

Announcement Plenary speech: working differently for an effective response

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

That so many of us are here today is a recognition that humanitarian crises and how we respond is a serious and a growing challenge. Our response, as individuals, communities, organisations and governments to these challenges will be judged by history, for if we fail to meet it we risk more displacements and suffering for millions of women, men and children.

The subject has certainly drawn a lot of attention, search Google for humanitarian disaster and you will get almost 60 million pages of results. But what can we do? What is causing it? What are some possible solutions? These are some of the questions that have brought us here today at this critical juncture.

Working Differently to End Need

Humanitarians must deliver principled assistance and protection where it is needed. However, people affected by crises deserve more than to simply survive, they need to see a future for themselves, their children, families and communities. The Summit is the opportunity to work differently, to not just to overcome the multitude of crises we see every day, but to also be better prepared to reduce the risk of crises, to enhance resilience to potential future shocks, and to bridge the divide between humanitarian life-saving and longer-term, durable developmental solutions.

Why are Diasporas Important

Diasporas have been much discussed in recent years, and there are numerous examples of diaspora's humanitarian response. You see how Syrian diasporas are able to provide assistance in hard to reach areas, how proactive the Sierra Leonean diaspora has been in the Ebola response, the Somali and Ethiopian diaspora are raising awareness and funds to halt the effects of the impending famine in the Horn of Africa and how the Filipino diasporas responded to Typhoon Haiyan. These are just snippets of what is taking place among diasporas globally, the list of their engagements is long and diverse. Diasporas should not just be seen through the remittance lens. Quoting my colleague who spoke at the WHS Global Consultations, we are not just a wallet, but a bridge between North and South, an important information channel to and from affected communities. And we are committed to make a change.

How do we move forward?

There are several steps that we as diasporas can take forward. Let me present you with some of them:

- Utilise our local, national and international networks to channel information to and from affected communities, aiming to ensure that the voices of affected communities are at the centre of decision-making processes within humanitarian programming.
- Incorporate applicable Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in our work and encourage all partners to do the same, to enable a response that can provide lasting sustainable growth and recovery.
- Support all efforts that seek to ensure the inclusion of front-line responders in collective coordination platforms and response processes, thereby promoting stronger partnerships and increased direct access of local, national and diaspora front-line responders to humanitarian funding.

We have great challenges and great opportunities, and with you we will meet them. Our aspirations to save lives and alleviate suffering around the world will not just be words, but a reality.