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***The European Consensus on
Humanitarian Aid
A summary and recommendations***

*DSAI Annual Conference
- November 2014*

The Principles

European humanitarian aid is based on principles of:

- humanity
- solidarity

Implementation depends on the application of:

- international law - particularly International Humanitarian Law
- the four 'core' humanitarian principles:
 - humanity
 - impartiality
 - independence
 - neutrality

The Context

The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid

Signed – December 2007

- 👍 first political text of reference on humanitarian aid
- 👍 reaffirms the core humanitarian principles
- 👍 humanitarian aid is not a crisis management tool
- 👎 non-binding

Treaty of Lisbon

Signed - December 2007

- Humanitarian aid is a shared parallel competency
- 👍 *...humanitarian aid operations shall be conducted in compliance with the principles of international law and with the principles of impartiality, neutrality and non-discrimination*
- 👎 *The Union's operations in the field of humanitarian aid shall be conducted within the framework of the principles and objectives of the external action of the Union*

European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid - Action Plan published and adopted by the Council

June 2008

Reviews & Evaluations since 2008

2010 - **EC** mid-term review of the Consensus

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-10-663_en.htm?locale=en

2011 - **Caritas Europa**: *Bridging the Gap between policy & practice*

<http://www.caritas.eu/functions/policy-advocacy-humanitarian-coordination/humanitarian-aid/bridging-the-gap-between-policy>

2014 - **EC** evaluation carried out by Kings' College and ADE

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/evaluation/2014/european_consensus_main_en.pdf

2014 - **VOICE** evaluation carried out by DARA

<http://www.ngovoice.org/index.php?page=3490>

Common Recommendations from EC and VOICE evaluations

- Improve resource allocation on the **basis of need**
- EU Institutions and EU MS have **a more consistent approach to upholding humanitarian principles** in specific contexts and crises.
- **Respect for humanitarian concerns** in all government action
- **Coherence between humanitarian and development assistance**, recognizing the fundamental differences in approach
- **Continued work on LRRD and DRR** including in and through development structures
- Follow-on Action Plan for coordination and accountability

Ireland's engagement with the European Consensus

- 👍 Strong record as a principled humanitarian donor – OECD DAC peer review
- 👍 Enhanced reputation during EU Presidency – innovative leading of the COHAFA, Ethiopia field visits, Consensus Roundtable Dublin
- 👍 Irish Presidency commitments included a strong focus on the European Consensus and on LRRD
- 👎 Not clear to what extent Ireland – or indeed many EU MS sought to consistently deliver on the Action Plan

Recommendations to the Irish Government

- Continue to play an active role in promoting **principled humanitarian aid policy** with EU Member States and in the Good Humanitarian Donorship process
- Maintain current policy commitment that **humanitarian assistance is based on need** and not linked to political objectives
- Ensure greater attention is paid to issues of **DRR/resilience-building** and that funding for this necessary action is not taken from the humanitarian budget
- **Consider the distribution of funds between humanitarian actors** to reflect the comparative advantages and the proportion of aid delivered by NGOs
- Take the opportunity of the **WHS** to reinforce the need to **keep IHL and humanitarian principles at the heart of all humanitarian action**
- Actively encourage and contribute to the **development of a new Action Plan** and ensure that Ireland has a **strategy for its implementation**