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**NOTE**

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From: Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid  
To: Delegations

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Subject: COHAFA common messages on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan

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Delegations will find in Annex the common messages on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as agreed by the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid on 28 September 2017.

**Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA)****Common messages on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan****1. Afghanistan**

We are concerned at the deteriorating humanitarian situation, as well as at the mounting civilian casualties and the attacks on humanitarian aid operations. We note that by the third quarter of 2017 205,000 people have been displaced , 58 % of which are children, bringing the total number of internally displaced people (IDPs) to 1.7 million.

**To all parties to the conflict**

We urge all parties to take all the necessary measures to ensure the respect of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The safety and well-being of women and girls are a particular concern. We call on all parties to the conflict to protect women, girls and boys from any form of gender-based violence, in particular abduction, rape and other forms of sexual abuse. We also call on all parties to the conflict to stop the forcible recruitment of children.

We consider any targeting of humanitarian personnel and assets totally unacceptable and in violation of international humanitarian law. We note that in 2017 alone 15 humanitarian workers have been killed, 12 wounded and 39 abducted.

We are also concerned that if the conflict continues to deteriorate as at present, humanitarian operations could become so overstretched, or so dangerous to implement, that they will no longer be able to provide the 3.6 million vulnerable Afghans that are currently targeted with life-saving assistance.

We underline the fact that humanitarian assistance can only palliate the misery of the affected population and that a negotiated peace process is the only way to bring their suffering to an end.

We are concerned by and condemn the continuous attempts of parties to the conflict to steal or misappropriate humanitarian aid.

To the Government

We call for a revision of the so-called 'petition system' for selecting vulnerable people eligible for emergency humanitarian aid, which currently lends itself too easily to the fraudulent allocation of humanitarian resources .

We note that the Government of Afghanistan has elaborated a socio-economic action plan that incorporates measures to support IDPs and the re-integration of returnees from Pakistan and Iran (e.g. issuance of ID card; land allocation; job creation; investments) but wish to remind the Government that unless these are effectively implemented the risks of an increasing humanitarian tragedy will continue to accumulate.

To UN, IOs, NGOs

We commend all humanitarian workers for their selfless work in what is a highly complex and dangerous operating environment.

Humanitarian agencies must strive to improve coordination and indeed to develop response systems that allow beneficiaries to be served according to their assessed needs and not merely their status. We urge them to pay particular attention to the most vulnerable populations, including women, boys and girls and people with disabilities. In line with the localisation agenda, humanitarian agencies should also increase support and funds where appropriate for local and national responders.

Humanitarian and development agencies must continue to develop the nexus between them in order to promote resilience and prevent vulnerable populations affected by conflict or natural disasters from remaining on the margins of society and the economy or in a state of long-term dependency on humanitarian assistance. We also encourage them to incorporate conflict sensitivity and peace building elements into their programmes.

*To donors*

In view of the protracted and complex nature of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and in keeping with the spirit of the so-called 'Grand Bargain', we encourage donors to provide flexible funding and whenever possible and relevant, multi-annual funding.

**2. Pakistan**

We acknowledge the fact that the Government and people of Pakistan have hosted millions of Afghan refugees over the last forty years, and we commend them accordingly.

We urge Pakistan to protect all refugees from any humanitarian crises by respecting all the relevant provisions under international humanitarian law and in particular allow registered (POR card holding) refugees to remain until they decide to go home voluntarily.

We note the decision of the Government of Pakistan to register unregistered refugees and urge it to provide these individuals with the same degree of protection as POR card holders. We also urge the authorities to pay special attention to the welfare and protection of women, unaccompanied minors and people with disabilities – who are particularly exposed to the risks of exploitation and violence.

We request Pakistan to ensure that, in view of the current situation in Afghanistan, any return of refugees (registered or not) is carried out in a safe, controlled and dignified manner that allows the Afghan authorities the maximum opportunity to organise their successful re-integration. Keeping this in mind, we commend Pakistan for extending the validity of the POR cards until the end of 2017 and encourage the Pakistani authorities to extend it even further.

In order to be able to better support Pakistan in meeting its humanitarian needs, we urge the Government of Pakistan to expedite the process of review of potential operating partners (memorandum of understanding) and facilitate more regular access for bona fide international monitoring and assessment missions to the affected areas.

### **3. Iran**

#### To the Government

We acknowledge the fact that the Government and people of Iran have hosted millions of Afghan refugees over the last forty years, and we commend them accordingly.

We welcome the fact that the Government of Iran has given over one million registered refugees access to the state health system and that all refugee children (registered or not) have been permitted to enrol in schools. We commend the Government for these actions.

We continue to encourage Iran to afford due protection to those who require it under international law but also urge that any returns should be carried out in a dignified manner and with appropriate prior notification to the receiving country. We further encourage Iran to afford special attention to the welfare and protection of women, unaccompanied minors and people with disabilities – who are particularly exposed to the risks of exploitation and violence.

#### To UN

We commend UNHCR for developing a constructive relationship with the Government of Iran but urge it to develop a stronger presence in the border regions where refugees still appear to be particularly vulnerable.