



## Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation

### SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY

#### Core Responsibilities Four and Five of the Agenda for Humanity



**“We need to think about institutional innovation, not innovations in products and services. In the humanitarian sector, collaboration will prove to be more effective than competition.”**

**Hadeel Ibrahim,  
Founding Executive  
Director, Mo Ibrahim  
Foundation**

### I. Overview

The special session focused on the significant role innovation plays in creating opportunities for change and adaptation in the humanitarian sector and included the launch of the [Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation \(GAHI\)](http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/global-alliance-for-humanitarian-innovation). In line with Core Responsibilities Four and Five of the Agenda for Humanity, the launch of GAHI marked a pivotal point in accelerating innovative approaches in the humanitarian field. GAHI is a unique and breakthrough alliance, arguably the first of its kind at the global level in the humanitarian sector, which aims to connect, mobilize and amplify innovations, resources, approaches and best practices to increase efficiency and address humanitarian challenges too complex for any single actor to address on their own. Engagement with those outside of the mainstream humanitarian sector, including businesses, academia and the research and scientific community, is vital for adapting best practices and exploring new solutions.

### II. Key outcomes/themes

This special session resulted in a range of concrete commitments as part of the global effort to boost innovation, change and adaptation in the humanitarian sector. By stocktaking and connecting existing initiatives, associations and networks under the umbrella of a global alliance and matching capacities against shared humanitarian challenges, GAHI ensures that efforts to address humanitarian challenges are not duplicated but instead build on existing solutions.



A defining feature of GAHI is its commitment to action, a plan for addressing significant humanitarian challenges that cannot be addressed by humanitarian organizations working on their own. These commitments to action are a result of cross-sector partnerships, with GAHI members combining efforts to expand their impact.

The potential for innovation to accelerate transformative improvements in humanitarian action was emphasized during the special session, whether adopting existing technologies for use in humanitarian response or developing new solutions that are unique to an emergency context. Speakers highlighted that challenges within the humanitarian system need to be addressed collectively and effectively, maximizing reach while utilizing limited available resources. It was acknowledged that humanitarian innovation is affected by a number of constraints and the lack of shared priorities with regard to the types of humanitarian challenges that need to be addressed collectively through innovation and taken to scale. Innovative solutions that might be applicable across sectors remain siloed. GAHI serves as a catalyst for action, transformation and adaptation in the humanitarian sector.

The role of GAHI as a coordinating body complementing each organizations efforts and its multi-stakeholder approach were commended. Innovation requires creating collaborative partnerships that bring together assets, skills and competencies to achieve a shared objective. A key advantage of GAHI lies in its network comprising of government actors, academic institutes, businesses and humanitarian organizations, bringing together a unique combination of resources, expertise and capabilities. GAHI also offers the private sector a route to engage with humanitarian actors – in a structured manner – to innovate and deliver solutions for those most in need.

Stakeholders committed to GAHI as a key mechanism for prioritising innovation and ensuring that it is an integral part of the new humanitarian business model. The objective of GAHI is to achieve higher impact and efficiency through innovation in humanitarian action; by focusing on addressing challenges no single actor would be capable of addressing on their own, GAHI will limit duplication and ensure multiplication of impact. To deliver on this ambition, GAHI connects by matching problems to people that might solve them, mobilizes social, intellectual, and financial resources, and amplifies by sharing knowledge of what works.

With over twenty-eight governments, private sector, academia and international organizations having expressed intent to join as members, GAHI will address barriers in humanitarian response and sector-wide innovation needs. Members have committed to lend financial and in-kind resources in support of innovation in the humanitarian sector, leveraging capacities and skills to accelerate transformative improvements in humanitarian action. Pledges also were made to supporting the work and the GAHI Secretariat. Specifically, Denmark pledged DKK 2 million (about USD 300,000) for 2016-2017 and Australia committed to provide AUD 450,000 over three years to support the GAHI Secretariat.

### III. Way Forward

The immediate next steps for GAHI include setting up its governance mechanisms comprising of a High-level Leadership Board, Steering Group, a light and nimble secretariat as well as finalizing the hosting arrangements of the GAHI secretariat and expanding the GAHI's membership. It is expected that the GAHI will promote coordination and cohesion across a broad set of actors. Six initiatives have been proposed, with GAHI addressing two or three in its launch phase, in these areas: 1) innovation in emergencies; 2) refugees and energy; 3) data 4) education in emergencies; 5) community engagement; and 6) global innovation challenge prioritization. Progress towards achieving the outcomes of these initiatives will be monitored and reported annually by the GAHI secretariat and the GAHI Steering Group. While the GAHI secretariat will coordinate actors working on these initiatives, the initiatives themselves will be led by relevant GAHI members who have a direct interest in their success.

A strong structure will be necessary for GAHI's success. Other success factors include leadership, the existence of an enabling eco-system, continual investment in the innovation process and strong evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of innovations. GAHI must be able to mobilize resources, both in-kind and financial, around its priorities and challenges within the innovation ecosystem to improve response to complex humanitarian challenges. To do this requires commitments on the part of member organizations. Ultimately, responsibility for resource allocation and usage with respect to specific initiatives will be determined by the participating members themselves. GAHI must also possess the capital – social, intellectual, financial - to promote impact across a broad geographic and constituent base.

### IV. Speakers

#### Moderator:

- Ms. Kate Russell, BBC Click

#### Speakers:

- Ms. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Australia
- Mr. James (Chip) Cottrell, Global Executive for Humanitarian Innovation, Deloitte
- Mr. Illac Diaz, Founder, Liter of Light Foundation
- Ms. Hadeel Ibrahim, Founding Executive Director, Mo Ibrahim Foundation
- Ms. Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Netherlands
- Mr. Fuat Oktay, President, AFAD, Turkey
- Ms. Rebecca Marmot, Global Vice President Partnerships, Unilever
- Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director, UN World Food Programme



- Mr. Kevin Jenkins, CEO, World Vision

**Interventions from the floor included:**

- Representative of the Office of the State Secretary for Development, Denmark
- Representative of Dubai International Humanitarian City
- Representative of Kathmandu Living Labs