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Discussion: What are the future challenges for humanitarian action?



Thomas Vanden Driessche, ICRC

*Dr. Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner responsible for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, and Dr. Jakob Kellenberger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross**

* This debate was conducted in Brussels on 4 October 2011 by Vincent Bernard, Editor-in-Chief, and Mariya Nikolova, Editorial Assistant.

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Editor's Note

This edition of the Review is introduced by the reflections of two of the leading humanitarian action policy makers. In 2010, Kristalina Georgieva was named the first Commissioner of the European Union specifically appointed for humanitarian aid and crisis response. In this capacity she heads the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection of the European Commission (ECHO), a major donor of international aid. Dr Jakob Kellenberger's second term as President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is drawing to a close, following a decade during which the principles defended by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and international humanitarian law have been severely tested. Commissioner Georgieva and President Kellenberger have met regularly to exchange views on the working files common to both organizations. The Review asked them to extend one of their interviews in order to discuss the threats and challenges facing humanitarian action. They give their respective positions on several questions of current importance, such as that of the continuum between crisis and development or the problem of coordination among humanitarian actors. Commissioner Georgieva also gives her view of humanitarian principles, including the independent financing of humanitarian action vis-á-vis the states since the adoption of the EU Lisbon Treaty and the creation of an External Action Service responsible for conducting the new European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy.

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The* Review: *Let us begin with a question on the main challenges for humanitarian action and humanitarian actors in the years to come. Madame Commissioner, perhaps you could start by sharing your views on the trends we observe today and their impact on humanitarian action?

Kristalina Georgieva: We clearly live in a world which may be richer today but is also more fragile. We are facing an increase of the frequency and intensity of natural disasters and an increase in the complexity of conflicts and their effect on communities and countries. These two trends, unfortunately, overlap in many parts of the world. Countries that are unstable are also in areas that are vulnerable to natural disasters. The Horn of Africa is a very typical example where we have fragility caused by nature, such as recurrent droughts that affect communities. Affected countries include Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti but also, in prior years, Uganda, Niger, and Mali. Then we also have the conflict in Somalia, which makes access to people in need so much more difficult.

So what does the future look like? I very much believe that we will see conflicts continuing to tear apart societies and becoming even more difficult to resolve because of the exponential growth of populations and the very fragile lands and ecosystems in which they take place. What will make such conflicts particularly difficult is the rapid urbanization in the developing countries, including in these fragile countries. In such contexts, the urban area brings the extra danger of 'anonymity', which breaks the social fabric that sometimes – in smaller

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INTERNATIONAL REVIEW of the Red Cross

communities – helps people stay together, especially in times of conflict. Then, on top of that, we have climate change, which is making the whole world – the poor and the rich world alike – more fragile.

We talk about these threats, but very rarely do we try to project what they mean for the humanitarian community, for the development community, for politicians. That is where I think we are falling behind the changes in the world.

I want to raise another point – and I would be very interested in President Kellenberger's reaction to it – and this is the combination of ecological fragility and population growth. I was actually quite shocked to learn that, since independence in 1960, the countries today suffering in the Horn of Africa have all increased their population by five or more times. That was a wake-up call for me. To give an example, in 1960 Bulgaria and Kenya had a similar-sized population. In fact, if I remember it correctly, Bulgaria was 56th in the global ranking, with 7.9 million people; Kenya was right after, 55th in the global ranking with 8.1 million. Today Bulgaria has a population of about 7.4 million, while Kenya has more than 40 million! All of a sudden, it hit me – I tried to imagine what my country would look like if we were 40 million people! And again, my country is more fortunate because it has a richer natural environment, whereas Kenya has a big part of its territory in arid and semi-arid lands. Then you look at Somalia, which had a population of 2.5 million in 1960. It now has a population of almost 10 million people, living in ecologically very fragile areas.

My point is that, if you take the map of the world, and you overlay on this map natural fragility, frequency of disasters, and conflicts, there would be a remarkable overlap between where conflicts take place, where natural resources are scarce, and where the ecological environment is fragile. My conclusion from this is that we have to become much more focused on thinking not only about the changes in the world but also about what they mean for us in our action.

President Kellenberger and I have talked about one of the important points that comes out of this – that we have to build more resilience. How do you build resilience? With development. This means that the humanitarian world and the community of development professionals have to come closer together.

Jakob Kellenberger: Yes, perhaps I can start with what the Commissioner just said, and I would perhaps generalize a bit. Humanitarian organizations are likely to be increasingly faced with situations where populations are under different layers of pressure: demographic pressure, economic forms of pressure, pressure from natural and technological disasters, conflict pressure, climate change pressure, and so on. I think that the number of these types of situations will increase. I also think we will see an increase in the number of situations where you have a humanitarian crisis which lasts a long time because of these different layers.

I think Somalia is a case that we all have in mind, but there are other similar situations. As far as the challenges for the humanitarian sector are concerned – I think perhaps one of the first challenges for the humanitarian organizations would be for them to be clear themselves about what they understand

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by 'humanitarian action'. If they were very clear about what they understand by that, this could greatly facilitate co-operation. For instance, if they understand by humanitarian action only emergency action, or emergency action *and* early recovery, or even also activities embracing development and social work. More common understanding of what is meant by 'humanitarian action' would be helpful for co-operation.

Regarding the challenges, the Commissioner put it in other words, but I think she meant the same thing: humanitarian organizations focusing on natural disasters and technological disasters, in order to prepare well for the future, have to invest a lot in disaster preparedness. The preparedness challenge looks a bit different for armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

We have enough proof from around the world that the humanitarian consequences of natural disasters can be very different, depending on the level of preparedness of the populations affected by these disasters. It is sufficient to think of the earthquakes that took place in 2010 in Haiti and Chile. It makes a lot of sense to invest more in preparedness and resilience. For those who are working in armed conflict and other forms of collective violence, such as the ICRC, I take it that the future will present a lot of unforeseen situations, with a lot of contexts that you could not even think about in advance. The point is to be really on the spot, if possible, and to be physically present, wherever you have a feeling your action may be needed. You have to integrate in your mind the certainty of uncertainty, and draw the right conclusions. Developing rapid deployment capacities and widening the network of your interlocutors are measures useful in any situation.

Kristalina Georgieva: Yes I agree with that.

If you look at the social resilience of countries, it very much depends on the institutions countries have: the institutions of law and order, the educational institutions, jobs opportunities. What we recognize is that, at any given time, some thirty to forty countries, because of a lack of institutional capacity, are either in a conflict, slipping into a conflict, or coming out of a conflict. So we have a significant number of countries that, at any one time, are simultaneously on that path. This translates into three major challenges for us.

First, there are, unfortunately, more places that are becoming very dangerous to work – Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq (or at least parts of Iraq) … Yemen, too, is slipping in this direction. Second, more often – because of the big number of fragile societies – we have an explosion of unexpected crises: consider Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and Côte d'Ivoire in 2011. Third, we have more protracted crises, some of which last for 10, 15, 20, 30 years: the occupied Palestinian territories, or the refugee inflows from Myanmar and Darfur, for example. We can go on and on. When you look at these three challenges and you look at the capacity of the humanitarian community to respond, we all have to recognize that we have to reach out to the development community and to work on social resilience, on the institutions in these countries. We also need to be able to sustain a presence that builds resilience and opportunities in these countries. All this is to say that we have a

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INTERNATIONAL REVIEW of the Red Cross

change in the world that we have not yet translated into a change in our collective response.

Then you look at the ever more frequent occurrence of natural disasters. When I was younger, in the '60 s and '70 s, the number of registered disasters was much lower than it is today. In 1975, the year I graduated from university, there were 78 major disasters. Last year, there were 385: a five-fold increase. In the last decade, the average disaster occurrence is just below 400 per year. So, obviously, that means that the investment in preparedness and prevention for resilience to natural disasters also has to increase. Yet sometimes humanitarian organizations and professionals would say 'our job is lifesaving', and that is all. You save a life and you do not ask the next question – is this life worth living, is this life going to be at risk again tomorrow? You could also say that your job is to build this resilience and to build bridges with the development community, with those who have a longer-term perspective and look into the institutions; you could advocate with these people to focus more on linking relief, rehabilitation, and development.

Let us talk more about the 'relief–development' continuum. How can we better address transitional contexts, which are not humanitarian crises per se, but which are also not purely development contexts? How can your respective institutions contribute to an adequate and efficient response?



Thomas Vanden Driessche, ICRC

Kristalina Georgieva: I would make two points here. The first one is paramount for the humanitarian community operating in protracted crises' environments: there is a need to professionalize more into linking relief to rehabilitation and development, to be more open to using humanitarian means to promote sustainable results. For example, using cash-for-work programmes to help people to develop skills and generate some income from their activities so they can eventually break out of their dependency on aid; or having more flexible funding that also allows the funding of training programmes for those who spend a large portion of their lives in camps; or promoting environmental measures because, very often, in protracted crises, the natural environment on which people depend becomes completely destroyed. For instance, humanitarian organizations working in a refugee camp put no requirements for reforestation of the area, for water resource management, for cleaning and processing the garbage because they do not have the skills or they do

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not feel, as President Kellenberger said, that it is their mandate. So there has to be an improved understanding of such responsibility.

Number two – and this goes to the development community – they need to be more willing to link what they do with relief efforts. I came from the development world and I am now in the humanitarian world. Both worlds look down upon each other. The humanitarian world thinks of itself as fast and says the development people are very slow. The development people think of themselves as sustainable, and they think of the humanitarians as 'fire-fighters' who do not understand long-term problems. This culture has to be changed. In this regard, we had a first high-level dialogue on humanitarian action and development in the World Bank last September, with Mr. Robert Zoellick,[1] Ms. Valerie Amos,[2] Ms. Helen Clark,[3] Mr. Rajiv Shah,[4] myself, Mrs. Ogata,[5] and we pledged that we would make this topic of resilience a common platform and that we will systematically build these bridges. President, my colleagues asked me why I think there is this gap between humanitarian and development action. I said, 'three Cs – culture, cash, capacity'. And culture, to my mind, is critical for unlocking both cash and capacity. There is a need for a culture change in the two worlds.

Jakob Kellenberger: You know, one of the modern philosophers characterized today's world not so much as a world of 'either/or' but rather as a world of 'as well as'. I have to say that, when you see how fluid the limits have become between what you would consider a humanitarian crisis context or a transitional period or a development context, you can already see that the different actors have to become more flexible and look at the context in which they operate, in order to determine how far they go. The ICRC links relief to rehabilitation, maintaining and developing water supply systems, for example, or by delivering tools, seeds, and fertilizers.

Your point of view is interesting, Madame Commissioner. I have never seen it exactly in such terms, but we may mean the same thing. In recent years, I was asked again and again about exit strategies of humanitarians. When I asked the question about 'entry strategies' for development actors, people looked surprised and had no answer. Building bridges means for me serious work and bringing together these strategies, preferably in the field. The real challenge consists not so much in bridging the gap conceptually, but rather at the level of action. For this to happen, the actors concerned have to be present and demonstrate relevant capacities. In a world characterized by increasingly blurred lines between different forms of activities, different forms of violence, different bodies of law, etc., clear conceptual frameworks are even more important than in earlier times. The ICRC 'Strategy 2011–2014' is an example for this. All this being said, a real humanitarian organization should have the capacity to do relevant work itself in emergency

1 President of the World Bank.
2 UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.
3 Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
4 Administrator of United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
5 President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

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situations. This is its core responsibility. The challenge is not to feel and to declare oneself responsible for everything, but to assume concrete responsibilities in specific areas.

I think this is my way of giving the same answer. If one really wants to link, in a decent way, post-crisis situations with pre-development situations, I think it will be very important that the humanitarians and the development agencies talk and work more together, really in terms of knowing who is capable of doing what, and who is going how far. I'll give you an example: some time ago the notion of 'early recovery' was introduced into the humanitarian/development debate. You had to position yourself with regard to this notion. To be more assertive and systematic in 'early recovery' is part of the ICRC 'Strategy 2011–2014'. This summer we felt we had to put on one page what we understood by 'early recovery' and in which type of activities the ICRC saw its value added in early recovery activities. This would help us be predictable partners for all concerned by early recovery activities – beneficiaries and donors alike. It is, for example, important to know if you can count – or not – on an organization when internally displaced persons return home. I think Commissioner Georgieva knows by now what the ICRC means when it talks about 'early recovery', and what type of action that she could expect from us. We try to make it easier for Commissioner Georgieva so that she is then able to decide what allocations she will make for humanitarian and early recovery actions in a specific context.

Kristalina Georgieva: Yes, and yet we still have to work hard to make sure that funding is available for humanitarian action – usually fast-delivery, more flexible funding can be matched with development funding that is at a similar level of speed and flexibility so that we can connect the resources in a seamless manner.

Jakob Kellenberger: We hope that Dr Georgieva will be successful in her efforts to have more flexible rules about support of projects that would clearly fall into the category of what we understand by 'early recovery'. I think it would make a lot of sense in this world where we have these fluid limits between different situations.

Kristalina Georgieva: If I can just add to that, there are some good examples already. We should not leave you with the impression that this is totally uncharted territory. There are many good examples where actions that are related to putting out the fire of a conflict contribute to rehabilitation and to development. One example is the work with war-affected children: the humanitarian community may offer a programme to provide post-trauma rehabilitation and psychological support, and then the development community could bring them into schools. With this, we not only provide immediate help to those children, but we already have a longer-term plan for them to be educated and re-integrated. Another

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example, perhaps less related to humanitarian work in a post-conflict situation, are the cash-for-work programmes in a post-disaster environment: in that context, the cash-for-work programme could be followed by a development programme (UNDP or somebody else), which could turn it into a much bigger activity. We have also good synergies with our development colleagues at country level, which is bringing a more effective response. In the Sahel region, for example, our support to livelihoods, notably through regional food purchases, creates an incentive for farmers to produce, and makes an important contribution to food security and nutrition. These are also important sectors for interventions by development agencies. Yet these are still the exceptions, rather than the rule, of how we work, and we need to turn them into a rule in this new world.

Jakob Kellenberger: Yes, and perhaps you would agree that the development agencies are not yet starting to enter a bit earlier into post-crisis situations. This means that humanitarians will be forced to go into early recovery and pre-development more and more.

Kristalina Georgieva: I do agree.

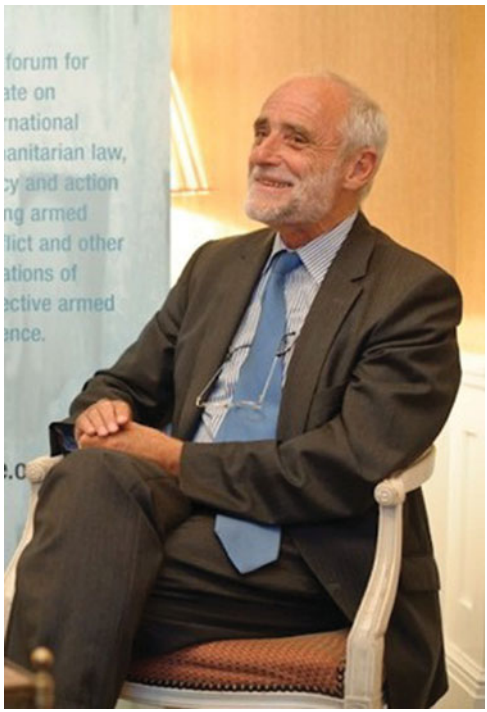
International humanitarian law (IHL) is another topic very close to the ICRC, and it is also one which obviously concerns the European Union, especially since the adoption of the 'EU Guidelines on Promoting Compliance with International Humanitarian Law'. How do you see the role of IHL in future conflicts? Maybe we could start with President Kellenberger, and then, Madame Commissioner, you could tell us how you envision supporting the development of IHL in the future?

Jakob Kellenberger: At the ICRC, and I think rightly so, when we talk about IHL, we first talk about getting better implementation for existing rules. In this regard, the co-operation with the Council and the Commission of the European Union is excellent. The revised EU Guidelines of 2009 are exactly the type of measure we would wish from states, because they show that one is taking seriously the responsibility to promote the respect of IHL. I always take these Guidelines as an example in terms of what we would wish to see. Now there is even a yearly reporting requirement about the implementation of IHL, which is excellent.

Even if getting better implementation for existing rules is the priority, the development of new rules cannot be neglected in order to obtain better protection for those affected by armed conflicts. The ICRC, based on a thorough study of existing gaps in IHL, especially IHL applicable in non-international armed conflicts, has worked out proposals for development of the law. Thinking of the future, my feeling is that the humanitarian consequences of situations of violence other than

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armed conflicts may become more important than the humanitarian consequences of armed conflicts. A humanitarian organization like the ICRC, while maintaining its ambition to be the reference organization for IHL, has to become more and more competent in the field of international human rights law. This is the international law reference in such different contexts as Kyrgyzstan in Summer 2010 or Mexico. Contexts of collective non-state organized armed violence below the threshold of armed conflict could become much more frequent in the future.


Thomas Vanden Driessche, ICRC

The notion of 'other situations of violence' has to be handled with care and explained well. It may be more closely defined to avoid misunderstandings, in particular with regard to individual and collective armed and unarmed violence. This notion can also be abused by states in order to deny the applicability of IHL and the right, for exclusively humanitarian purposes, to be in contact with all parties to a conflict.

Kristalina Georgieva: For us, we are fortunate as Europeans that the EU Member States not only support the implementation of IHL, as it is their obligation to do so under the Geneva Conventions, but some of them are also active in promoting respect for IHL at the UN, and in other fora.

We support three types of concrete activities for the dissemination and implementation of IHL. First, we fund training programmes that can reach out to people, especially when in new types of conflicts we are faced with non-state armed groups, which usually have no clue of any law, least of all IHL. Reaching out to people who are party to a conflict is important, so that they can understand a very simple thing – that, even in the direst environment, there has to be space for humanity. We fund training in IHL through our implementing partners, in places such as Colombia, India, the border between Thailand and Myanmar, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Second, we also fund activities aimed at increasing the capacities of humanitarian workers and of those who design humanitarian policies in advocating for IHL. Over a period of one year, more than 130 people from all over the world, living in conflict or post-conflict situations (including staff from the Red Cross and

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Red Crescent National Societies) have been trained in IHL. I believe that they will be able to disseminate their knowledge further. We are likewise keen to get our own staff, who work in fragile contexts, to understand the significance of being well prepared.

Third, we try to raise awareness among our partners worldwide about some of the unintended consequences of new counter-terrorism legislation and policies, which may limit or hamper training in international humanitarian law. As you know, some states have passed domestic criminal legislation prohibiting material support to listed terrorist entities. Such legislation also effectively prohibits the funding of training in IHL where such training is directed to armed groups labelled as 'terrorist'. So my staff and I are active in promoting more awareness of the risk of curtailing effective humanitarian engagement through such legal developments.

Finally I think that IHL has developed over time but the nature of conflicts has changed very rapidly, and the law may also need to be adapted to the new realities of armed conflicts. I therefore fully support the initiatives undertaken by the ICRC to strengthen and develop IHL further.

Let us discuss the principles that, according to you, should guide humanitarian action in the future. Madame Commissioner, since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, how do you see your services keeping their autonomy from the External Action Service of the EU, and more generally from the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy?

Kristalina Georgieva: In fact, after the entry of the Lisbon Treaty into force, we have a stronger legal ground for the impartiality and neutrality of EU humanitarian action. We have an article in the Lisbon Treaty defining 'humanitarian aid' as a specific policy clearly distinct from foreign and security policy objectives and decision-making, and we have an institutional change that comes with the establishment of my position as Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, separate from the External Action Service.

My staff is outside the European External Action Service and my decisions on providing humanitarian assistance are driven by only two factors – need and ability to access people in need – nothing else. We are blind to political, religious, or any other considerations. This being said, we also advocate for these principles of impartiality, neutrality, and non-discrimination with our colleagues in development and our colleagues in the political arm of the EU in the External Action Service.

So we retain our operational independence and our ability to fund humanitarian organizations like the ICRC to carry out their mandate with zero interference on the way they do their job, protecting their independence as well. But we also are a strong voice for the most vulnerable people around the world and for the protection of our capacity to reach out to them.

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INTERNATIONAL REVIEW of the Red Cross

Thank you, Madame Commissioner. President Kellenberger, would you like to react to that?

Jakob Kellenberger: Well, I wanted to say that one of the best proofs that the European Commission is so attached to the principles is the genuine support given to the ICRC, which is a credible independent, neutral and impartial organization.

Kristalina Georgieva: That's very true.

Jakob Kellenberger: And why? I think because the Commissioner has seen that, in certain contexts, only if you are a credibly independent, neutral, and impartial actor, will you have access to all; if you are not – or if you are perceived as not being one – you will not have access. This being said, even if you stick to all their principles, you may be denied access. But this clearly is the exception.

In addition to being clear on the principles, you also have to deliver on your promises. You have to be explicit whether you talk about intentions (or declarations thereof) or about actions actually carried out on the ground. These are two different worlds for people in urgent need of assistance and protection. And your actions have to be relevant for them, to correspond to people's most urgent needs.

Kristalina Georgieva: Absolutely. Very often we talk about the humanitarian principles as a matter of safety and security of humanitarian workers, and this is because humanitarian workers are in the greatest danger. More people die in humanitarian action than peacekeepers, which in itself is a matter of great concern. But another big concern is access to people in need. If you want to help people who are affected by conflicts, you have to be able to get to them, and the only way to get to them is by protecting the neutrality, independence, and impartiality of what you do. We have numerous experiences. One is Yemen and the Huthi rebels in the North. My ability to talk to Huthi commanders stems only from the fact that I do not represent a political entity. I represent one simple thing, which is that humanity must retain its space, even in the most difficult environments.

In order to do so, different types of strategies for access in difficult environments have been used by my staff and implementing partners. These are quite similar to other humanitarian agencies' approaches put in place by the UK, Switzerland, the UN, or the Red Cross Movement. We develop different types, levels, and techniques of advocacy in order to increase humanitarian access. In instances where vocal advocacy is likely to be detrimental to maintaining or gaining access for implementing partners, and when, at some point, administrative or other impediments become so great that an effective, principled humanitarian intervention is no longer possible, we implement jointly with our partners strategies of remote control. But this must be compatible with principles of sound financial and operational management.

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At other times, armed escorts or humanitarian air services can be used also to gain access in difficult security contexts. Our aim is to find a balance between the humanitarian imperative to intervene in situations of emergency with the need to maintain the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Our legal obligation to ensure our accountability to the European taxpayer goes hand in hand with that. We also fund a capacity-building training programme for partners so as to improve the efficiency and accountability of their own programmes and activities.

Let us now turn to the events in Libya, where ECHO[6] found itself actively engaging in co-ordination. What did this experience teach you? And more generally, what views do you both have on co-ordination of the humanitarian response as a whole? What is the right formula that we should pursue in the humanitarian world in the future?

Jakob Kellenberger: Now, this is a big passion for me! I would wish more concrete field-related co-ordination and less trivial, repetitive debate about co-ordination. We need *real* co-ordination, and by that I understand co-ordination that has a humanitarian value added to it. This has to happen on the ground, and those participating have to be transparent and precise on their capacities and their human resources; on where they have access, where they do not have access; on whether they are carrying out the actions themselves or delegating it to implementing agencies. I think it is indispensable to improve co-ordination but not really in the way it is often done – leading to much more costly bureaucracy – but rather in the way of having really transparent information on the relevant issues between agencies which have the capacity to act. There is a real risk of an enlarging gulf between bureaucratic and operational wings in the humanitarian sector.

Kristalina Georgieva: More often than not, in a humanitarian crisis, speed and the ability to address new and very often difficult problems are essential. So I agree with President Kellenberger that co-ordination is not for co-ordination's sake. It is for reaching more people faster, more effectively. Therefore, effective co-ordination is about skills, capabilities, and delivery, sometimes in dangerous zones. All of us strive for a 'space' – but the decision about who should be inside that space has to be based on what it is that one brings to the solution. And we have to be very honest in making an assessment.

This would differ from one situation to another but there has to be less emphasis on process and more emphasis on results, on outcome. That is important for the people we are trying to help and it is important for the credibility of the humanitarian community. In a world where needs are growing and resources are

6 ECHO stands for Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection of the European Commission.

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not – hence, where we all compete for resources – we are actually making a plea for the generosity of our citizens in a difficult time. That plea can only be based on credible action. It is not good enough any more for me to say, Mr. Kellenberger, I am responsible for €1.1 billion in assistance. It is only credible if I can say that I am responsible for helping 140 million people around the world, which is the number we reached last year. But who are these people? Who can help? How? These are the questions of co-ordination that must drive us.

Madame Commissioner, this is a question directed to you. You mentioned remote-controlled operations. Can you elaborate on ECHO's stance on supporting activities in remote-controlled contexts, where there is no possibility of reaching all requirements in terms of accountability?

Kristalina Georgieva: ECHO-funded projects are often in areas where access is difficult because of security concerns or other problems. It is vital that we reach those in need even in the most difficult circumstances. We try to minimize risks through remote-control and monitoring systems. To that end, we have a field network of experts and our local implementing partners to rely upon. But we do accept whatever risks remain because, if we did not, we would in certain cases have to abandon people in need, which runs counter to our humanitarian principles and values. In Somalia, over 80% of funded operations are being implemented in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas, where, due to insecurity and limited access, partners are operating through remote management. While accepting the increased risks, we have also tried to further reduce them, for example through a rigorous selection of partners with proven high accountability.

Our final question, to both of you, concerns the evolution of the humanitarian sector. What are your reflections on its future composition (especially the rise of non-Western donors), its professionalization, and its practice?

Kristalina Georgieva: As already mentioned at the beginning of this interview, the world is changing at a pace and a magnitude that we can hardly grasp and all this affects the scale and nature of the humanitarian challenges we face nowadays. Not only has the global level of humanitarian needs gone up, but the humanitarian contexts have become more complex and difficult for reasons that we discussed earlier.

In this changing humanitarian context, the need for co-operation is vital. There is no hope for advancing a global consensus on humanitarian aid if the governance of the humanitarian system is not changed. The current system is too fragmented and divided between traditional donors and new donors, as well as between donors and humanitarian organizations. New donors tend to act outside the multilateral frameworks often dominated by Western countries. This creates an

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Thomas Vanden Driessche, ICRC

unhealthy perception of a divide in the international community, with competing systems of norms and practices in humanitarian assistance.

A first important step forward would be to broaden the dialogue about international humanitarian action to all donors – traditional, non-traditional, and emerging ones. Developing regular high-level platforms for such dialogue would give greater legitimacy and effectiveness to the humanitarian system. And it would bring about a better shared understanding and commitment to the fundamental goals and principles that underpin humanitarian action.

Another key step would be to strengthen the co-ordination between the civil and military agencies, because armed forces are becoming increasingly involved in crisis response. The lack of understanding of each other's mandates and responsibilities often leads to the blurring of lines, endangering vital access and protection for humanitarian agencies. This is why early co-ordination and interaction among different agencies is so important. Two instruments currently exist to guide the appropriate use of military resources in humanitarian situations. These are the 'Oslo' Guidelines for Disasters, and the United Nations Military and Civil Defence Assets guidelines for complex emergencies. These make possible the use of military capabilities in certain circumstances, while avoiding opening the door to an unwelcome deployment of military assets for every emergency.

The growing number of private companies providing a myriad of services – ranging from security to the provision of assistance – has added yet another challenge. States contracting these companies should ensure appropriate accountability under international law, especially in conflict situations.

For all these reasons professionalism in the delivery of humanitarian aid is more important than ever, which is why my services insist upon maintaining a high level of professionalism and accountability in the delivery of aid. We conclude a Framework Partnership Agreement with organizations we fund, and this agreement guarantees that our partners have and maintain a high level of competence, commitment, and expertise. In addition, our reporting requirements on the

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implementation of specific projects remain some of the most stringent among public donors.

Jakob Kellenberger: I believe the number of state and private actors in the humanitarian field is likely to further increase in the future. 'Humanitarian' is a good label. There are also new needs to be covered, at least in part. I do not expect this wide range of actors to become more principled. Increased competition – not so much in insecure, difficult operational contexts, but in relatively safe contexts which enjoy high political and media attention – can make some organizations more vulnerable to politicization. Such organizations may prefer to stay in a context, giving in on basic principles like independent assessment of needs and control of distributions. They may just prefer to be able to tell donors they are present instead of leaving because independent and impartial humanitarian action is no longer possible. To the extent that increased competition leads to better and more timely humanitarian action, I can only welcome it. It would be a pity, however, if donor money goes to those speaking the loudest and not to those carrying out actual humanitarian relief.

Second, Islamic relief organizations and private enterprises are likely to play a more important role in specific activities in the future, especially in Islamic contexts (as far as the former type of actor is concerned). It is generally most likely (and welcome) that local humanitarian actors will play a more important role. It is less clear what this will mean for international humanitarian organizations that are less and less operational and channel the money from donors to local humanitarian actors. Such organizations will probably be under increased pressure to explain the added humanitarian value of the money retained on the way from donors to those who carry out the action in the field.

The multi-storey construction of the humanitarian building will be increasingly challenged in a context where donors insist on added humanitarian value for their money. I presume this will be felt more in the bureaucratic wings of humanitarian organizations than in their operations.

Finally, I expect the professionalization in the humanitarian sector to progress further, not least as a consequence of new actors entering the sector with very specific skills: for example, in the field of information technology or logistics. Such developments will, however, never replace genuine humanitarian commitment.

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