

European Humanitarian Forum

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2022 European Humanitarian Forum

High-Level Session - A dialogue to inspire transformative leadership

(21 March 2022 – 15:45 – 17:30)

Moderator: *Panos Moutmtzis*, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Global Executive Leadership Initiative (GELI)

Panelists: *Volker Türk*, Under Secretary-General for Policy, Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General (EOSG); *Nena Stoiljkovic*, Under Secretary General for Global Relations, Humanitarian Diplomacy and Digitalization, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC); *Charlotte Slente*, Secretary-General, Danish Refugee Council (DRC); *Najat Rochdi*, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon; *Ghada Al Jadba*, Chief Field Health Programme, (UNRWA Gaza field); *Giovanni Varela*, Director of Primeros Auxilios LUZ (PALUZ, Venezuela NGO)

Speakers from the floor: *Asuntha Charles*, World Vision, Afghanistan National Director; *Djénéba Sodre*, Présidente de l'Association Tabithal Lobal, Burkina Faso; *Cindy Isaac*, OCHA, Head of the Humanitarian Leadership Strengthening Section; *Rachel Scott*, UNDP, Senior Partnership Advisor; *Bruno Pozzi*, UNEP, Regional Director for Europe; *Mette Petersen*, Director of Red Cross EU Office; *Daniel Beck*, German Federal Foreign Office, Deputy Head, Division for International Humanitarian Organisations and Multilateral Policy on Humanitarian Assistance

Executive Summary:

The panellists emphasized the importance of investing and developing collaborative leadership across the board, since robust leadership skills are crucial to prepare and coordinate effective humanitarian responses for communities affected by conflict and (climate-related) disasters. In increasingly complex settings such as Gaza, Venezuela, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso or Ukraine, humanitarian leaders (UN, Red Cross/Crescent, INGOs, local NGOs) encounter the critical, though demanding task of creating coalitions and trust between different constituencies. More and more, humanitarian leaders need to unite a range of stakeholders around a common agenda and purpose, frequently with contending priorities and mandates. While leaders must always safeguard the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, they should remember not to take these values for granted and universally shared. They should also lead by example and carry on with humility in order to inspire their teams and communities. Overall, the session managed to inspire 'thought leadership,' fostering collaborative and effective cooperation frameworks on issues such as accountability to affected populations, triple nexus, peacebuilding, diversity, youth, women, climate change, child focused and locally-led leadership.

Panelists stressed the new fluid humanitarian environment which requires several different capacities and skills from leadership. Panelists suggested to consider that humanitarian work requires a high degree of **innovation, risk willingness** and capacity to navigate in **constantly changing environments** (Charlotte Slente, DRC). According to them, local leaders need to be loyal to beneficiaries, communities, and their own team, while remaining highly adaptable to rapidly-changing contexts (Giovanni Varela (PALUZ, local Venezuela NGO). In addition, they stated the need for a new **collective and collaborative leadership** that allows open participation and relationships between humanitarian organizations and the surrounding world.

Moreover speakers stated the importance to break silos and appreciate different perspective. Within this scenario the UNSG's '*Call to Action for Human Rights*' provides four ingredients of leadership in humanitarian settings:

- 1) **Firm orientation and focus:** on **individuals and communities** and their particular rights;
- 2) **Strong rule of law dimension:** for humanitarian action (ex. IHL, IHRL, IRL);
- 3) **Culture of protection:** system-wide agenda for protection that comprises the right needs and aspirations of people affected by conflict, violence, natural disasters;
- 4) **Partnership and collaboration:** enhanced understanding of what kind of leadership could induce this.

Panelists continued by underlining the need to involve and empower local actors, local leaders and affected communities (Nena Stoiljkovic, IFRC). For example, the African Union leaders decided to train 5 million community-health workers in 55 countries over the next five years (supported by IFRC / National Red Cross Societies). This requires transferring skills and facilitating cross-sharing between organisations. They stated the fundamental commitment for leaders to respect humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and high levels of professionalism (Ghada Al Jadba, UNRWA Gaza). Finally they concluded by asking for innovative bridging towards emergency and development and by ensuring that within the humanitarian-development nexus, humanitarian needs could be both immediately and sustainably addressed (Najat Rochdi (UN RC/HC Lebanon).

