



## European Humanitarian Forum

### Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination as an enabler of International Humanitarian Law

Monday, 21 March 2022, 15:45-17:30

Moderator: *Ikenna Azuike* (moderator),

Keynote speakers: *Brice De Schieter* (Head of Division, European External Action Service, ISP.1), *Brigadier General Bart Laurent* (Director of Operation at EU Military Staff)

Panelists:

*Bediako Buahene* (Chief of UN OCHA Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS)), *Anthony Cardon de Lichtbuer* (Chief of the Peace Mission Support Section at UN OHCHR), *Dr Helen Durham* (Director at International Committee of the Red Cross), *Beatrice Godefroy* (Europe Director at CIVIC)

Interventions from the floor:

*Scott Fontaine* (USAID), *Menna Seged Abraha* (Action Contre la Faim), *Edouard Rodier* (Norwegian Refugee Council), *Julien Benoist* (Humanité et Inclusion).

### Executive Summary

The effective dialogue between civil/humanitarian and military/security actors is essential for enhancing mutual understanding of roles and mandates, and maintaining a clear distinction in contexts where both actors are present. Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination (CMCoord) can be also an enabling factor for improving humanitarian access and protection outcomes. The session emphasised that the compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a pressing humanitarian necessity and an indispensable prerequisite to mitigate the civilian harm in armed conflicts.

UN OCHA (CMCS) has a primary coordination and facilitation role between the various civil and military actors on the ground, leading to a common understanding of respective roles. In order to bring about a behavioural change, there is a need to increasingly focus on employing innovative means and aligning the IHL framework with the culture and experience of those trained.

However, with IHL violations on the rise, it is necessary to go beyond the simple monitoring and reporting of IHL violations and do more than the training of military actors (e.g. pre-deployment selection and screening; post-action reviews; accountability measures). The new trends in warfare (urban warfare; private military contractors) and their impact on CMCoord should also be considered. In contexts such as Ukraine, primary CMCoord engagement is happening at a local level showing the need for better supporting localised efforts (e.g. identifying self-protection strategies of local actors, supporting preparedness to escalation risks) in addition to the higher-level coordination.

The role of CMCoord in preserving the humanitarian space and addressing access constraints was particularly stressed (incl. the role of Humanitarian Notification Systems). Finally yet importantly, the session underlined the relevance of linking strategic and conceptual thinking with field experience and learning, also bringing in conclusions from a dedicated field consultation on the subject.

Recommendations from the panel:

- Promote multilateral approach to peace and security as opposed to bilateral approach.
- Ensure complementarity and coordination of efforts on the ground.
- With global funding for security operations growing in the future, security budgets should encompass a percentage earmarked for compliance with IHL/CMCoord.
- Improve skills and knowledge on IHL of local stakeholders and promote bottom-up approaches while maintaining top political articulation. There is also a need to infuse humanitarian civil-military coordination thinking into peace and military institutions.
- Sustainably resource CMCoord at the field level to ensure sufficient presence and quality coordination.