

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release

May 24, 2016

FACT SHEET: World Humanitarian Summit - U.S. Government Priorities

The World Humanitarian Summit is a high-level event convened to reinvigorate international commitments to humanitarian principles and strengthen the international community's response to crises caused by conflicts and natural disasters. Conflict-related crises and natural disasters affect approximately 125 million people on an annual basis – a combined population equivalent to the world's 12th largest nation. Conflict and human rights abuses have forced approximately 60 million persons worldwide to flee their homes. Natural disasters have displaced an average of 26 million persons annually in recent years. These humanitarian crises have caused a staggering loss of life and destructive economic and social impacts that have reversed decades of hard-earned development progress in some locations.

The World Humanitarian Summit occurs at an historic moment when the scale of displaced populations in need of humanitarian assistance and protection has reached levels unseen since World War II. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon convened the first World Humanitarian Summit to bring together more than 5,000 government, private sector, and civil society representatives in unity to draw attention to the issues of today. Gayle Smith, Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) led the U.S. delegation to the summit in Istanbul, which included representatives from the White House, Department of State, including the United States Mission to the United Nations, the Department of Defense, and USAID.

As the world's single largest humanitarian assistance donor with contributions of nearly \$26 billion in the past 5 fiscal years, the United States views the World Humanitarian Summit as an important opportunity to promote a stronger and more accountable international system capable of addressing today's unprecedented needs. The Summit is also an important opportunity to emphasize that support and financing from a broad set of traditional donors as well as from new sources are essential to address emergencies effectively. President Obama's Leaders' Summit

on Refugees in September 2016 will be a timely complement to the World Humanitarian Summit and will further efforts to address the needs of refugees, host communities and other affected populations.

The United States' primary objectives for the World Humanitarian Summit are to:

- Reduce the impact of conflict on civilians, with special attention to the impact on women and girls, and re-affirm our country's longstanding commitment to international humanitarian law;
- Strengthen the international humanitarian system, including how it is resourced, and its effectiveness in addressing needs;
- Improve coherence between humanitarian and development assistance to better address recurring and protracted crises.

United States' Response to Humanitarian Emergencies

The United States is committed to helping people around the world during this time of unprecedented need. In 2015, the U.S. government provided more than \$6 billion in humanitarian assistance to more than 60 new and protracted emergencies worldwide ranging from earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods to health epidemics, conflicts, and refugee influxes, with the vast majority of our assistance meeting needs in long running conflicts. When the scope of a disaster overwhelms the capacity of an affected country to respond, the United States is able to deploy a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) overseas to conduct disaster assessments, determine urgent needs, and coordinate response activities with affected governments and implementing partners. The U.S. government had a record five DARTs deployed simultaneously during 2015 to support large-scale relief efforts in West Africa^[1], South Sudan, Syria, Iraq, and Nepal. In addition, the U.S. government has more than 120 refugee coordinators and emergency humanitarian response specialists stationed around the world to advise and coordinate the U.S. government's humanitarian response.

Reducing the Effect of Conflict on Civilians

Upholding humanity is at the core of humanitarian action and the United Nations Charter reaffirms faith in the dignity and worth of the human person. Protecting the vulnerable from harm and preserving their dignity, in particular by upholding international law and seeking accountability for violations, should be at the very top of the international community's agenda. The United States joins with **47 other countries in presenting a statement** to reinforce commitment to the protection of civilians in conflict situations by honoring the full spirit and letter of international law and to reaffirm and strengthen international respect for the core humanitarian

principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence that should serve as the foundation for all humanitarian response.

The international community should have more systematic approaches to address the scope and nature of constraints placed on agencies delivering humanitarian relief in order to identify systematic access denials, devise appropriate policy measures through multilateral fora, and take other appropriate action. We intend to work with other Member States, the UN, and humanitarian organizations in the coming months to identify concrete ways to address more systematically challenges to humanitarian access to populations in need.

The United States believes that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, which includes addressing gender-based violence (GBV), is a critical priority and will continue to advance the Call to Action for women and girls in emergencies, which is a global effort to fundamentally change humanitarian response to GBV. This includes a pledge of an additional \$12.5 million in 2016 in support of Safe from the Start, a joint Department of State-USAID initiative to better protect women and girls in crisis, bringing the U.S. total contribution to more than \$50 million since 2013.

Strengthening International Humanitarian Assistance Operations

The United States is working to strengthen how the international humanitarian system operates, including how it is resourced. In response to human suffering caused by conflict and disasters, many emergency relief agencies do outstanding work that saves countless lives. Despite increased global funding for emergency programs and an impressive expansion of services in recent years the international community has been unable to keep pace with the increased emergency needs worldwide.

At the Summit, the United States emphasized the importance of ensuring that emergency assistance is provided effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of crisis-affected people. The U.S. government calls on humanitarian organizations to work together better to assess needs among affected populations, identify gaps in existing relief programs, and formulate collective response strategies that identify clear priorities according to urgency of need and inclusive of all affected populations, including refugees. As a result of political commitments at the Summit, humanitarian agencies should be able and willing to strengthen their operational coordination to minimize service gaps and avoid duplication of programs. UN humanitarian agencies should take steps to ensure that leadership of humanitarian operations is effective and accountable.

The United States commits to providing flexible funding to enable humanitarian agencies to more easily adjust emergency programs to address shifting needs and longer time horizons where humanitarian agencies demonstrate increased accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness. The United States is also committed to continuing its legacy of building local capacity so that humanitarian response can be as local as possible and as international as needed. The United States is joining with other donor governments and humanitarian agencies in what is being called a “Grand Bargain” that will strengthen how humanitarian assistance efforts are designed, funded, implemented, and evaluated so as to maximize their impact and efficiency and increase their accountability to affected populations.

Fostering Humanitarian and Development Coherence

The United States is redoubling efforts to strengthen coherence between our humanitarian and development assistance efforts. The destruction caused by conflicts and natural disasters has eroded and in some cases reversed the hard-earned progress many communities had made toward long-term, sustainable development. The frequency of extreme weather events is increasing as a result of climate change, and too often refugees and internally displaced persons become trapped in protracted displacement and dependency for years or decades. Their needs are closely related to the development needs of communities that host them. The international community responds to emergencies to save lives, but it must also do a better job of ensuring that the people saved will have an opportunity to enjoy a productive future.

To help bridge this gap, the U.S. government is providing leadership and technical assistance to support global efforts to prioritize and strengthen education in emergencies and protracted crises, and will provide a \$20 million contribution to “Education Cannot Wait: a Fund for Education in Emergencies” for one year, and looks forward to learning from its progress. The UNICEF-managed Fund will help transform the global education sector and bridge the humanitarian and development divide through a more collaborative, agile, and rapid response to education in emergencies. Ultimately, the Fund will increase safe and quality education so that all children have the opportunity to learn even amid protracted emergency situations.

The U.S. government also supports greater World Bank engagement in protracted and recurrent crises and its intent to establish a Global Crisis Response Platform. Initially, the Platform should provide support to developing countries, irrespective of region or income level, that are hosting large numbers of refugees on a protracted

basis, to enable these countries to invest more in livelihoods and education opportunities for affected populations, and alleviate strains on national infrastructure and social services.

Additionally, the United States will initiate a Crisis Review Mechanism within the U.S. government that will review a crisis to determine whether and how our relief programming should pivot to a combined humanitarian-development approach. And we will continue our work of building resilience in fragile communities so they can more effectively prevent or withstand shocks that trigger large-scale emergencies. The U.S. government is committed to support responsible national governments in reducing their risks of disaster and strengthen their capacity to lead their own response efforts when disasters strike, and will continue to build and support local capacity for disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response.

[1] Funding figures do not include supplemental resources allocated by Congress for the U.S. government response to Ebola in West Africa.

SHARE THIS: [TWITTER](#) [FACEBOOK](#) [EMAIL](#)