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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT**

**Annual Report on Humanitarian Aid Policy and its Implementation in 2009**

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The European Union is one of the world's biggest donors of humanitarian aid. It also promotes respect for, and adherence to, International Humanitarian Law.

Its assistance, unique among the funding made available by the European Union is based on the humanitarian principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality.

The European Union's humanitarian aid policy enables it to demonstrate in practical terms its commitment to supporting those outside of the Union in need of assistance while they are at their most vulnerable. It contributes to fulfilling a strategic objective in external relations, as set out in the European Union's Treaty.

### **The Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) activities in 2009**

Through its Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO), the Commission provided needs-based EU humanitarian assistance to the victims of natural and man-made disasters in over 70 countries in 2009. Aid reached about 115 million people, and was worth a total of €30 million.

The initial 2009 budget of €77 million was reinforced twice from the emergency aid reserve:

- by €65 million for Pakistan and Somalia; and
- by €45 million for South-east Asia and the Horn of Africa.

The budget was also reinforced via European Development Funds earmarked for humanitarian aid in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

The need for humanitarian aid has increased over the last few years because of a combination of various factors:

- a rise in the number of refugees and displaced persons due to (protracted) conflicts;
- a rise in the number of natural disasters attributable to climate change; and
- the impact of economic crisis, which is driving more people into distress.

There has been a very marked increase in the number of **natural disasters** recorded. Most of these are due to weather-related events. ECHO has adopted a two-fold strategy towards these:

- Rapid response: ECHO is able to offer assistance in emergencies which exceed a country's own capacity to respond; and
- Disaster preparedness: ECHO aims at identifying those geographical areas and populations most vulnerable to natural disasters, and puts a high priority on enabling disaster preparedness projects to be implemented where appropriate.

In 2009, ECHO intervened in the following types of natural disaster:

- Floods in Afghanistan, India, Tajikistan and West Africa;
- Cyclones, tropical storms and hurricanes in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh, India, Philippines, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cuba, Fiji and Papua New Guinea;

- Droughts in the Greater Horn of Africa, the Sahel region in Western Africa, Madagascar, the Palestinian territories and the Syrian Arab Republic;
- Earthquake in Indonesia;
- Epidemics in West African countries, Southern Africa and Papua New Guinea; and
- Other phenomena: Emergency assistance was also provided in Laos and Bangladesh, which suffered rodent outbreaks affecting food security, and in Uganda following crop failures in the north of the country.

In terms of "**man-made**" crises, ECHO implemented EU humanitarian assistance in the following cases:

- Sri Lanka: the conflict between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the north of Sri Lanka escalated dramatically in February 2009. Emergency aid was mobilised to assist internally displaced people (IDPs) and those otherwise affected by the conflict. Later in the year, when the conflict ended, over 100,000 IDPs returned home and a further 25,000 were released to host families.
- Gaza Strip: The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) launched a large-scale attack on the Gaza Strip on 27 December 2008. Civilians were, and are still, severely affected, and in need of humanitarian aid. ECHO provided emergency assistance for health care, including psychological support, as well as for food and other essentials, shelters and water/sanitation.
- Pakistan: Since August 2008, the conflict between the Pakistani Army and various militant groups in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has significantly intensified. After breaking a ceasefire, the Taliban moved south from the Swat Valley in early April. This offensive and the Pakistani Army's counter-offensive provoked an unprecedented level of displacement among civilians. Further major military operations began in mid-October in South Waziristan, causing the displacement of at least 260,000 families. Military operations also continued in other areas of South Waziristan, which caused more displacements. Over 2.5 million people were affected in all; ECHO implemented emergency humanitarian aid actions to assist the victims of the conflict.
- Afghanistan: The security situation deteriorated. This and the consequences of extensive military operations were aggravated by years of drought and recurrent small-scale disasters. The combination of these factors caused a sharp rise in humanitarian needs over the year 2009, and this looks set to persist into 2010. ECHO concentrated on the humanitarian needs of over 5 million returnees, mainly from Pakistan and Iran, internally displaced people (IDPs) and the most vulnerable communities.
- Yemen: Conflict in the northern Yemenite governorate of Sa'ada escalated at the beginning of 2009. It first erupted in 2004, and there have been six separate rounds of fighting since then. The clashes seen in 2009 were the most serious yet. The EU emergency aid implemented by ECHO aimed, among other objectives, at providing integrated relief assistance for those who had been internally displaced or otherwise affected by the conflict.

- Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)/Republic of Congo border area: The Dongo region, along the river Ubangi, between the DRC and the Republic of Congo, was tormented by violent conflict from the end of October 2009. This led to huge movements of refugees from the DRC into the Republic of Congo.
- Somalia: The humanitarian crisis remained both widespread and severe throughout 2009, with half of the population, an estimated 3.76 million people, in need of humanitarian assistance. This includes: those affected by a severe drought; urban dwellers struggling with very high prices for food and other essentials; and more than 1.4 million people displaced because of fighting.

The Commission was also involved in actions to alleviate the effects of **protracted, complex emergencies**. In terms of funding, Sudan and the DRC remained the two countries in which the EU allocated the highest sums to its partners.

- In Sudan, the EU contributed massively to making humanitarian aid available for over 6,500,000 internally displaced people, refugees, returnees, host communities and nomads across the country. This was the response to needs resulting from the protracted crisis in Darfur, and from new emergencies sparked by conflicts, inter-tribal violence, an epidemic of cholera and floods. In one way or another, these led to major population displacements and disruption of livelihoods throughout the country. In the South and transitional areas, ECHO implemented life-saving interventions and services for the most vulnerable, in areas where returnees, displaced people and/or communities were facing extreme hardship.
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo, ECHO implemented EU-funded actions for around 3 million people in the North Eastern provinces of North and South Kivu and Haut and Bas-Uele. ECHO continued to assist internally displaced people in North and South Kivu, as well as in Haut and Bas-Uele, where the security situation deteriorated significantly following attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army. On a more positive note, some of those who had been displaced were able to return to those parts of these regions in which security has improved, and ECHO was able to implement programmes to support such returnees. All health programmes implemented by ECHO had a component addressing the issue of sexual violence, and a clinic specifically for the victims of sexual violence was implemented in South Kivu.

Despite the increase in natural and man-made disasters and the heavier toll that complex emergencies have taken during the last few years, disrupting the lives of millions of civilians and despite the lack of respect for, and adherence to, the humanitarian principles and the safety and security of humanitarian workers, there are also cases where the **humanitarian situation has improved**. There are definitely hopeful signs that humanitarian interventions are not always endless, where funding is never followed by development.

In 2009, this was the case in North-Uganda, where the Lord's Resistance Army has been kept out. This means that those who fled violence can now return. A Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for northern Uganda, although very much behind schedule, made a faltering start during 2009 but could, all being well, continue to gather pace during 2010.

In Zimbabwe, the need for basic health and water/sanitation services continued, although the general situation improved following the liberalisation of the economy at the beginning of the year, and a good harvest. This has enabled ECHO partners to turn their attention to starting pilot job-creation projects.

Finally, in **Sri Lanka**, where the guns have finally fallen silent, many Tamils remain in need of humanitarian aid. Already some displaced persons have started to return to their places of origin, and it is hoped that others will follow. If this pattern is sustained, ECHO will be able to concentrate on the medium-term needs of those returning home, and on host communities.

The table below shows how EU funding for humanitarian aid was allocated by region in 2009, in application of the needs-based principles.

<b>Humanitarian assistance in 2009 (in €'000)</b>		
<b>Region</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>489,560</b>	<b>53%</b>
Sudan & Chad	149,600	
Central Africa	79,500	
Horn of Africa	173,475	
Southern Africa, Indian Ocean	35,535	
West Africa	51,450	
<b>Middle East, Mediterranean, Caucasus &amp; Central Asia</b>	<b>121,775</b>	<b>13%</b>
Mediterranean and Middle East	109,475	
Caucasus and Central Asia	12,300	
<b>Asia and Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific regions</b>	<b>248,175</b>	<b>27%</b>
South Asia	157,500	
South East and East Asia	45,500	
Latin America	28,325	
Caribbean	14,000	
Pacific	2,850	
<b>Worldwide (capacity building, technical assistance &amp; support)</b>	<b>70,940</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>930,450</b>	<b>100%</b>

ECHO does not intervene directly on the ground but implements its mandate by providing funding to about 200 partners composed of non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies, other international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies and some specialised agencies from EU Member States.

It is important for ECHO to have a wide range of partners, as this allows it to cover an ever-growing list of needs in different parts of the world often in increasingly complex situations. ECHO-managed grants and contributions are made on the basis of selecting the best proposals received for covering the needs of the most vulnerable. In 2009, funding was distributed among ECHO's partners as follows: NGOs 47%, UN agencies 39% and International Organisations 14%.

Humanitarian organisations are faced with an increasingly **limited access to beneficiaries** on the one hand due to a tightening of the humanitarian space by governments and non-governmental actors, who disregard even the most basic protection afforded under international humanitarian law, and on the other hand due to security constraints. More and more, governments are imposing restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid (e.g. Sri Lanka). In many conflict zones (e.g. DRC, Somalia, Sudan) humanitarian workers see particularly brutal methods of warfare, including, the targeting of civilians and frequently, the

use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. The incidence of attacks on humanitarian aid workers, including expulsions and killings, appears to be on the rise. Donors have to face the fact that not only the safety of humanitarian staff is at risk, so also is the funding and infrastructure that they provide. Some governments are willing to go to the extreme of expropriating or ‘borrowing’ funds and property financed by donors and/or expelling humanitarian aid organisations once they have been stripped of their assets.

At the **policy and institutional level**, 2009 was more positively marked by activities related to the timely implementation of the action plan related to the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the Commission’s co-chairmanship with the Netherlands of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative and the work of the newly created Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA).

The Council Working Group quickly established itself as a useful forum for regular policy level exchanges and facilitated closer coordination among EU experts on humanitarian aid policy and operational strategies. It has been instrumental in helping the Commission and Member States to develop shared analysis on thematic issues, including food assistance, as well as geographical issues. It raised the profile and relevance of humanitarian issues with other Council working bodies, particularly geographical working groups (e.g. Sri Lanka), the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), which in turn fed in to the Foreign Affairs Council. Over time, this should lead to more consistency and coherence in the application of the humanitarian principles and good practices outlined in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

At the European Parliament, 2009 was a key year with the election of a new assembly and a new Committee on Development (DEVE). The Commission, through ECHO, was quick to establish close working ties with the members of the Committee, particularly with its Chair and the new standing Rapporteur on Humanitarian Aid. This has provided a fresh impetus to the inter-institutional relationships in the area of humanitarian affairs which bodes well for the future.