



# WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

ISTANBUL • 23-24 May 2016

## Global Alliance for Urban Crisis

### SPECIAL SESSION

All Core Responsibilities of the Agenda for Humanity



**“Although towns and cities provide new opportunities, rapid unplanned urbanization combined with natural hazards, pandemics and aerial bombardments are placing even more people at risk.”**

**Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit**

### CONTEXT

Humanitarian crises are increasingly urban phenomena and if humanitarian action is to be fit for purpose it must adapt to be more effective in towns and cities. Improved responses to displacement, conflicts and disasters in urban settings must be part of the vision for change presented by the World Humanitarian Summit.

The majority of the world’s population now lives in urban areas. Four-fifths of the world’s GNP is produced in cities. Rapid and often unplanned urbanisation continues unabated. These factors, combined with the effects of climate change, armed conflict, natural disasters and forced displacement, are fundamentally changing the scale and nature of humanitarian crises and the social and the economic impact of these events.

Armed conflict and the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas kill and injure large numbers of civilians. Earthquakes, storms and floods cause particular devastation in towns and cities. The majority of internally displaced people and refugees live in urban areas. They are not in camps, and are generally living in substandard housing and in informal settlements. They do not receive the assistance required to support immediate needs and find longer-term solutions for their plight. In such circumstances, children and women are uniquely vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking. Communities hosting the displaced face enormous pressures on, and competition for, scarce social services, accommodation and jobs, and social tensions often result.



Yet urban areas offer hope in the face of crises, and we must find effective ways of harnessing these opportunities, as well as responding to the particular challenges of urban crises. This will require innovative partnerships which mobilize local governments, humanitarian, development, and urban actors. We must collaborate with local authorities to prepare for and lead responses to crises.

## OBJECTIVE

The Summit offers a unique opportunity to bring global focus to the urban dimensions of humanitarian crisis. A wide range of organizations have seized this opportunity to create a new global framework for urban preparedness, response and recovery: the Global Alliance for Urban Crises. This Alliance reflects a new type of collaborative action – it joins a diverse group of stakeholders who currently do not systematically work together to prepare for and deliver humanitarian responses in urban areas. The Alliance places municipalities and affected communities at the centre of its work.

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises will be formally launched at the Summit in order to bring high-level attention to the increasingly urban dimension of humanitarian crises and to advocate for adaptation of global crisis response to an increasingly urban world. Major commitments to be launched during the Special Session:

- An **Urban Crisis Charter**: a global mobilisation of members committing to work together to enable urban societies, in particular those most at risk, to prepare for, cope with and recover more quickly from the effects of humanitarian crises, recognising that urban societies have specific characteristics which require effective, context-specific approaches to addressing vulnerability and risk reduction, preparedness and humanitarian response.
- An **Action Agenda**: structured around a set of concrete initiatives with a three-five year time horizon including: developing innovative area-based approaches to address the nature and complexity of urban crisis management and response; the development of more predictable surge capacity of local government and urban expertise to empower municipal governments' response capabilities; modalities for managing urban displacement effectively; and recommendations for sustainable financing instruments.

Finally, the Session will call for preparedness and response to urban humanitarian crisis to be reflected in the New Urban Agenda, to be agreed at the 2016 United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

## BACKGROUND

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit will take place from 23 to 24 May 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey. Following three years of extensive consultations with more than 23,000 people in 153 countries, this will be the moment to answer their overwhelming



call for a renewed commitment to humanity. In his report for the World Humanitarian Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General calls upon Member States and other stakeholders to endorse and get behind five core responsibilities. These will ensure that we can deliver more and better on behalf of all those who are suffering and who need assistance. The Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity spells out how this can be achieved.

The Special Sessions respond to the specific calls made during the consultation process. They will focus on launching strategic initiatives underlying the five core responsibilities. These initiatives aim to harness the vision, skills and capacities of stakeholders in each relevant area. Istanbul is the opportunity to demonstrate unity and solidarity with the needy, to prevent and end suffering, and to take all the necessary steps to place our common values of humanity back at the heart of the decision-making process.

The Special Sessions will provide a platform for Member States and other stakeholders to make specific commitments in support of these and as a means of achieving the Agenda for Humanity.

## FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The Special Session will be a moderated discussion among four to five speakers, with short videos illustrating the reason for and purpose of the Alliance. The Special Session will result in a summary document that will include the commitments made during the Session and will contribute to the Commitments to Action document of the World Humanitarian Summit.

This Special Event will last for one hour. Participants are asked to share their commitments before or during the Summit. Commitments made prior to the Summit will be given visibility during the Special Session. The Special Sessions will be open to media.

## REGISTRATION AND SPECIAL SESSION PREPARATIONS

The focal point will engage with interested stakeholders in the run-up to the Summit to assist in the development of commitments. Please refer any queries related to this session to Filip Decorte at [urban.session@whsummit.org](mailto:urban.session@whsummit.org). As part of the online registration process for the Summit there will be the opportunity to register to attend this session. Details on registration will be circulated to all invitees in the coming weeks.