas. In addition, DG ECHO will advocate for a stronger strategy on humanitarian access and the respect of IHL.

Central African Republic (CAR) regional crisis

The crisis in the Central African Republic remains one of the world's most acute and this despite the fact that the Government and 14 armed groups signed a peace agreement in February 2019. This agreement was a major step in resolving the conflict, but it continues to be violated and its implementation is very slow. The insecurity has severely worsened since the beginning of 2020 with an increase in violence, in number of attacks against the civilians, the humanitarian community and MINUSCA, which has led to a shrinking humanitarian space. Armed groups continue to have a very strong hold on the country. The upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections (end of 2020 - early 2021) lead to further tension and instability. The COVID-19 pandemic has a severe impact on the socio-economic situation in the country.

Humanitarian needs remain very high with 2.6 million people – more than half of the population - in need of humanitarian assistance. Some 50% of the population is food insecure and one in four citizens (1.3 million people) has been forcibly displaced. The spillover of the crisis to neighbouring countries – notably DRC, Chad and Cameroon – continues with the refugee situation being protracted (some 293 900 refugees from CAR are still in Cameroon and 93 200 in Chad). Returns are also registered but the repatriated people face challenges in terms of peaceful co-existence with the communities in the areas of return. Quite often returnees are confronted with illegal occupation of their land and property.

CAR is one of the most dangerous countries for humanitarians. Humanitarian actors continue to operate in a highly insecure environment and remain targeted by armed groups and criminals, which greatly affects humanitarian access.

In 2021, we will prioritise emergency needs in unstable and hard-to-reach areas or those areas affected by natural disasters. Efforts will ensure a swift and flexible response capacity in this volatile context. DG ECHO will continue to intervene in all sectors that cover the essential needs of the targeted populations while ensuring a balance between sectors. Aid will encompass food assistance and short-term livelihood support, health and nutrition services, WASH interventions, protection, education in emergencies, provision of shelter and non-food items for the conflict-affected population in CAR and to some extent the neighbouring countries. Due to the significant socio-economic recession and severe food insecurity, food assistance will remain a priority.

Within the humanitarian remit, assistance for refugees in Cameroon and Chad should look to foster sustainable solutions and for actions to strengthen their self-reliance in view of the lack of perspectives for return in the short to medium-term. At the same time, it is important to adequately address the humanitarian needs of host communities.

Advocacy efforts will continue to help ensure that the CAR crisis, including its regional dimension, becomes more visible on the international agenda and receives an adequate international response.

Whenever possible, activities will be closely coordinated with development cooperation instruments, in particular in the health sector, and with the EU Trust Fund "Bêkou". This will be done with a view to promote the implementation of the triple nexus peace/humanitarian/development.

3.4 EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Upper Nile Basin

South Sudan

The formation of a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity in February 2020 was welcomed as an encouraging development and a significant step towards sustainable peace in South Sudan. However, the country has experienced an uptick of violence at subnational level, which risks unravelling the peace agreement and compounds the already very dire humanitarian situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic is poised to have devastating secondary consequences in South Sudan due to the protracted humanitarian crisis in the country (6.5 million food insecure people), large scale displacement (2.3 million South Sudanese refugees, 1.6 million IDPs), extremely weak public health and education infrastructure, and longstanding vulnerabilities (undernutrition, large scale epidemics, very poor access to safe water). The COVID-19 pandemic has also further increases protection risks.

South Sudan is one of the most challenging countries for humanitarian aid workers to operate. The cost of humanitarian operations have also increased, as the operating environment is more complex due to COVID-19.

Under its 2021 strategy for South Sudan, DG ECHO will build on the previous year strategy and focus on addressing severe food insecurity, acute malnutrition and epidemics, providing protection assistance, lifesaving activities in particular in the case of new shocks and support the humanitarian community activities through enhanced coordination, logistics, safety and security and context analysis.

Sudan

The removal of former President Omar Al Bashir in April 2019 paved the way to a 39-month transition period. Prime Minister Hamdok took office in August 2019 and is leading the transitional government. A historic peace agreement was signed between transitional government of Sudan and eleven opposition groups in October 2020.

The EU plays an important role to support the transition and co-hosted, alongside Sudan, Germany and the UN a Partnership Conference in June 2020 to garner support. The ongoing democratic transition provides an opportunity for increased engagement of development donors and to pursue a more ambitious humanitarian-peace-development nexus in Sudan to which DG ECHO remains committed.

These positive political developments take place against the background of a severe economic crisis affecting the whole population (9.8 million food insecure people). This comes on top of large-scale humanitarian crises (1.1 million refugees, 2.4 million IDPs) linked to unresolved conflicts and natural disasters. The devastating floods, which occurred in 2020, had an significant impact in the country, and it is expected that the recurrence of such climate –induced disasters may increase. The devastating floods, which occurred in 2020, had an significant impact in the country, and it is expected that the recurrence of such climate –induced disasters may increase. The COVID-19 pandemic is poised to have devastating secondary consequences due to weak public health and education infrastructure and longstanding vulnerabilities (undernutrition, large-scale epidemics, very poor access to safe water). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated protection risks.

The transitional government is committed to tackle past impediments to humanitarian access and to remove all the bureaucratic restrictions. However, at field level, humanitarian partners continue to face administrative difficulties to access the most vulnerable.

Under its 2021 strategy for Sudan, ECHO will build on the previous year strategy and focus on reinforcing response capacity to emergencies in high-risk zones, providing an appropriate response to the health, nutrition and food security crisis as well as support the humanitarian community activities through enhanced coordination, logistics, safety and security and context analysis.

Uganda

Uganda continues to host the largest number of refugees in Africa, with over 1.4 million people mostly from South Sudan and DRC. Whilst borders closed following the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees continued to enter. The scale of the refugee crisis continues to overwhelm national and local capacities. Uganda also faces regular large-scale epidemics and natural disasters and has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well.

Uganda is a Nexus pilot country and a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework pilot country. Both processes are interlinked as EU services and EU Member States agreed to address forced displacement challenges in Uganda and support the country's roll out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The overall objective of the action plan is to contribute to the establishment of durable solutions for displaced and vulnerable people, targeting both refugee and host communities.

ECHO's strategy for 2021 will build on the previous year strategy and focus on life-saving assistance to refugees and host communities, based on vulnerabilities, as well as, strengthening Disaster Preparedness to address the multiplicity of crises including epidemics, new refugee influxes and natural hazards.

Horn of Africa

Several acute crises hit the Horn of Africa (HoA) in 2020, further aggravating the protracted ones, and creating an unprecedented humanitarian situation. Beyond the existing armed conflicts, intercommunal and ethnically motivated violence, natural disasters compounded with climate change, and recurrent epidemics, the HoA has been facing the triple-threat: the worst in several decades desert locust upsurge, major flooding and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, around 18 million people are in immediate need of humanitarian assistance in the region.

Conflict and insecurity prevail across large areas of the region. They are dynamic, destroy lives and livelihoods, and are a major driver of massive displacement. While the majority of displacement remains internal to the countries, Ethiopia and Kenya host some of the largest refugee caseloads in Africa.

The COVID-19 pandemic further aggravated the situation, which caused severe socio-economic consequences, an erosion of livelihoods across the Horn, and protection issues, in addition to the health impact.

Due to fragile situations in their countries of origin, and the travel and access restrictions taken to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little prospect that refugees will be able to return at scale in the short term. In the meantime, hosting countries are changing their attitude and policies towards refugees, who are not systematically granted prima facie recognition.

Despite air and ground control efforts, the desert locusts continue to cause widespread damage. Travel and access restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have slowed down the response. With some 25 million people (May 2020) already food insecure in the region, the desert locust upsurge represents an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods particularly for the most vulnerable population.

The 2020 spring rainy season was excessively performant. The region was affected by heavy rains leading to major flooding, which caused fatalities, massive displacement, and damage to infrastructure and cropland.

Djibouti

The country is faced with chronic extreme dry climate, widespread and severe poverty, food insecurity and acute malnutrition. Continuous conflict and displacements from neighbouring countries (Ethiopia, Yemen, Somalia and Eritrea) are creating additional pressure on already overstretched basic social services. In addition to hosting a steady number of refugees from the region, Djibouti has become an epicentre of complex, bi-directional migratory flows across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Migrants are particularly vulnerable, facing violence and abuse. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, their humanitarian needs have increased further. Djibouti hosts a steady number of refugees and asylum seekers (around 30 000), the majority from Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, and more recently from Yemen. They live mainly in three camps all located in highly food insecure areas, with very limited access to any form of livelihoods and a full dependence on external food assistance, as well as in urban areas. In addition, it is estimated that over 160 000 migrants transit annually through Djibouti, the vast majority from Ethiopia.

In 2021, the priority for DG ECHO will be to build on the COVID-19 response and continue to provide protection services and other types of assistance to vulnerable migrants, in coordination with the EU Delegation. The number of migrants is expected to increase, notably due to the economic and social crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ethiopia

Despite an unprecedented transition initiated by Abiy's government, the balance sheet in Ethiopia is bleak. While the global COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of the 2020 elections, the country is increasingly engulfed in an ethnic-based political crisis with ethno-nationalism resonating among a wide range of the population. The country is facing four major types of humanitarian crisis: conflict, migration/deportation, climate shocks and disease outbreaks. An estimated total 2.2 million IDPs in the country out of which 1.6 million are conflict related and 600 000 are drought related. In addition, the country has an estimated 940 000 IDPs who have returned to their places of origin, although 125 000 of those have not been able to live in their houses mainly due to insecurity. The large-scale premature and sometimes forced government-led returns that took place in 2019 and 2020 continue to pose a high risk of being unsustainable and sowing the seeds for more violence and further harm of civilian populations. Ethiopia currently hosts approximately 7 630 000 refugees according to latest biometric registration figures from May 2020. Registration of new asylum-seekers have significantly reduced due to end of the prima facie policy for Eritreans since January 2020 and shift to individual refugee determination status (RSD) policy officially announced by Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and COVID-19 prevention and control measures with borders closure. Additional influxes are expected to continue especially from South Sudan due to renewed fighting and possibly from Eritrea. Since March 2017 and the expulsion by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) of large number of Ethiopians living without proper immigration status, massive return operations have taken place and continue to date. As of August 2020, 350 000 have been sent back (90% involuntary) to Ethiopia at an average pace

of 10 000 deportees per month (including around 400 unaccompanied minors per week). While deportations from KSA seems to have halted since April 2020 following enhanced advocacy for a moratorium on deportations in time of COVID-19, it is still estimated that another 200 000 to 400 000 Ethiopians could be forcibly returned once the pandemic is over.

In Ethiopia, recurrent climatic shocks, mostly drought and floods have caused widespread food and nutrition insecurity, particularly in the South and South-East regions. However, in addition to the 2019 drought episode, several waves of Desert Locust infestation have affected some of the most vulnerable rural areas in several regions across the country. These compounded with ethnic and communal tensions, rampant inflation and food prices increase, and lately the COVID-19 pandemic and the political crisis are bringing together all the elements for a large-scale food and nutrition security crisis in Ethiopia. The 2020 HRP mid-term review projects 15 million people in need of humanitarian food assistance in Ethiopia, in addition to the 8 million people under the Productive Safety Net (PSNP). Over 4.4 million children under age of 5 and pregnant and lactating mothers are estimated in need of treatment for moderate and severe acute malnutrition, with a 23% increase due to COVID-19 pandemic. The food and nutrition needs of the refugees remains also extremely high as they rely exclusively on external food assistance for survival and critical pipeline break for the second half of 2020 threaten for a further cut in the food ration, already only at 80% of the standard ration.

In 2021, in Ethiopia, ECHO will target in priority populations affected by inter-communal ethnic conflicts, i.e. populations in displacement, communities hosting/affected by displacement and populations returned/integrated/relocated. Moreover, DG ECHO will continue to ensure a rapid response capacity to new shocks, with particular attention to rapid-onset shocks such as conflicts, floods and epidemic outbreaks. Support to the refugee response will also remain a priority, ensuring that essential assistance such as food and water as well as basic services are covered in the different refugee settings – in particular where new arrivals occur but also that their protection framework is maintained as per Refugee Law, despite a challenging political environment. DG ECHO's engagement in addressing urgent humanitarian needs of deportees will continue in 2021, while at the same time advocating for more long-term and sustainable solutions to be found.

Kenya

Kenya faces recurrent conflicts caused by competition over limited resources, as well as insecurity, especially near the borders with Somalia and Ethiopia. It continues to host nearly 495 000 refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from Somalia and South Sudan, but also from DRC and Ethiopia. Refugees are fully dependent on international humanitarian assistance, because of the Kenyan government's encampment policy in place and the limited possibilities for durable solutions, including voluntary return operations. In the past three years, the pace of official returns has significantly reduced since its peak in 2017 due to the persistent drought and the sustained conflict in Somalia. The Government's renewed intention to close the Dadaab camp builds on the 2016 announcement, which at the time led to an increase of repatriation of Somali refugees. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Kenya, borders have been closed, and all voluntary return and relocation operations have been halted, while no official new arrivals have been reported. Only minor numbers of individuals seeking international protection have been reported, trickling in from neighbouring countries, mostly from Somalia.

In addition, Kenya is regularly affected by climate-related events and since the end of 2019 also by the desert locust upsurge, primarily impacting the most vulnerable households in remote areas. The recurrence of the shocks is also undermining households' capacities to

cope with them. After a number of consecutive failed rainy seasons in the past, agricultural and pastoral communities have partially lost the ability to cope as their resources are depleted. Seasonal forecasts suggest that while pasture and vegetation conditions across much of the country are well above the median as of June 2020, preliminary research suggests there is a possibility for a below-average March to May 2021 season, which will likely result in an increase in acute food insecurity in late 2021 due to consecutive below-average rainfall seasons. It is estimated that over 980 000 people living in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, in addition to the nearly 500 000 refugees living in camps, will require food assistance by the end of the year, while the number of malnourished children is estimated at nearly 79 000.

DG ECHO's support for Kenya in 2021 will focus on basic survival services (food, WaSH, health and nutrition, protection and education in emergency) for refugees and asylum seekers living in camps. Efforts will also be made to link humanitarian interventions for refugees with durable solutions, particularly for those living in Dadaab, following the recent reminder made by the government to find a long-term solution for the more than 210 000 people living in this camp. Support will be well articulated with the longer-term actions funded by other EU instruments and donors, avoiding overlap. Should the food security situation deteriorate, DG ECHO would consider a harmonised approach responding to basic needs of the most vulnerable population, preferably through unrestricted cash. In the event of potential new crises (e.g. drought, floods), DG ECHO would focus on the most vulnerable population and support a coordinated and harmonised response pending funding availability.

Somalia

Somalia still represents one of the most serious and complex humanitarian crises in the world. The armed conflict is ongoing, primarily between the Government, supported by African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), multiple regional security forces, and Al Shabaab. This is compounded by recurrent inter-clan fighting. The conflict has also seen increased tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States, and it is likely that political tensions in the run-up to the elections in late 2020/early 2021 will further increase insecurity and armed clashes.

These conflicts cause massive displacement, mostly internally and more limited across borders, civilian casualties, destruction of property and decimation of livelihoods. IHL and human rights violations are widespread. The conflict situation is at a stalemate, with no end in sight of the very high levels of insecurity. Restricted access and high insecurity are major challenges for aid agencies and result in widespread protection issues for the Somali population.

While there have been improvements in terms of rainfall which helped to partially re-build livelihoods that had been affected by previous recurrent droughts, Somalia has faced floods in spring 2020, which affected more than one million people and displaced half of these. Somalia is an extremely fragile country and people's ability to cope with any additional shock is highly constrained. The impact of climate change in the form of more frequent droughts and floods with limited or no time for recovery has been widely felt. Crop failure and accelerated decline in livestock productivity and trade have rapidly pushed communities in many parts of Somalia into acute food insecurity and high levels of chronic poverty.

As a result of the above-mentioned issues, as well as due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a significant socio-economic impact in Somalia and thereby contributed to a further erosion of livelihoods, food insecurity levels have sharply increased in 2020 and have reached 3.5 million people in June to September 2020. All of these are in need of food assistance and interventions to prevent even worse levels of acute food insecurity and

malnutrition. About 830 000 children under-5 suffer from moderate acute malnutrition, and another 178 400 suffer from severe acute malnutrition, of which half have been reached by humanitarian partners for treatment.

In 2021, DG ECHO will prioritise actions based on a comprehensive context analysis, and will continue to focus on emergency response through life-saving activities for populations recently displaced by acute crises (conflict, drought, floods) or exposed to high levels of food insecurity or outbreaks of epidemics. The mitigation of the consequences of the “triple threat” of the desert locust upsurge, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (and in particular the resulting food insecurity and protection crisis) will be a priority to address with the 2021 DG ECHO funding.

In addition, support will be provided to strengthen early response capacity in case of new shocks. Areas with high levels of displacement, in IPC 3+ and with a high prevalence of acute malnutrition will be the first focus. Continued high support will be provided to education in emergencies and actions will focus on reaching displaced out-of-school children with relevant education opportunities. DG ECHO will also encourage integrated, multi-sector actions in health, nutrition and WASH and will mainstream protection issues as well as promote stand-alone focused protection actions. Development linkages and Nexus opportunities will be pursued where feasible.

Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (SAIO)

The Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (SAIO) region is highly vulnerable to various hazards ranging from floods, cyclones, droughts and epidemics resulting in loss of lives and livelihood assets, economic losses and population displacement. Disasters represent a major source of risk for the most vulnerable populations and can potentially undermine development gains. About 16.5 million people across the region have HIV. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 could exacerbate the humanitarian context in an already-vulnerable region.

Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe because of climate change. The region has had just one normal rainy season in the last five years, with the last quarter of 2019 being one of the ten driest since 1981 for most areas, causing largescale livestock losses and damaging harvests. In many places, the current growing season is exceptionally hot and dry, while in several other parts of the region, erratic rains risk undermining harvests in 2020. In some countries, this burden comes on top of already-crippling economic woes.

Since 2018/2019, adverse weather events including severe drought have affected central and western parts of the region, leading to a deteriorating food security situation for almost 15 million people. Food insecurity is linked to a number of factors including a generally food insecure previous season, late onset of rains, early cessation of rains, prolonged dry spells, heavy rains which caused flooding as well as pest outbreaks, social and macroeconomic challenges and now also the impact of COVID-19 related lockdown measures. The projected food insecure population for 2019/20 is about 61% higher than the previous season and 42% above the past 5-year average according to the 2019 Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Synthesis Report.

Another serious cause for concern in the region is the worsening internal armed violence in northern Mozambique (Cabo Delgado). The province has suffered from violent activity for nearly three years, where armed groups have been attacking villages and civilians, causing death and displacement and exacerbating the humanitarian situation. In 2020, there has been a dramatic increase in violence, which has led to some 211 000 internally displaced people as

of May 2020. Most displaced people live with host populations, putting strain on already scarce resources as most of these host families are already food insecure.

In Zimbabwe, 7.5 million of people, representing 60% of the population, are in need of humanitarian assistance as of July 2020. The overall situation is deteriorating, as well as the COVID-19 exposure, triggering further travel and access restrictions from the government having a direct impact on humanitarian access and work.

In the region, schools and tertiary institutions have been closed because of the pandemic, affecting education and learning. While some education institutions, especially private institutions, have resorted to the use of virtual online facilities to ensure uninterrupted learning, others, particularly in rural communities, do not have access to these facilities.

In this context, humanitarian priorities for ECHO in 2020 in the SAIO region will be based on three pillars:

- Multisectoral disaster response in particular to address humanitarian needs in Cabo Delgado/Mozambique and Zimbabwe, as well as food insecurity, humanitarian food assistance and COVID-19 related needs in the region;
- Education in Emergencies;
- Disaster Preparedness.

Great Lakes region

The Great Lakes' region continues to be confronted with a multitude of complex crises, both protracted and acute, affecting millions of people. Crises include natural disasters as well as conflict and high levels of insecurity, leading to recurrent forced displacement, food insecurity and under-nutrition, as well as protection issues related to violence, coercion and deprivation. The level and brutality of armed conflicts in the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) deteriorated further in 2020.

In addition, the region faces recurrent outbreaks of epidemics, including measles, malaria, cholera, yellow fever, dengue, Ebola and, since 2020, COVID-19. The DRC reports the largest measles outbreak worldwide and has had three separate Ebola outbreaks since 2018.

Many crisis-affected people lack livelihood opportunities and often live in extreme poverty. Food insecurity and under-nutrition remain among the most significant humanitarian problem especially in the DRC, considered the second largest food crisis in the world, with millions going hungry and including 3.6 million children reportedly acutely severely malnourished. The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the region has further worsened the plight of the most vulnerable, especially in poor and crowded urban areas that are a hotspot for the disease. Access to basic social services and the rule of law are inadequate, especially in the DRC, the Republic of Congo – which also faces an economic crisis – and in Burundi.

The protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas is another major concern in the DRC. A pending exit of the United Nations' stabilisation mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) would further jeopardize the protection of civilians. The high insecurity is also partly responsible for the dramatic food insecurity and under-nutrition, as it often prevents farmers from tilling their land and accessing local markets.

Conflicts in the Great Lakes are dynamic and cause a high level of displacement within and across national borders. The region hosts around 1.7 million refugees, mainly from Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda, Central African Republic and South Sudan. The DRC, Tanzania and Rwanda host the largest numbers of refugees. Tanzania has increased the pressure on Burundian refugees to return since 2018, and while election results in Burundi in 2020 have so far not addressed the political issues that had caused the refugee influx into neighbouring

countries in 2015, the push for repatriation may further increase, especially in Tanzania. In addition, internal displacement is particularly high in the DRC – in fact, among the highest in the world – but also in Burundi. Densely populated refugee camps and settlements of IDPs are also at high risk of COVID-19 transmission.

In the DRC, high humanitarian needs exist throughout the country, but the situation remains particularly challenging with ongoing complex emergencies and crises in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, Tanganyika and Ituri. Out of 178 countries, the DRC is considered the fifth most fragile state in the world in 2020. Significant protection concerns exist, including a high prevalence of gender-based violence.

The major socio-economic downturn in Burundi has not been reversed since 2015. The country ranks 185th out of 189 countries in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) last Human Development Index (2019). While it is difficult to obtain reliable data, over 1.7 million people are reportedly food insecure in 2020. Violations of human rights occur. Working conditions for aid organisations remain difficult.

In 2021, DG ECHO will address urgent humanitarian needs arising from epidemics and population displacements in conflict zones and life-threatening situations in non-conflict areas in DRC. A particular attention will be given to the protection of civilians affected by conflict. ECHO will continue supporting crisis modifiers built in aid projects and emergency response mechanisms to ensure swift response capacity in such volatile contexts.

Food insecurity and acute malnutrition in the region will also be addressed, respecting emergency thresholds and taking into account local capacities and overall funding availability.

In the region, DG ECHO will prioritise its humanitarian support on the provision of immediate multi-sectorial assistance and protection responding to the basic needs of refugees, while working on longer term solutions with development actors for the more protracted situations. Advocacy for the voluntary character of any refugee return will be pursued. In Burundi, DG ECHO will focus mainly on protection activities, including for returning refugees.

All countries in the Great Lakes region are prone to man-made and natural disasters. DG ECHO will support disaster preparedness actions in Burundi, Republic of Congo and the DRC, given their vulnerability.

In line with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus commitments, DG ECHO will continue to be actively involved in the search for self-reliance solutions in forced displacement settings for both IDPs and refugees in the Great Lakes' region, in coordination with development partners. Advocacy for the respect of humanitarian space, principles and IHL will be maintained, along with support for humanitarian coordination and logistics whenever relevant, including the provision of humanitarian ECHO Flight services to access remote areas in the DRC. While supporting emergency responses to epidemics, DG ECHO will also aim at integrating preparation and emergency response to communicable disease outbreaks into health sector support while ensuring coordination with on-going development interventions in this sector whenever feasible.

3.5 EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD AND WESTERN BALKANS

Turkey

In 2021, the conflict in Syria will enter into its tenth year. Turkey is still hosting nearly 3.6 million Syrians under Temporary Protection, and remains the country in the world hosting the highest number of refugees (around 4 million), mostly living in protracted displacement and in need of both humanitarian and development support. While the devaluation of the Turkish lira and the relatively high inflation have further increased refugees' vulnerability, the protracted nature of the displacement has eroded their capacity to recover from shocks and meet subsistence, health and education needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact in terms of income generation capacity and resorting to negative coping strategies. Protection remains a major need as refugees face difficulties accessing social services and exercising their rights, particularly marginalised groups. In 2021, the EU humanitarian support in Turkey will focus on the full transition of some projects in health and protection. The two flagship EU humanitarian projects under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey - FRiT (i.e. the Emergency Social Safety Net – ESSN, and the Conditional Cash Transfers for Education - CCTE) will continue until the end of 2021 and should then be taken over by development assistance in 2022, in cooperation with the Turkish Government. In line with the transition strategy, EU humanitarian funding in 2021 will focus on filling gaps in the basic needs, education, health and protection sectors, preferably with a multi-sectoral approach.

Ukraine

Entering the seventh year of conflict, the situation in eastern Ukraine remains extremely volatile. In 2021, the situation is likely to remain unpredictable, reflecting slow and almost negligible progress of the largely stalled political peace process. The estimated number of most vulnerable people in need of humanitarian assistance is 3.4 million, living in the Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCA) and in the areas along both sides of the contact line. Persons living in the NGCA, particularly near the contact line, are regularly exposed to threats against life and safety (shelling, mines) and blatant violations of IHL. Access to essential services, markets and livelihood/job opportunities is limited. The impact of COVID-19 in the conflict-affected areas is comparatively higher than in Ukraine in general, due to the high proportion of elderly people, poor healthcare system and pre-existing access constraints. In 2021, EU humanitarian aid will remain focused on the most pressing needs in the areas of health, shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs), Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH), basic needs, Education in Emergencies (EiE), and protection. DG ECHO will continue to advocate for improved humanitarian space and for the respect of rights of the conflict-affected population.

Western Balkans & Caucasus

Since the beginning of 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has faced a linear increase of irregular arrivals of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (People of Concern, PoCs) transiting to Northern and Western European countries. In 2020, the restrictions of movement and barriers for registration imposed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a decrease in registered arrivals of nearly 42% compared to 2019, but with a new increase in spring. With nearly 9 000 PoCs constantly stranded in BiH, the pressure on the existing accommodation capacities remains high, with up to 6 000 persons registered in one of the seven Temporary Reception Centres, and an estimate of nearly 3 000 sleeping rough. In complementarity with development actors and depending on DG NEAR's future strategy on the migration management response in the Western Balkans, in 2021, EU humanitarian aid

will focus on protection, health, life-saving assistance outside the reception centres, particularly in winter, and shelter for most vulnerable PoCs.

The resurgence of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in October 2020 may require in the course of 2021 additional EU support under this HIP to help address possible further humanitarian consequences of this conflict.

3.6 MIDDLE EAST

Syria Regional Crisis

The Syria conflict continues to cause immense displacement, casualties and tremendous suffering of the civilian population. Over 11 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance of whom 4.65 million are in acute need, 4.8 million are children, and 3.07 million people with disabilities. There are over 6.1 million IDPs in Syria. The conflict remains characterised by blatant violations of IHL and widespread human rights abuses by parties to the conflict. In 2020, as part of its principled and needs-based humanitarian response throughout the country, DG ECHO has continued to scale up and adapt its humanitarian assistance in response to increasing humanitarian needs resulting from large-scale offensives in central, southwest, northeast and, most lately, northwest Syria. The situation is of particularly serious concern in northwest Syria, where over three million civilians are in dire humanitarian need. In 2020, DG ECHO also adapted swiftly its response to meet the needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, DG ECHO will continue to provide swift and needs-based multi-sectorial life-saving response. Sectors will include protection, health, WASH, coordination, livelihood support, education, emergency preparedness and first line response. COVID-19 sensitive and specific programming will continue while the pandemic remains in the country. Humanitarian access and protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers, will remain serious challenges. DG ECHO will prioritise assistance to the most vulnerable people, regardless of their geographical location, through all possible modalities and based on operational capacities of partners. While conditions for return are still not met, DG ECHO will continue to provide its assistance based on needs and not on status. DG ECHO will also continue to keep risk management central in its response strategy. It will continue its strong humanitarian advocacy to ensure respect of IHL, enhanced access and protection of civilians. While it is premature to consider exit scenarios due to a co-existence of both protracted and acute humanitarian needs at scale in Syria, DG ECHO will continue seeking coherence and complementarity with other EU financial instruments.

Lebanon

In 2020, Lebanon is facing a wave of multiple crises – economic, fiscal, financial, monetary and sanitary – unprecedented in magnitude, with devastating effects on the economic vulnerability of the people, including the large refugee population. Bleak economic outlook, systemic inefficiencies, deteriorating fiscal situation due to falling tax revenue and higher public debt feed social instability. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the situation. Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide, with an estimated 1.5 million registered and non-registered Syrian refugees. The issue of Syrian refugees in the country has long been at the centre of political debates and rhetoric. Clashes have taken place between refugees and host communities.

On top of all existing crises, huge explosions rocked Beirut at the beginning of August, reportedly caused by 2 750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate stored in port facilities. The explosions produced widespread damage, with reports of hundreds of deaths and around

300 000 displaced. The destruction of the port of Beirut, through which around 90% of imports would normally transit, is likely to have a devastating impact on people, also affecting the humanitarian aid pipeline. DG ECHO mobilised additional EUR 32.2 million to deal with the short-term humanitarian consequences of the explosion.

DG ECHO response in 2021 will maintain its focus on the provision of life-saving assistance and protection of the most vulnerable individuals. Protection and accountability remain key elements in the DG ECHO strategy. DG ECHO will continue to focus on supporting Syrian refugees, while not excluding support to the Lebanese population to deal with the consequences of the Beirut port explosions. Close coordination between different EU services and instruments will continue to be paramount in ensuring operational continuity of actions and assistance, notably to tackle the longer-term needs resulting from the explosions.

Jordan

In 2020, Jordan was hosting 748 461 refugees, the second highest number of refugees per capita in the world. This number includes 658 028 Syrians (532 871 live in urban areas and 125 157 reside in camps, source UNHCR, July 2020). Following the government decision to suspend UNHCR registration of non-Syrian asylum seekers in early 2019, an estimated 7 000 individuals have only minimal protection due to the absence of documentation, and limited access to basic services. Furthermore, and despite the successful regularisation exercise conducted until March 2019 to formalise the status of Syrian refugees residing in urban areas, an estimated 30 000 refugees remain undocumented, and therefore more vulnerable and at the risk of detention and/or forced relocation to camps. Four years after the closure of the northeastern border with Syria, approximately 10 000 people are still stranded at the “Berm” on the Syrian side of the border (Rukban) and this number is not expected to significantly decrease. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis led to the temporary closure of the only UN health clinic located on the Jordanian side of the border, a few kilometres away from the settlement, forcing emergency medical cases to reach health facilities in Syrian government held areas, with no option of coming back and therefore facing high protection risks.

In 2021, DG ECHO will continue assisting refugees in host communities, in refugee camps and at the Berm, focusing mostly on access to protection, health and education services. In parallel, DG ECHO will continue its coordination efforts with other EU instruments to ensure a smooth transition to longer-term solutions for refugees and host communities in Jordan

Palestine⁴¹

The civilian population in Palestine continues to suffer from the consequences of the ongoing Israeli occupation and recurrent IHL violations. In Gaza, Israeli restrictions on the entry of goods and people and recurrent bouts of violence have led to increased vulnerabilities of the population. The COVID-19 crisis has further restricted movement and socio-economic indicators have dropped sharply. Living conditions are deteriorating at an alarming rate and record-high levels of unemployment have reduced people’s purchasing power and their access to food.

In 2021, DG ECHO will continue to assist and protect increasingly vulnerable and isolated communities in Gaza that are exposed to conflict and economic hardship. In the West Bank, DG ECHO will continue supporting vulnerable communities at risk of displacement and who lack access to basic services. In 2021, humanitarian assistance in Palestine will maintain its focus on protection and humanitarian advocacy. Close coordination with other Commission

⁴¹ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

services and with the EEAS will continue to ensure programmatic complementarity between immediate relief and resilience-building.

3.7 NORTH AFRICA, IRAQ AND ARABIAN PENINSULA

Iraq

Within a highly unstable context exacerbated by rising tensions between the US and Iran, Iraq recovery process continues facing concurrent challenges of political, security and socio-economic nature. The humanitarian situation has remained largely stable throughout 2020. According to the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), 4.1 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance and 1.4 million remain internally displaced. Of those, 274 000 IDPs still live in camps, and 275 000 in informal settings in extremely vulnerable conditions, following multiple rounds of displacement. Return movements have slowed down due to COVID-19, which has halted the Government-led camp consolidation process. In addition, the country is hosting an estimated 286 000 refugees, mostly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Nearly three years after the IS defeat, major protection issues remain. 5.5 million people are still missing some form of civil documentation and nearly 500 000 children have no identification document (2020 HNO). The number of people deprived of liberty remain high. The detention of children, including third country nationals, is of particular concern. The COVID-19 outbreak added another layer of vulnerability to Iraq's complex landscape, increasing the severity of existing needs. The epidemic has impacted most severely on vulnerable groups, in particular refugees and IDPs, low-income families depending on daily and seasonal employment, and people deprived of their freedom detained in prisons and detention centres. The entire health system is under heavy strain.

In 2021, DG ECHO will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to the most vulnerable populations in Iraq through provision of multi-sector assistance in IDPs camps and in informal settlements, and protection of persons deprived of their liberty, where needs are most acute and partners could have a tangible impact. Specific actions to support the Iraqi health system response to COVID-19 are also envisaged, in light of the evolution of the pandemic in the country.

Yemen

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world, driven by conflict, disease, economic collapse and the breakdown of public institutions and services. After five years of continuous war, a staggering 80 percent of the entire population or 24.3 million people require some form of humanitarian assistance and protection. Over 3.6 million people have been displaced, with one million residing in informal sites. Yemen is the biggest food security crisis in the world, with 20.1 million people classified as food insecure, of whom 10 million are severely food insecure. Malnutrition levels in Yemen are among the highest in the world with 25 percent of the population, approximately 7.5 million people, suffering from either moderate or severe acute malnutrition. Among them, 2.1 million children (including an estimated 360 000 children severely acutely malnourished) and 1.2 million pregnant and lactating women. 19.7 million people are in need of healthcare as the already fragile healthcare system is struggling to address the excessive mortality related to COVID-19, other epidemics, and the direct effects of the conflict on top of regular healthcare.

In 2021, DG ECHO will focus on multi-sector and integrated interventions addressing the needs of people directly exposed to conflict and displacement and to the health, nutrition and food security crises, including WASH activities to prevent transmission of epidemics and malnutrition. The response to COVID-19 will be integrated in every operation with a priority

for community-based interventions, adapted primary/secondary health programming and case management capacity per facility. Humanitarian protection remains a key aspect of DG ECHO's response in Yemen. Furthermore, DG ECHO will build on the existing Rapid Response Mechanism to new displacements and will contribute to coordination and critical logistical capacities. DG ECHO will prioritise its response in locations with the highest concentration of life-saving needs:

- Areas of active conflict and populations trapped in conflict zones;
- Areas hosting large numbers of newly displaced people, including migrants and asylum seekers and;
- Areas with high levels of malnutrition, food insecurity or epidemics.

Algeria - Saharawi crisis

The Sahrawi refugees hosted in five camps in Southwest Algeria (near Tindouf) are almost entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance, with little prospect for return, integration or resettlement. Humanitarian funding remained stable in 2020 and amounted to USD 25.7 million. Over the last five years, the yearly funding for this forgotten crisis has remained at around USD 25.5 million per year. EU humanitarian funding still represents more than 50% of the overall assistance. COVID-19 has had limited impact on the camps so far.

In 2021, DG ECHO will continue to focus on basic needs such as food assistance, water and sanitation, essential medicines, and education in emergencies. We will remain vigilant about the evolution of the pandemic. DG ECHO will pay additional attention to the environmental impact of the projects it funds. In parallel, DG ECHO will keep advocating for more burden-sharing by other donors and other EU instruments that could support livelihood and self-reliance initiatives. Employment opportunities are particularly important for young people who feel increasingly frustrated by their dependency on aid and bleak future prospect.

Egypt

Egypt is host to a population of almost 260 000 refugees and asylum seekers (Source: UNHCR). These individuals are located in some of the most overcrowded and poorest neighbourhoods of the country's largest cities, sharing these areas with host communities who suffer from similar levels of vulnerability. The refugee population is a mix of Syrian refugees (50%) and other nationality refugees (50%), mainly from Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Women represent more than half of the refugee population, which includes 50 000 children, among which 3 870 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Refugees face many significant barriers in accessing basic services, while also suffering from high levels of discrimination and stigmatisation. 89% of refugee and asylum seeker households report not being able to meet their basic needs, with many resorting to negative coping strategies.

In 2021 DG ECHO will continue supporting refugees and asylum seekers by addressing the most vulnerable through an effective 'One Refugee' approach with a focus on protection as the path into all other sector activities. Through this focus, it will seek to address the many different needs of the refugee community. The approach will also take into account and reinforce the Nexus framework, and coordination and advocacy initiatives.

Libya

Since the fall of the Qadhafi regime in 2011, Libya has experienced several rounds of intense conflict. Military control is split between the Government of National Accord (GNA) in the West and the Libyan National Army (LNA) in the East and South with a plethora of affiliated armed groups on either side. The country's economy has been severely affected by the conflict, the absence of a functioning government, and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. This has significantly affected the lives of the population with shortages in medical, food and fuel supplies, multiple displacements, breakdown of the social and medical infrastructure, disruption of basic services and communication, and violations of IHL and Human Rights Law. By June 2020, according to the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, 425 714 people were internally displaced, including about 28 000 individuals displaced in May and June, due to armed conflict between GNA and LNA and related change of control over territory. According to the 2020 HRP, 893 000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance: IDPs, non-displaced conflict-affected Libyans, highly vulnerable returnees, and migrants and refugees affected by the crisis.

Libya is primarily a protection crisis, therefore in 2021, DG-ECHO will consider protection as the entry point for all sectors/programmes (mainly protection, health, education in emergencies, and multipurpose cash transfers for food and NFIs) based on a solid protection risk analysis, in order to ensure access to the most vulnerable people excluded from assistance. Continued support will be provided to advocate for the respect of IHL and initiatives aiming at strengthening local partners' capacities to implement an appropriate humanitarian response.

3.8 ASIA, LATIN AMERICA, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC

South West Asia and Central Asia Region

Afghanistan

The conflict in Afghanistan has continuously intensified over the last years and was qualified as one of the deadliest conflicts worldwide. In 2019, for the sixth year in a row, United Nations Assistance Mission In Afghanistan (UNAMA) counted more than 10 000 civilian casualties, of which 3 400 were killed. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was devastating and dramatically compounded the already dire situation, affecting the survival and resilience of large parts of the population and particularly of the most vulnerable. The 2020 UN Humanitarian Needs Overview initially identified 9.4 million people in direct humanitarian need, one third more than the figure identified for 2019 (6.3 million). The Humanitarian Response Plan, revised in June 2020, identifies 14 million people in need. At least 3.4 million people were internally displaced in 2019, with half a million newly displaced expected in 2020. Severe food insecurity affects 12.4 million people throughout the country, with the number of people acutely affected increasing from three to four million people. There are still 2.4 million registered Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan and an estimated equal number of undocumented Afghans without official refugee status or the associated protection. With COVID-19, the number of returnees increased again in the first half of 2020, mainly due to the difficult situation in Iran, among the countries most affected by COVID-19. Many IDPs and returnees end up in need of humanitarian assistance. Thus, in 2021 there will be a continued need for supporting life-saving multi-sector interventions to assist conflict-affected populations, as well as for healthcare provision and trauma care, in areas not covered by government services. DG ECHO will thus support coordination, safety and security measures and air services as a pre-requisite for more effective aid delivery. Afghanistan is

also regularly affected by natural disasters, predominantly floods and drought. It will be important to maintain lifesaving multi-sector support capacity for affected populations.

Pakistan

Pakistan continues to face multiple crises, namely:

- The 40 years Afghan refugee crisis, with Pakistan still hosting some 1.4 million registered refugees out of 3 million Afghans present in the country, many of them being still in need of humanitarian assistance;
- The impact of COVID-19, which is putting a severe pressure on a weak health system and has devastating socio-economic consequences;
- A severe malnutrition emergency and food insecurity, triggered by multi-annual drought, compounded by the consequences of the virus and a locust plague and the impact of past and ongoing insurgency/counterinsurgency operations, including related internal displacement and returns.;
- It also remains one of the world's most disaster-prone countries (e.g. floods, glacial lake outburst floods, earthquakes, heat waves).

As a result, in 2021 DG ECHO's response will focus on:

- The most acute humanitarian needs of Afghan Refugees (returnees from Afghanistan to Pakistan);
- Very vulnerable people still affected by COVID-19;
- People affected by drought/food security issues and malnutrition;
- Pakistani affected by internal conflict, namely internally displaced people and returnees, for instance to tribal districts (former FATA);
- People affected by other natural/climate induced disasters (e.g. flooding, GLOF earthquake).

DG ECHO will also continue to support Education in Emergencies for children most in need and its Disaster Preparedness strategy in Sindh to implement Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) with a model that can be mainstreamed and replicated in other districts.

Iran

Iran faces a severe deterioration of the humanitarian situation, which is expected to further worsen in 2021. The country will continue to be severely hit by multiple crises:

- The 40 year Afghan refugee crisis, with up to 4 million Afghans hosted in Iran, many of them very vulnerable and dependent on humanitarian aid, especially those undocumented;
- A health crisis, including a dramatic COVID-19 outbreak compounded by Iran's challenges in importing medical goods and its limited capacity to provide life-saving health services to the population;
- An economic crisis enhanced by the US stated policy of maximum pressure on Iran, implemented primarily through sanctions, low oil price and COVID-19 socio-economic impact, with serious consequences on the population's livelihood;
- The impact of climate change and natural hazards, due to floods, earthquakes and locust infestation, with possible negative food/nutrition impact.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Iran has remained the most affected country in the Eastern Mediterranean region and one of the worst affected worldwide. Its socio-economic impact will further increase both humanitarian and developmental needs, already severely

affected by the country's economic downturn and impact of US policies. In 2021, DG ECHO's response will continue to focus on the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Iranians and Afghan Refugees, with particular attention to those most affected by COVID-19, both in terms of health and limited capacity to fulfil their basic needs, as well as people affected by other critical health needs, climate-induced and other natural disasters. In addition, DG ECHO will launch a pilot initiative in Disaster Preparedness to help reinforce the preparedness of the health and education systems to external shocks, such as epidemics or natural disasters.

Central Asia

DG ECHO's Disaster Preparedness programme (DPP) in Central Asia has ended in 2018. The follow-on support is now undertaken by DG DEVCO. Nonetheless, DG ECHO will continue following closely the situation in the region, notably through its relationship with the regional Disaster Risk Reduction Centre in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and in terms of the COVID-19 impact.

South and South East Asia, and the Pacific

Bangladesh

Since August 2017, following a crack-down by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya population in Rakhine State, more than 700 000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, which is now hosting almost one million Rohingya refugees. Conditions for a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees to Myanmar are not in place and the crisis is likely to continue in the years to come. The initial 2020 Joint Response Plan for Cox's Bazar was USD 877 million and additional USD 181 million have been required in 2020 for addressing the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic. 1.8 million people, both Rohingya refugee and host communities, are targeted. In 2021, DG ECHO will continue to deliver basic life-saving humanitarian aid to the Rohingya refugees and the host community in Cox's Bazar, as refugees are fully reliant on humanitarian assistance for their survival. The most acute needs include food security and nutrition, health, WASH, education, protection and shelter and settlements. Bangladesh is a highly disaster-prone country and particularly vulnerable to cyclones, floods and earthquakes. DG ECHO will therefore continue to contribute addressing the emergency needs generated by major natural disasters that overcome national response capacities. In parallel, DG ECHO will continue to fund Disaster Preparedness projects, focusing on:

- scaling up Forecast-Based Early Action in various regions in country;
- strengthening disaster preparedness in urban settings. Geographical focal areas will be the vulnerable disaster-prone districts of north and west Bangladesh, urban Dhaka and refugee camps and host communities in Cox's Bazar.

Myanmar

In 2021, DG ECHO will continue to address the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by violence and conflict in Myanmar. The focus will be on Rakhine, Chin, Kachin and Shan States, where - according to the 2020 Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan - almost one million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. The funding requirements for 2020 have increased to USD 275.3 million (compared to initial USD 262.3 million), with a specific COVID-19 requirement amounting to 58.8 million USD.

For the estimated 600 000 Rohingya remaining in Northern Rakhine State, following the mass exodus in August 2017, the conditions remain extremely precarious with continued

restrictions on movement, combined with severe access constraints to basic services, widespread food insecurity and limited livelihood opportunities.

In Central Rakhine, approximately 128 000 Rohingya still languish in confined camps - fully dependant of humanitarian aid - since the eruption of intercommunal violence in 2012. In addition, the conflict between Myanmar military and Arakan Army, an ethnic Rakhine armed group, has dramatically intensified in 2020 in Rakhine and Chin States and over 85 000 individuals are currently displaced because of the ongoing violence.

The political and security situation in Myanmar's northern Kachin state and eastern Shan state has also deteriorated in 2020, with intense fighting between independent ethnic armed groups and the military armed forces (Tatmadaw). Over 107 000 people are internally displaced across both states.

Acute humanitarian needs remain unaddressed. As for Disaster Preparedness, in 2021 DG ECHO will focus on three priorities:

- Shock responsive social safety net and working with partners and DEVCO for forecast-based approach;
- For urban Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), earthquake preparedness programme adjusted with COVID-19 context.
- Providing localised response for emergency in terms of system preparedness to timely respond in conflict areas.

Regional Dimension of the Rohingya crisis

2020 recorded a threefold increase in the number of Rohingya seeking safe haven in South East Asia, undertaking treacherous sea or land journeys. Hundreds have been stranded at sea, as countries in the region hardened push-back policies amid the COVID-19 crisis. In the absence of asylum space, the Rohingya in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and India are exposed to multiple protection risks including trafficking, exploitation and arrest. Thousands are held in immigration and detention centres and denied access to protection and assistance.

In 2021, DG ECHO support for Rohingya in Southeast Asia will focus on:

- assistance to Rohingya in Immigration Detention Centres, welfare centres and similar structures;
- access to protection & asylum pathways;
- support to partners in monitoring of illegal movements and advocacy.

Philippines

The Philippines are prone to significant humanitarian crises prompted by both natural disasters and political instability, particularly in Mindanao. Mindanao endured long-standing internal conflicts between the government armed forces and different non-state armed groups until the signature of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. According to OCHA, about 500 000 people (displaced, returnees and host) are presently in need of humanitarian assistance in Mindanao.

In 2021, DG ECHO humanitarian assistance in Mindanao will aim to reach the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations and those who are socially and culturally discriminated and/or receive little or no assistance. The most acute humanitarian needs continue to encompass food security, protection, early recovery, WASH, health, and education. Low-scale tensions across Mindanao are expected to continue in the course of 2021, leading to recurrent forced displacements.

Regarding Disaster Preparedness, DG ECHO will focus on

- providing shock-responsive rapid response for medium and large-scale natural disasters and localized emergencies beyond of the government reach;
- strengthening local preparedness capacities through niche, value-adding disaster-preparedness programming such as urban DRR and forecast-based financing and action.

Nepal

Nepal is exposed to countrywide tectonic activity and is a country highly vulnerable to natural disasters, in particular to frequent flooding and landslides. The 2021 Disaster Preparedness strategy in Nepal will focus on

- preparedness activities for risk-based and anticipatory action of the national contingency plan, developed for earthquake response in the western region of the country;
- strengthening the capacity of the urban municipalities to enhance disaster preparedness.

Disaster Preparedness in Southeast Asia

Considering the increased proportion of climate-related disasters and higher impact of disasters in Asia's most fragile countries, DG ECHO will focus the Disaster Preparedness interventions in Southeast Asia along three main priorities:

- Shock responsive service provision and social protection linked to forecast-based early action;
- Disaster preparedness in urban settings;
- Emergency preparedness for response and conflict-sensitive disaster preparedness.

Central, South America and the Caribbean

Colombia

The announcement by a group of FARC to resume combat in August 2019 and a bomb attack in Bogota in January 2019, which led to the cessation of peace talks between ELN and the Government, have affected the dynamics of the internal conflict and triggered massive resurgence of violence by old and new armed groups against civilian populations.

Internal displacement has continued to increase (530 000 new IDPs recorded) and confinement of entire communities has soared.

The complexity of the Colombian context is heightened by impact of the Venezuelan crisis, by the country's exposure to natural hazards and, lately, by the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. In 2019, there were 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia, of which at least 56 percent without regular status. Ten million people (including 95% of Venezuelan migrants) are projected to become food insecure as a result of COVID-related restrictions affecting the prevailing informal economy. Three million of them will be requiring life-saving assistance.

In 2021, DG ECHO support in Colombia will focus on the most affected and under-assisted populations, in particular recently displaced people, rural communities affected by the armed conflict and people in food emergency. Specific attention will be given to most vulnerable groups: female-headed households, children, elderly, indigenous and Afro-Colombians. In the region, DG ECHO will provide assistance and protection to Colombians in need of international protection. The humanitarian needs of people fleeing Venezuela will be

addressed in the framework of the regional response to the Venezuelan crisis, focusing on border areas, reception cities and areas of double exposure (to conflict and natural disaster), seeking linkages with longer-term economic integration programmes as appropriate.

Haiti

The analyses show that 4.6 million Haitians are facing an acute food crisis or a food emergency in 2020. The situation has significantly worsened: since 2018, the number of people affected by the acute food crisis has doubled and the number of people facing a food emergency has more than quadrupled. The deterioration is due to a combination of higher than average staple food prices on local markets and poor performance of the last four agriculture seasons.

The food and nutritional status of vulnerable Haitians is expected to deteriorate further in 2021, following the devastating economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on jobs and inflation. The number of severely undernourished children has risen to 134 000.

In 2021, DG ECHO will continue to support food assistance for vulnerable populations in food emergency and nutritional services for under-five and children with severe acute malnutrition. It will also continue addressing the protection needs of survival migrants and forced returnees/deportees from within the region. Efforts to support disaster preparedness and build local rapid response capacities will also continue. All interventions will be designed in full synergy with EU longer-term development actions, following the definition of a joint humanitarian-development intervention framework in Haiti. In parallel, DG ECHO will step up efforts in humanitarian monitoring and advocacy, in light of the worryingly deteriorating socio-economic and security situation in the country.

Venezuela

The complex crisis in Venezuela continues to unfold, with severe consequences on the living conditions of the population, particularly in terms of access to food, health and education. Inside the country, malnutrition rates have exceeded the emergency threshold, and national health services have almost collapsed, with only emergency health services available largely thanks to international support. The 2020 pandemic has aggravated every aspect of the on-going complex humanitarian emergency.

The 2019 nationwide food security survey showed that already by late 2019, 9.3 million people were in need of food assistance. In terms of education, up to 70% of school-aged children are not attending schools on a regular basis due to the crisis. Of the approximately 5.2 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela displaced globally, some 4.3 million are hosted in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than 896 000 Venezuelans applied for asylum worldwide. At least 6.17 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance as a consequence of the migration crisis,

In the framework of the "EU Compact for Venezuela", in 2021 DG ECHO will maintain its humanitarian assistance according to identified needs inside the country and within the region. Multi-sectoral interventions will focus on providing basic health services, protection, access to food and nutrition services, WASH and shelter support for people on the move. Education in Emergencies will be supported with a set of integrated activities aimed at making schools a protective environment. Target populations will be in particular children under five and youth, pregnant and lactating women, elderly people, as well as indigenous populations in remote areas. In parallel, DG ECHO will keep supporting humanitarian coordination and leading donor coordination at country level, with a renewed effort in the framework of the ICG Humanitarian Working Group.

Central America

In the Northern Triangle of Central America and Mexico, the humanitarian impact of pervasive organised violence is extremely high on individuals and communities, with similar effects to those caused by conflicts. Successive shocks over the last years, exacerbated by El Niño-related droughts, have seriously affected the food security situation in the region: in 2020, already before the spread of COVID-19, 4.4 million people were acutely food insecure, mainly in the Dry Corridor of Central America, with over one million requiring urgent assistance. At global level, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador are among the fifteen countries most affected by extreme events. Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico are also occasionally affected. Some 1.7 million people per year require temporary evacuation and/or emergency assistance due to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, droughts, hurricanes.

In 2021, DG ECHO will support protection and relief assistance for the most vulnerable victims of organised violence, including food assistance and short- to medium-term livelihood for people facing acute food insecurity, as well as disaster preparedness and resilience building, in full coordination with longer-term development actions. DG ECHO will also continue monitoring and responding to epidemics. Population movements, in particular from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, triggered by violence, poverty, food insecurity and social unrest, including mass mixed migration flows to Mexico, will be monitored and the related humanitarian consequences addressed based on assessed needs.

South America

The region is experiencing an unprecedented influx of migrants/refugees from Venezuela (over five million people), affecting in particular Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile. Most migrants live in an irregular situation, are exposed to protection threats and lack basic services (health, food, water, education). The response capacities of host countries are overwhelmed, triggering appeals for international support. South America is also prone to a variety of hazards, including floods, earthquakes and forest fires.

In 2021, DG ECHO will consolidate and extend the current response to the displacement crisis with particular focus on protection and life-saving operations for the most vulnerable groups in remote, underserved areas. In parallel, DG ECHO will continue supporting disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities aimed at strengthening local, national and regional response and coordination capacities, while promoting a civil protection approach to State response. Based on the achievements and lessons learnt from previous interventions, actions will aim at further strengthening the use of best practices for ownership and institutionalisation by the authorities, as well as at enhancing preparedness to respond to the humanitarian challenges posed by the regional migration crisis. To this end, close coordination with local, national, and regional institutions will be maintained, and synergies with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism will be pursued.

Caribbean

The Caribbean is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, notably hurricanes, storms, flooding and drought (the latter intensified by the El Niño phenomenon since 2015). The region is currently also one of the most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, which is having a heavy impact on national economies. DG ECHO will continue its support to disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction and the strengthening of resilience, building on the lessons learned and achievements of previous interventions, within a wider EU nexus strategy linking relief to rehabilitation and development. Cooperation will continue with disaster management institutions at local, national and regional level to further promote institutionalisation and

sharing of best practices. DG ECHO will also stand ready to provide rapid humanitarian assistance in response to new sudden-onset disasters in the region. Continued synergies will be sought with EUCPM interventions. DG ECHO will furthermore support needs-based relief and protection activities in benefit of displaced populations in the Caribbean, notably refugees from Venezuela, Haitian survival migrants, and population groups forcibly displaced as a consequence of natural disasters.

3.9 RESPONSE TO SUDDEN-ONSET EMERGENCIES

The response will provide assistance to fast onset humanitarian needs for example within the context of an epidemic outbreak, cyclones, floods, earthquake, landslides or any other sudden onset crisis that triggers humanitarian response. This type of intervention falls under the emergency toolbox Humanitarian Implementation Plan and is designed to ensure rapid funding for response to a broad range of fast onset and first response needs.

Epidemics

Epidemics pose great risks to the health, lives and livelihoods of vulnerable people in developing countries. Communicable diseases that have appeared or reappeared in recent years have demonstrated their epidemic potential and their capacity to significantly exceed national resources and boundaries, causing major – even regional or global as in case of COVID-19 pandemic – emergencies. The burden of endemic and epidemic-prone diseases tends to increase in view of more complex emergencies related to natural disasters, climate change and conflict. Such crises result in increased vulnerability to infectious diseases alongside reduced capacity of countries to respond to public health risks, especially if existing health systems were already poorly resourced. Vaccination coverage in developing countries is generally low and, thus, the risk of transmitting infection increases. As health workers are particularly at risk of being contaminated, medical evacuation options need to be available to ensure a proper response. To reduce morbidity and mortality in disease outbreaks, early and effective action is required. Preparedness and response capacity are intimately linked as an effective response, but is only possible with an appropriate degree of preparedness.

Small-Scale Tool

While relatively limited numbers of affected people may be involved, small-scale disasters still have a serious negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of those affected. They can occur in remote or isolated areas not receiving support or assistance. The objective of the Small-Scale Tool is to provide rapid relief assistance to victims of natural or man-made disasters where a small-scale response is sufficient to cover unmet needs and enhance preparedness.

Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT)

Large-scale sudden onset natural disasters can have an enormous impact on the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations. In many countries, the effects of a disaster when combined with high levels of vulnerability and insufficient local capacities may be devastating and require urgent life-saving assistance. How quickly needs are addressed within the first days of a disaster is usually critical. The purpose of the Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) is to provide a first initial response to cover the immediate needs of the most vulnerable in the immediate aftermath of a large-scale natural or technological disaster.

Support to the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and Forecast-based Action (FbA) by the DREF

In most small-scale emergencies, emergency assistance is mostly provided at local or national level. Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, supported by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), are often best placed to provide an immediate response as they are rooted in the local community and are able to mobilise community members as volunteers. DG ECHO's contribution to the DREF is motivated by the need to ensure a quick reaction capacity with minimal administrative burden for the parties concerned. DG ECHO's contribution to the DREF may be used towards the IFRC's new mechanism under the DREF, Forecast-based Action (FbA). FbA aims to address specific, predetermined threats, with action triggered once it is certain the threat has become a real and imminent event.

3.10 COMPLEMENTARY AND THEMATIC ACTIVITIES

Policy Support toolbox

Having access to the right mix of policy support tools and ensuring their optimal use is essential to create and maintain systemic, long-lasting impact on the humanitarian system in priority areas that are important for DG ECHO and for the humanitarian system as a whole.

In a context of increasingly complex humanitarian challenges and scarce resources, the capacity of humanitarian actors to respond to ever-growing needs is often stretched to the limit. Addressing this issue is not only a question of increasing financial resources, but also of improving tools, knowledge, coordination and preparedness. In line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian aid “(...) *supporting the development of the collective global capacity to respond to humanitarian crises is one the fundamental tenants of our [EU] approach*”.

The development and roll-out of innovative and well-informed policies also ensures that DG ECHO, through its operational activities, provides responses that meet the highest international standards in terms of quality and timeliness.

Through the policy support toolbox DG ECHO has championed numerous policy initiatives, contributed to the development and building of capacity and strengthened the ability of our partners to deliver.

DG ECHO will continue to adapt its Policy Support Toolbox to best serve its purpose. In order to support DG ECHO's internal policy development capacity, it is foreseen that a call for tenders for a new service contract to this end will be launched in 2021.

ECHO flight

DG ECHO aims at facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid by supporting humanitarian air transport, to ensure that aid is accessible to beneficiaries. ECHO Flight opens up humanitarian access by providing dedicated, efficient, safe and cost-effective humanitarian air transport to remote locations that would otherwise be cut off from the rest of the world.

ECHO Flight is vital for many humanitarian partner organisations operating in some regions of Africa, as it would be extremely difficult to implement many humanitarian projects without this transport option. ECHO Flight facilitates partners' humanitarian response and improves the quality of humanitarian operations by allowing more frequent monitoring and evaluation missions. ECHO Flight's agility and flexibility allows it to respond promptly to

humanitarian emergencies, medical evacuations and security evacuations, as was the case for the Ebola response in DRC during 2020.

ECHO Flight directly benefits the staff of various implementing agencies in the regions where it operates, and indirectly benefits the population targeted by humanitarian and development programmes funded by the European Union and other donors. Several million people in need of assistance benefit indirectly from the programme. Field staff productivity is increased because rotations can be organised to allow staff to rest and recuperate on a regular basis. The capacity to carry out emergency evacuations by air is a prerequisite for many organisations' projects. ECHO Flight is also an important component of DG ECHO's security plan for its offices located in South Sudan, Central African Republic and DRC. ECHO Flight directly supports between 200 and 250 projects in the DRC, Kenya and Mali. Specific monitoring missions within Somalia are also operated from Nairobi. ECHO Flight usually transports more than 2 100 passengers and 15 tonnes of cargo per month.

Up to early 2020, six planes were operating in specific countries of operations. However due to the COVID-19 situation and the reduction in movement demands from partners, fleet has been reduced to 3 aircrafts and closer synergies established with WFP/UNHAS. The number of passengers transported in 2021 should drop due to the specific context.

Visibility, information and communication

In 2021, DG ECHO aims to increase awareness, understanding of and support for humanitarian issues, especially in Europe and in third countries where the Union is funding major humanitarian operations, by organising high impact public awareness, information and communication actions. These also serve to highlight the partnership between DG ECHO, on behalf of the Commission, and its partners in delivering relief assistance to people affected by humanitarian crises. Communication actions in 2021 will also contribute, where appropriate, to the corporate communication of the Commission, in particular regarding the implementation of the Recovery plan for Europe, as well as to the corporate communication cluster on "EU in the World".

DG ECHO developed the communication approach for humanitarian aid to take into account the specificity of humanitarian aid, with a view to preserving a distinct identity for principled, needs-based humanitarian action, in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. The European Union is one of the world's leading humanitarian aid donors and plays an important role in shaping the global humanitarian landscape. Providing transparent and accountable information about the impact of EU humanitarian aid and disaster response and the underlying values to stakeholders in the wider sense is crucial to underpinning and mobilising continued support and relief assistance. Joint communication actions with the European Commission's humanitarian partners are integral to this approach. Operational activities funded by DG ECHO will thus fully integrate this imperative, aligned with the visibility requirements of the Commission's Corporate Model Grant Agreement, which comes into force under the umbrella of the new long-term budget as of 1 January 2021. Communicating the EU's response to sudden onset, ongoing and protracted crises remains at the core of communication planning, together with awareness-raising on more strategic themes e.g. preparedness and resilience in a post-COVID-19 reality, IHL, the humanitarian principles and 'forgotten crises'. Communication channels will include, inter alia, traditional print media, digital and social media products, journalist visits, audio-visual programmes and media partnerships, online and offline content promotion, and strategic actions with humanitarian partners on key campaigning issues.

4 DELIVERY, COORDINATION AND CONTROL OF HUMANITARIAN AID

4.1 WAYS AND MEANS OF DELIVERING AID

Field Network

The field network of 50 field offices in 40 countries is considered as one of DG ECHO's main key strengths and a distinctive feature of the Commission's humanitarian aid policy. Composed of both international and local experts, it contributes decisively to making the European Union a reference donor, whose strong position in international fora is based on first-hand operational knowledge. The Field Network enables to improve the quality of humanitarian aid to beneficiaries by ensuring coordination with stakeholders, including the EU Delegations, EU Member States and international organisations. The Field Network facilitates the development of a strengthened EU reaction capacity in situations of sudden crises, increasingly building on the synergies with Civil Protection. The basic role of DG ECHO's field network is to enhance the effectiveness and appropriateness of the EU's humanitarian action by:

- contributing to the identification and evaluation of humanitarian needs in the field and their possible evolution;
- monitoring of humanitarian aid projects funded by the Union and provision of technical advice on needs assessment, analysis of proposals, and lessons learned;
- contributing to ensure a coherent roll-out of policy guidelines guaranteeing a consistent level of quality for Union-funded humanitarian aid projects;
- representing the Commission in relevant humanitarian aid clusters/fora, to advocate with relevant stakeholders at local/regional/global level, within the framework defined by Headquarters and to ensure appropriate communication and visibility actions, while keeping the office structures flexible and agile, adapted to needs and acting through an appropriate resource, logistics and security management separate from the EU Delegations management.

The field network is therefore of crucial importance in helping to enhance the impact of humanitarian aid to beneficiaries and in improving DG ECHO's ability, on behalf of the Commission, to determine priorities for the use of this aid.

Relations with partners

DG ECHO implements its humanitarian aid mandate by funding projects proposed by partner organisations (currently more than 200). They include European non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies, other international organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and specialised agencies from the EU Member States. With some of these organisations (i.e. who jointly account for more than half of the annual humanitarian budget) annual Strategic Dialogues are organised to discuss major issues of shared interest. DG ECHO will continue to actively coordinate the EU preparation for the governing bodies of those strategic UN partners for whom it has the lead, exchanging also with EUMS.

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.

Pilot Programmatic Partnerships

At the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, the world's major humanitarian donors and aid organisations signed the Grand Bargain. Its main objective is to improve the way humanitarian aid is delivered by making it more effective and efficient, thereby reaching more people in need. Based on Grand Bargain shared commitments, DG ECHO has launched pilot Programmatic Partnerships with four NGO partners. Specific objectives were developed jointly, including reducing the administrative burden, increasing the proportion of funding directly available to assist people affected by crisis, and promoting greater funding predictability and more flexibility in the humanitarian response.

Enhanced dialogue both at field and headquarters levels is expected to be monitored in 2021. Further efforts will also be pursued to provide more flexibility to react to new onset crises or emergencies and respond to new needs.

In 2021, DG ECHO also envisages to expand the Programmatic Partnership pilot phase to other types of partners, namely UN-agencies and International Organisations.

4.2 COORDINATION AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

Various mechanisms are in place to ensure coordination and exchange of information on crisis response and humanitarian aid activities in general, including:

- Exchange of information on overall operational strategies and on responses to specific crisis situations features regularly on the agendas of the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) attended by Member States;
- Crisis reports are shared with Member States. They contribute to the development of shared assessment and understanding on the situation on the ground and thus contribute to the overall coordination of the humanitarian response by the EU and its Member States;
- Exchanges with partners both at headquarters and in the field take place regularly;
- EDRIS (European Disaster Response Information System) collects data on DG ECHO and Member States' humanitarian aid activities, whereas CECIS (Common Emergency Communication and Information System) enables information exchange, situational awareness and coordination during emergencies with the UCPM (Union Civil Protection Mechanism) Member and Participating States;
- The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) enables a coordinated and swift response to disasters. The ERCC is a 24/7 coordination hub supporting humanitarian aid and civil protection activities, thus facilitating a coherent European response during emergencies. It also supports other EU services and the Member States in crisis situations;
- The ERCC is also supporting the institutional crisis management process as well as other DGs. Since 1 February 2020, the ERCC took over from the Secretariat General the Commission's duty system under ARGUS phase 1 meaning that all incoming communications concerning an ongoing or potential crisis are directed to the ERCC. Furthermore, the ERCC is ensuring the 24/7 operational focal point in the context of the Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements (IPCR) as well as a coherent information flow related to the production and dissemination of the Integrated Situational Awareness and Analysis (ISAA) reports.

- At international level, DG ECHO continues to participate in *fora* and donor groups such as the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), the ICRC Donor Support Group (DSG), IFRC Donor Advisory Group (DAG) and the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG) and the GHD initiative;
- Regular exchanges of views on the EU's response to crises take place in the European Parliament (in particular in the DEVE Committee);
- Ad hoc crisis coordination meetings of the EU services and broader inter-service meetings aimed at exchanging information (e.g. ARGUS meetings, Crisis Platform meetings organised by the EEAS);
- Regular information exchange and upstream coordination in relation to crisis response interventions under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) to ensure optimal deployment of DG ECHO resources and coherence of interventions;
- Regular evaluations with a geographical focus, each including a suitable thematic/sector aspect, with the aim to cover all regions where DG ECHO operates and all humanitarian themes and sectors every 5 years. The results of all these are posted on DG ECHO's website.

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.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a key tool for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of EU initiatives. DG ECHO's evaluation programme covers five years and provides comprehensive evaluation coverage of DG ECHO's activities (humanitarian aid and civil protection) over the programme period.

In 2020, the following evaluation related projects have been or will be completed, and the reports made available on DG ECHO's evaluation webpage on Europa⁴²:

- Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian assistance in Ukraine, 2014-2018;
- Evaluation of the EU humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh, 2017-2019;
- Evaluation of the European Union's implementation of the DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document Gender: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance of July 2013, (2014-2018);
- Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian assistance in Syria, 2015-2018.

The following evaluation is currently being implemented and will be completed in 2021:

- Evaluation of the Emergency Social Safety Net programme (ESSN-2), January 2018-March 2020.

The following evaluations are currently about to be launched and completed in 2021:

- Combined evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in the Horn of Africa, 2016-2020, and DG ECHO's partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross;

⁴² http://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding-evaluations/evaluations_en

- Evaluation of the European Union’s humanitarian interventions in Yemen and in Humanitarian Access, 2015-2019.

Controls performed by DG ECHO

The main aspects of the control environment developed by DG ECHO include supervision and monitoring procedures and ex-ante/ex-post controls:

- Strict selection and quality control mechanisms of NGOs and international organisations as DG ECHO partners defining the requirements for financial credentials and expertise of partners;
- Assessment of needs of crisis-affected people through a worldwide network of DG ECHO’s field experts;
- Appraisal of project proposals and on the spot project monitoring through a worldwide network of DG ECHO’s field experts;
- Regular field visits to project sites by geographical desks, technical experts, external auditors, and DG ECHO managers;
- Obligation for partners to produce reports after the end of each operation to justify their expenses. A thorough analysis of these reports, with checks on eligible expenditure, are carried out by DG ECHO's operational and financial desk officers;
- Audits of the legality and regularity of expenditures claimed, of management and control systems, and of compliance with the requirements set in the certificate are performed by external auditors contracted by DG ECHO.

The monitoring mechanisms listed above should not be seen in isolation. Each one of them contributes to the aim of providing assurance on the legality and regularity of transactions and their compliance with relevant rules and obligations.

Furthermore, within the European Commission, controls are carried out by the Internal Audit Service, whose mission is to give recommendations, opinions and advice with respect to the internal control systems of the European Commission's departments and EU agencies.

Additional controls

DG ECHO's operations and financial management are also subject to external controls. The European Court of Auditors audits the EU finances and, increasingly, the performance of activities. Observations and recommendations are published in the Courts' annual and special reports, which are transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council.

Furthermore, specialised committees of the Budget Authority (European Parliament and Council) exercise control over the financial management of the European Commission services: in this context, the Budgetary Control Committee of the EP organises annual hearings with a number of Commissioners in the framework of the procedure for the discharge of the European Commission's annual accounts.

Annex 1: Index for Risk Management – INFORM & Crisis Assessment (April 2020)

Annex I: Index for Risk Management – INFORM & Crisis Assessment (April 2020)

COUNTRY (a-z)	Natural		Human		HAZARD & EXPOSURE		Socio-Economic Vulnerability		Vulnerable Groups		VULNERABILITY		Institutional		Infrastructure		LACK OF COPING CAPACITY		INFORM RISK		RISK CLASS		Rank
	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(0-10)	(Very Low-Very High)	(1-191)	
Somalia	6,9	10,0	8,9	9,1	9,1	9,1	9,3	8,5	8,9	9,0	Very High		1										
Afghanistan	6,5	10,0	8,8	7,9	8,8	8,4	7,3	7,3	7,3	8,1	Very High		2										
South Sudan	4,0	8,0	6,4	8,2	8,8	8,5	9,4	9,5	9,5	8,0	Very High		3										
Yemen	4,0	10,0	8,3	7,4	8,5	8,0	8,8	6,5	7,8	8,0	Very High		3										
Central African Republic	3,1	8,0	6,1	9,6	9,0	9,3	8,0	9,2	8,7	7,9	Very High		5										
Congo DR	4,6	9,0	7,4	6,7	7,9	7,3	7,9	8,0	8,0	7,6	Very High		6										
Chad	4,2	6,9	5,7	8,5	7,6	8,1	8,1	9,7	9,0	7,5	Very High		7										
Niger	4,3	9,0	7,3	7,7	6,4	7,1	6,0	8,8	7,7	7,4	Very High		8										
Syria	5,6	10,0	8,6	7,5	8,0	7,8	6,6	4,4	5,6	7,2	Very High		9										
Sudan	4,4	8,0	6,5	6,4	7,8	7,2	6,6	6,8	6,7	6,8	Very High		10										
Iraq	5,3	9,0	7,6	4,4	7,0	5,9	8,1	4,5	6,6	6,7	Very High		11										
Mozambique	6,0	7,0	6,5	7,7	6,3	7,1	4,6	7,9	6,5	6,7	Very High		11										
Cameroon	3,6	9,0	7,1	6,1	7,2	6,7	4,9	6,9	6,0	6,6	Very High		13										
Libya	3,7	10,0	8,2	3,6	6,3	5,1	8,5	4,1	6,8	6,6	Very High		13										
Nigeria	3,9	9,0	7,2	5,7	6,8	6,3	5,0	7,5	6,4	6,6	Very High		13										
Uganda	4,3	6,5	5,5	6,5	7,5	7,0	6,7	7,5	7,1	6,5	Very High		16										
Burkina Faso	3,6	7,0	5,6	7,0	6,9	7,0	4,7	7,9	6,6	6,4	High		17										
Haiti	7,0	3,9	5,7	7,5	4,9	6,4	7,6	6,7	7,2	6,4	High		17										
Ethiopia	4,5	6,7	5,7	6,7	6,5	6,6	4,6	8,2	6,8	6,3	High		19										
Mali	3,7	7,0	5,6	7,5	5,5	6,6	6,0	7,3	6,7	6,3	High		19										
Myanmar	7,8	7,0	7,4	5,3	5,3	5,3	7,1	5,3	6,3	6,3	High		19										
Burundi	3,8	5,9	4,9	7,3	6,1	6,7	6,3	7,4	6,9	6,1	High		22										
Kenya	5,1	6,6	5,9	5,7	6,7	6,2	5,2	6,9	6,1	6,1	High		22										
Pakistan	7,4	7,0	7,2	5,3	6,1	5,7	5,3	5,8	5,6	6,1	High		22										
Bangladesh	8,2	6,4	7,4	5,3	6,2	5,8	5,0	5,0	5,0	6,0	High		25										
Côte d'Ivoire	3,8	6,1	5,1	6,0	5,7	5,9	7,1	6,4	6,8	5,9	High		26										
Papua New Guinea	6,7	2,5	4,9	5,8	4,4	5,1	6,8	7,7	7,3	5,7	High		27										
Guatemala	6,7	4,2	5,6	5,4	6,3	5,9	6,2	4,3	5,3	5,6	High		28										
Mauritania	5,6	2,2	4,1	6,6	6,5	6,6	5,9	7,2	6,6	5,6	High		28										
Philippines	8,4	7,0	7,8	3,8	6,4	5,2	4,7	3,3	4,0	5,5	High		30										

Colombia	6,7	7,0	6,9	3,8	7,7	6,1	4,4	3,1	3,8	5,4	High	31
India	7,7	7,0	7,4	4,6	5,1	4,9	3,5	4,8	4,2	5,3	High	32
Korea DPR	5,1	3,6	4,4	5,9	5,0	5,5	8,2	3,0	6,3	5,3	High	32
Nepal	5,7	5,5	5,6	5,9	3,3	4,7	6,1	5,0	5,6	5,3	High	32
Djibouti	5,8	0,9	3,7	6,3	6,5	6,4	6,2	6,0	6,1	5,2	High	35
Eritrea	4,2	2,5	3,4	6,9	3,0	5,3	8,1	7,5	7,8	5,2	High	35
Guinea	3,9	4,2	4,1	5,5	3,5	4,6	6,0	8,2	7,3	5,2	High	35
Honduras	6,5	2,7	4,9	5,7	5,1	5,4	6,0	4,3	5,2	5,2	High	35
Iran	6,7	5,7	6,2	2,4	6,8	5,0	5,6	3,2	4,5	5,2	High	35
Madagascar	6,1	0,3	3,8	6,1	3,9	5,1	6,1	7,9	7,1	5,2	High	35
Palestine	3,2	7,0	5,4	4,2	7,8	6,3	6,2	1,0	4,1	5,2	High	35
Sierra Leone	3,9	3,7	3,8	6,9	3,4	5,4	5,3	8,2	7,0	5,2	High	35
Tanzania	5,0	2,3	3,8	5,8	5,8	5,8	5,0	7,2	6,2	5,2	High	35
Zimbabwe	4,7	2,8	3,8	5,9	6,5	6,2	5,1	6,6	5,9	5,2	High	35
Angola	3,2	3,9	3,6	5,6	4,7	5,2	6,3	7,6	7,0	5,1	High	45
Congo	3,8	2,2	3,0	5,4	6,8	6,1	7,8	6,9	7,4	5,1	High	45
Egypt	5,0	9,0	7,5	3,6	4,2	3,9	5,3	3,9	4,6	5,1	High	45
Liberia	4,0	1,4	2,8	7,4	4,3	6,1	7,5	7,8	7,7	5,1	High	45
Mexico	6,8	9,0	8,1	3,3	4,2	3,8	5,7	2,9	4,4	5,1	High	45
Turkey	6,2	9,0	7,9	2,6	6,8	5,1	3,9	2,5	3,2	5,1	High	45
Lebanon	5,3	4,1	4,7	3,9	7,8	6,2	5,8	2,4	4,3	5,0	High	51
Malawi	4,5	0,8	2,9	7,1	5,0	6,2	5,4	7,4	6,5	4,9	Medium	52
Cambodia	5,8	2,2	4,2	5,8	2,3	4,3	7,0	5,2	6,2	4,8	Medium	53
Guinea-Bissau	2,7	2,0	2,4	7,1	4,2	5,8	8,0	7,8	7,9	4,8	Medium	53
Brazil	4,0	9,0	7,2	3,4	3,3	3,4	5,3	3,2	4,3	4,7	Medium	55
Indonesia	7,7	7,0	7,4	3,6	2,8	3,2	4,3	4,6	4,5	4,7	Medium	55
Peru	7,1	2,5	5,2	3,8	4,8	4,3	4,8	4,1	4,5	4,7	Medium	55
South Africa	5,0	5,4	5,2	4,3	5,1	4,7	4,5	4,0	4,3	4,7	Medium	55
Nicaragua	6,6	3,4	5,2	5,0	1,9	3,6	6,0	4,5	5,3	4,6	Medium	59
Senegal	4,8	2,0	3,5	6,3	3,6	5,1	5,1	6,0	5,6	4,6	Medium	59
Togo	2,9	1,8	2,4	6,3	3,8	5,2	8,2	7,0	7,7	4,6	Medium	59
Ukraine	3,2	7,0	5,4	1,8	5,6	3,9	6,4	2,5	4,7	4,6	Medium	59
Jordan	4,2	2,4	3,4	3,6	7,8	6,1	5,6	2,7	4,3	4,5	Medium	63
Solomon Islands	5,8	0,4	3,6	5,9	1,4	4,0	6,6	6,4	6,5	4,5	Medium	63
Tajikistan	5,8	4,3	5,1	4,7	2,1	3,5	6,0	3,8	5,0	4,5	Medium	63
Azerbaijan	4,9	4,0	4,5	2,2	5,6	4,1	6,1	2,3	4,5	4,4	Medium	66
Zambia	3,4	1,1	2,3	6,3	5,6	6,0	5,0	6,8	6,0	4,4	Medium	66
Rwanda	3,6	1,3	2,5	6,3	5,8	6,1	3,9	6,1	5,1	4,3	Medium	68
Venezuela	6,1	2,7	4,6	3,4	3,9	3,7	5,4	3,7	4,6	4,3	Medium	68
Bolivia	4,2	3,9	4,1	4,6	1,9	3,4	6,0	4,3	5,2	4,2	Medium	70
China	7,5	6,4	7,0	2,6	3,4	3,0	3,8	3,3	3,6	4,2	Medium	70
Lao PDR	4,9	0,6	3,0	5,0	3,7	4,4	6,4	5,2	5,8	4,2	Medium	70
Timor-Leste	4,5	1,1	3,0	5,0	3,0	4,1	6,5	5,7	6,1	4,2	Medium	70
Benin	2,8	1,5	2,2	6,6	2,4	4,8	5,8	7,5	6,7	4,1	Medium	74
Ecuador	6,8	1,4	4,6	3,4	4,0	3,7	4,5	3,4	4,0	4,1	Medium	74
El Salvador	6,5	3,3	5,1	4,4	1,2	3,0	5,8	3,1	4,6	4,1	Medium	74
Gabon	2,6	4,2	3,4	4,3	2,3	3,4	6,8	5,0	6,0	4,1	Medium	74

Lesotho	2,2	1,1	1,7	6,9	4,6	5,9	7,4	6,1	6,8	4,1	Medium	74
Namibia	4,1	0,2	2,4	5,6	5,4	5,5	4,6	5,5	5,1	4,1	Medium	74
Thailand	6,2	4,7	5,5	2,2	4,0	3,2	5,1	2,6	4,0	4,1	Medium	74
Vanuatu	5,2	0,0	3,0	6,2	1,3	4,2	5,6	5,6	5,6	4,1	Medium	74
Algeria	5,0	4,8	4,9	2,5	3,4	3,0	4,9	3,7	4,3	4,0	Medium	82
Gambia	3,1	0,9	2,1	7,1	2,7	5,3	4,7	6,3	5,6	4,0	Medium	82
Ghana	3,6	2,1	2,9	5,3	3,1	4,3	4,6	5,6	5,1	4,0	Medium	82
Morocco	4,9	3,2	4,1	4,6	1,7	3,3	5,7	3,7	4,8	4,0	Medium	82
Russian Federation	5,5	6,4	6,0	1,6	2,9	2,3	6,2	2,2	4,5	4,0	Medium	82
Comoros	2,9	0,2	1,6	6,2	4,5	5,4	7,9	6,1	7,1	3,9	Medium	87
Equatorial Guinea	3,0	2,0	2,5	4,2	2,0	3,2	8,0	6,3	7,2	3,9	Medium	87
Georgia	4,4	3,2	3,8	2,9	6,2	4,8	4,4	1,8	3,2	3,9	Medium	87
Micronesia	4,3	0,0	2,4	5,6	3,5	4,6	5,7	4,9	5,3	3,9	Medium	87
Tonga	5,2	0,0	3,0	5,5	3,5	4,6	5,3	2,8	4,2	3,9	Medium	87
Kyrgyzstan	5,2	4,1	4,7	3,9	1,0	2,6	5,2	3,4	4,4	3,8	Medium	92
Sri Lanka	5,2	3,4	4,4	2,6	3,6	3,1	4,8	3,3	4,1	3,8	Medium	92
Belize	5,4	0,1	3,2	3,7	2,5	3,1	6,2	3,8	5,1	3,7	Medium	94
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4,1	1,8	3,0	2,7	4,6	3,7	6,3	2,4	4,6	3,7	Medium	94
Dominican Republic	6,7	2,0	4,8	3,6	0,8	2,3	5,6	3,1	4,5	3,7	Medium	94
Eswatini	2,5	1,1	1,8	5,6	5,0	5,3	5,5	5,2	5,4	3,7	Medium	94
Viet Nam	7,3	2,2	5,3	3,4	0,9	2,2	5,0	3,3	4,2	3,7	Medium	94
Kiribati	3,8	0,0	2,1	5,4	2,5	4,1	5,6	5,0	5,3	3,6	Medium	99
Marshall Islands	3,6	0,0	2,0	5,4	2,1	3,9	7,7	4,1	6,2	3,6	Medium	99
Panama	6,2	0,1	3,8	2,7	2,9	2,8	5,0	3,0	4,1	3,5	Medium	101
Dominica	4,9	0,0	2,8	3,4	3,4	3,4	5,1	3,2	4,2	3,4	Low	102
Armenia	4,4	1,5	3,1	2,0	3,0	2,5	6,5	1,9	4,6	3,3	Low	103
Guyana	3,9	0,3	2,3	4,4	1,6	3,1	5,8	4,3	5,1	3,3	Low	103
United States of America	6,6	5,9	6,3	0,8	4,5	2,9	2,8	1,2	2,0	3,3	Low	103
Bhutan	3,6	0,1	2,0	5,2	1,2	3,5	4,2	4,7	4,5	3,2	Low	106
Cuba	5,7	1,3	3,8	2,7	2,9	2,8	4,0	1,8	3,0	3,2	Low	106
Nauru	2,8	0,0	1,5	4,3	4,0	4,2	6,7	3,1	5,2	3,2	Low	106
Suriname	3,9	0,1	2,2	4,1	1,4	2,9	6,0	4,0	5,1	3,2	Low	106
Jamaica	5,4	0,3	3,3	3,9	0,7	2,4	4,1	3,0	3,6	3,1	Low	110
Malaysia	4,9	1,5	3,4	2,0	4,0	3,1	3,2	2,6	2,9	3,1	Low	110
Paraguay	2,6	1,5	2,1	3,7	3,1	3,4	5,2	3,3	4,3	3,1	Low	110
Tunisia	4,6	2,5	3,6	2,6	0,8	1,7	6,0	3,1	4,7	3,1	Low	110
Tuvalu	3,0	0,0	1,6	5,1	2,0	3,7	6,4	3,3	5,0	3,1	Low	110
Uzbekistan	5,3	2,0	3,8	3,4	0,6	2,1	4,7	3,0	3,9	3,1	Low	110
Albania	6,4	0,6	4,1	2,1	0,9	1,5	5,7	2,5	4,3	3,0	Low	116
Botswana	3,0	0,2	1,7	3,5	3,3	3,4	4,9	4,4	4,7	3,0	Low	116
Costa Rica	6,0	0,1	3,6	2,4	3,4	2,9	2,9	2,2	2,6	3,0	Low	116
Cyprus	4,3	0,1	2,5	0,8	6,5	4,2	3,7	1,3	2,6	3,0	Low	116
Greece	6,0	0,3	3,7	1,5	4,2	3,0	3,6	0,9	2,4	3,0	Low	116
Samoa	3,5	0,0	1,9	5,2	0,7	3,3	4,2	3,9	4,1	3,0	Low	116
Serbia	4,4	1,9	3,2	1,5	3,0	2,3	5,2	2,1	3,8	3,0	Low	116
Chile	6,2	1,7	4,3	1,7	2,2	2,0	3,2	2,4	2,8	2,9	Low	123

Israel	4,6	5,9	5,3	0,6	3,2	2,0	3,3	0,9	2,2	2,9	Low	123
Moldova Republic of	4,1	1,5	2,9	2,5	1,2	1,9	6,3	2,3	4,6	2,9	Low	123
Fiji	3,9	0,1	2,2	3,4	3,5	3,5	2,3	3,4	2,9	2,8	Low	126
Bahamas	3,5	0,0	1,9	4,6	2,0	3,4	3,8	2,5	3,2	2,7	Low	127
Mongolia	2,7	0,1	1,5	3,9	1,6	2,8	5,6	4,1	4,9	2,7	Low	127
Italy	5,2	0,3	3,1	0,6	4,0	2,5	3,5	0,7	2,2	2,6	Low	129
Romania	4,1	1,4	2,9	1,9	1,5	1,7	4,7	2,2	3,6	2,6	Low	129
Saudi Arabia	2,9	5,5	4,3	1,2	1,1	1,2	4,6	1,9	3,4	2,6	Low	129
Argentina	3,9	1,3	2,7	1,8	1,8	1,8	4,5	2,2	3,4	2,5	Low	132
Cabo Verde	2,4	0,0	1,3	4,9	0,9	3,1	3,9	3,7	3,8	2,5	Low	132
Oman	5,2	0,1	3,0	1,7	1,0	1,4	4,7	2,2	3,6	2,5	Low	132
Palau	3,2	0,0	1,7	3,4	1,1	2,3	5,5	2,2	4,0	2,5	Low	132
Trinidad and Tobago	3,0	0,1	1,7	2,1	3,5	2,8	4,9	1,4	3,3	2,5	Low	132
Antigua and Barbuda	3,7	0,0	2,0	2,9	1,1	2,0	5,2	1,6	3,6	2,4	Low	137
Bulgaria	3,5	0,1	2,0	1,8	2,7	2,3	4,2	1,6	3,0	2,4	Low	137
Canada	4,6	0,1	2,6	0,4	3,8	2,3	2,4	2,2	2,3	2,4	Low	137
Maldives	3,2	0,1	1,8	2,6	0,6	1,7	6,2	1,6	4,3	2,4	Low	137
North Macedonia	3,7	0,5	2,2	2,4	1,0	1,7	4,8	2,2	3,6	2,4	Low	137
Sao Tome and Principe	1,3	0,0	0,7	5,4	1,1	3,5	5,9	4,7	5,3	2,4	Low	137
Turkmenistan	3,7	0,4	2,2	1,5	0,6	1,1	7,6	2,8	5,7	2,4	Low	137
Australia	4,9	0,0	2,8	0,5	3,6	2,2	2,3	1,8	2,1	2,3	Low	144
Japan	8,1	0,6	5,5	0,3	2,5	1,5	2,1	0,8	1,5	2,3	Low	144
Saint Lucia	2,6	0,0	1,4	3,1	1,2	2,2	4,9	2,7	3,9	2,3	Low	144
Croatia	4,8	0,5	2,9	1,3	0,9	1,1	4,6	1,4	3,2	2,2	Low	147
France	3,5	0,4	2,1	0,5	4,6	2,8	2,8	1,0	1,9	2,2	Low	147
Montenegro	4,2	0,1	2,4	1,6	1,1	1,4	4,6	1,7	3,3	2,2	Low	147
United Kingdom	2,3	3,9	3,1	0,5	3,6	2,2	2,2	0,9	1,6	2,2	Low	147
Mauritius	3,8	0,1	2,1	2,3	0,7	1,5	3,7	1,9	2,8	2,1	Low	151
Spain	4,1	0,4	2,4	0,6	3,3	2,1	2,8	0,6	1,8	2,1	Low	151
Barbados	3,8	0,0	2,1	2,4	0,5	1,5	3,4	1,6	2,5	2,0	Low	153
Korea Republic of	5,9	0,6	3,7	0,4	2,2	1,3	2,5	0,9	1,7	2,0	Low	153
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2,6	0,0	1,4	2,7	0,5	1,7	4,4	2,8	3,6	2,0	Low	153
Seychelles	2,8	0,0	1,5	2,7	0,7	1,8	4,0	2,0	3,1	2,0	Low	153
Belgium	1,7	2,2	2,0	0,3	3,2	1,9	2,6	0,9	1,8	1,9	Very Low	157
Germany	2,4	0,1	1,3	0,4	5,5	3,4	2,3	0,6	1,5	1,9	Very Low	157
Hungary	3,6	0,1	2,0	1,3	1,7	1,5	3,1	1,1	2,2	1,9	Very Low	157
Saint Kitts and Nevis	2,8	0,0	1,5	1,8	1,1	1,5	4,0	1,7	2,9	1,9	Very Low	157
Belarus	2,3	1,2	1,8	1,2	1,2	1,2	4,2	1,2	2,8	1,8	Very Low	161
Grenada	1,7	0,0	0,9	2,2	1,1	1,7	4,9	2,4	3,8	1,8	Very Low	161
Kazakhstan	4,0	0,3	2,3	1,1	0,3	0,7	4,8	2,4	3,7	1,8	Very Low	161
Kuwait	1,5	0,9	1,2	1,7	1,1	1,4	5,6	1,1	3,7	1,8	Very Low	161
Malta	2,5	0,0	1,3	0,7	3,2	2,0	3,9	0,7	2,4	1,8	Very Low	161
United Arab Emirates	4,1	0,1	2,3	0,7	1,8	1,3	2,3	1,2	1,8	1,8	Very Low	161
Poland	2,2	0,1	1,2	0,8	1,9	1,4	4,2	1,3	2,9	1,7	Very Low	167
Uruguay	1,8	0,0	0,9	1,9	2,1	2,0	3,7	1,7	2,8	1,7	Very Low	167
Austria	2,3	0,0	1,2	0,3	4,4	2,6	2,1	0,7	1,4	1,6	Very Low	169

Brunei Darussalam	2,6	0,0	1,4	1,3	0,5	0,9	4,7	2,1	3,5	1,6	Very Low	169
New Zealand	4,4	0,0	2,5	0,5	1,2	0,9	2,1	1,4	1,8	1,6	Very Low	169
Portugal	3,3	0,0	1,8	1,0	1,1	1,1	2,9	0,9	2,0	1,6	Very Low	169
Slovakia	2,9	0,1	1,6	0,9	0,9	0,9	3,9	1,2	2,7	1,6	Very Low	169
Latvia	2,0	0,1	1,1	1,2	1,0	1,1	3,7	1,5	2,7	1,5	Very Low	174
Ireland	2,2	0,0	1,2	0,4	2,2	1,3	2,4	1,2	1,8	1,4	Very Low	175
Netherlands	2,0	0,0	1,0	0,2	3,7	2,1	1,7	0,7	1,2	1,4	Very Low	175
Sweden	1,2	0,1	0,7	0,2	5,2	3,1	2,0	0,8	1,4	1,4	Very Low	175
Switzerland	2,2	0,1	1,2	0,3	4,1	2,4	1,1	0,7	0,9	1,4	Very Low	175
Bahrain	0,9	0,2	0,6	1,3	0,9	1,1	4,5	1,3	3,1	1,3	Very Low	179
Lithuania	1,7	0,0	0,9	1,0	1,2	1,1	3,5	0,9	2,3	1,3	Very Low	179
Qatar	1,4	0,1	0,8	1,2	0,7	1,0	4,3	1,3	2,9	1,3	Very Low	179
Czech Republic	1,7	0,1	0,9	0,4	1,4	0,9	3,2	0,9	2,1	1,2	Very Low	182
Iceland	2,2	0,0	1,2	0,2	1,3	0,8	2,2	1,4	1,8	1,2	Very Low	182
Slovenia	3,5	0,0	1,9	0,2	1,0	0,6	2,2	1,1	1,7	1,2	Very Low	182
Denmark	1,1	0,0	0,6	0,2	3,2	1,8	2,0	0,5	1,3	1,1	Very Low	185
Estonia	0,9	0,0	0,5	0,7	1,0	0,9	2,6	0,9	1,8	0,9	Very Low	186
Liechtenstein	1,3	0,0	0,7	0,0	1,6	0,8	1,5	0,7	1,1	0,9	Very Low	186
Luxembourg	0,7	0,0	0,4	0,5	2,1	1,3	1,7	0,8	1,3	0,9	Very Low	186
Norway	0,3	0,0	0,2	0,2	3,6	2,1	1,9	1,3	1,6	0,9	Very Low	186
Finland	0,2	0,0	0,1	0,2	2,8	1,6	1,7	0,9	1,3	0,6	Very Low	190
Singapore	0,9	0,1	0,5	0,2	0,3	0,3	1,1	0,9	1,0	0,5	Very Low	191

(*) Reliability Index: 0 more reliable, 10 less reliable.