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FRANCE'S HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023 – 2027



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The world is undergoing unprecedented upheaval.

In the space of a few years, crises have multiplied, overlapped, and become chronic. Some have changed in nature, others in scale, to an extent hitherto unknown. The subsequent rise in humanitarian needs demonstrates the impact of these trends on vulnerable populations, whose numbers are increasing every year.

Humanitarian action is increasingly vital, but it faces ever-greater obstacles. Humanitarian space, described as a “common heritage” by the French President, has been put at risk by violent conflicts, which spare no one, not even those responding to the needs of populations on the ground. The difficulties of humanitarian access – now brought about through deliberate

strategies – are heightened not only by violence against civilians and insufficient financing, but also by increased administrative roadblocks and checks affecting the delivery of aid.

Where the 2018-2022 humanitarian strategy reaffirmed France's position on the international stage, the 2023-2027 strategy must be an opportunity to reinforce the commitments already made and renew the methods of the humanitarian response to adapt it to a new reality. This strategy should, by bringing aid funding to €1 billion per year by 2025, strengthen France's position as a key humanitarian actor, at a time when the need to uphold neutral, independent and impartial action is greater than ever.

DEFENDING THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND ENSURING RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

■ Preserving humanitarian space and protecting civilian populations and humanitarian workers

France will reassert the need to implement and comply with international humanitarian law (IHL), including in cyberspace, through all channels and in all relevant fora. It is committed to continuing to play a key role in promoting and defending respect for IHL and protecting humanitarian space. In this respect, the strategy plans to:

- Speak out against IHL violations in theatres of conflict and contribute to jurisdictional mechanisms to suppress these violations.
- Support efforts to limit the use of veto power in cases of mass atrocities at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and foster the mobilization of the international community to tackle humanitarian crises.
- Maintain France's commitment to fostering tangible solutions that aim to bolster the protection of international solidarity stakeholders and combat administrative and financial constraints on humanitarian action.
- Build a network of European contact points for strong joint communication, particularly to speak out against IHL violations.
- Complete the first report on the national implementation of IHL by 2027.

■ Limiting the unintended adverse impacts of international sanctions on humanitarian action

Sanctions are an essential instrument to help maintain international peace and security. However, their implementation can have an indirect impact on humanitarian aid projects, and in certain cases can even present a risk of criminalization.

In December 2022, these considerations led to the adoption by the UNSC, with France's support, of Resolution 2664, which provides for a generalized and cross-cutting exemption in all UN sanctions regimes. To progress further in this area, the strategy sets out to:

- Mobilize to support the transposition of UNSC Resolution 2664 into EU law and national legislation.
- Regularly consult NGOs involved in the fight against the unintended negative consequences of sanctions on humanitarian space.

■ Promoting IHL in the operational practices of the armed forces

Since introducing its previous strategy, France has developed a national IHL training plan, in consultation with the ICRC, the French Red Cross, the International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) and the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH). As part of the 2023-2027 strategy, it commits to:

- Adapt the training programmes, notably those provided to operational legal advisers.
- Better distribute the Manual on the Law of Military Operations and ensure that it is regularly updated.
- Continue the implementation of the national IHL training plan.

ADAPTING THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO OVERLAPPING CRISES

■ Taking better account of the environmental and climate dimension

Climate change, biodiversity loss and the degradation of local environments make up one of the primary factors driving humanitarian crises and needs. This is an additional argument for better taking into account the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This reality calls for a new approach to French humanitarian action. For this reason, France undertakes to:

- Implement anticipatory and disaster preparedness actions.
- Strengthen and expand emergency disaster response capacities.
- Improve how environmental impact is taken into account in humanitarian action.

■ Pursuing efforts in the area of food security and nutrition

In 2023, more than 238 million people living in 48 countries and territories faced acute food insecurity. In light of this situation, France has significantly increased its funding to provide food and nutrition assistance to vulnerable populations. As part of the strategy, France undertakes to:

- Strengthen the response to severe food and nutritional insecurity, particularly in the context of protracted crises.
- Allocate at least 50% of food assistance funding to projects focusing on nutrition, prioritizing undernutrition and the crucial period of the first 1,000 days of life.

■ Reinforcing actions related to health and continuity of care

Conflicts, crises and disasters prevent people and communities from accessing quality healthcare and basic services, such as vaccination. In response, France will remain true to its historical commitment to the continuity of care, even in crisis situations, as it recently reaffirmed in its 2023-2027 global health strategy. It therefore undertakes to:

- Preserve populations' access, especially the most vulnerable, to healthcare providers, services and products, including mental health care and psychosocial support.
- Maintain France's support for the Global Fund and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to implement emergency programmes.

■ Establishing the rights of women and girls and gender equality as a strategic priority of humanitarian assistance

Gender inequalities and sexual violence are intensified by crises and conflicts, of which women and girls, from adolescents to children, are the first victims. An effective humanitarian response must promote inclusive solutions. By adopting a feminist foreign policy in 2019, France made the rights of women and girls, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health rights priorities of its international action. This new dynamic is reflected in this strategy, which proposes to:

- Attain the target of 85% of French humanitarian funding marked as integrating gender objectives by 2027.
- Increase the share of funding aimed at promoting gender equality and the rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings in contributions to United Nations agencies.
- Support actions to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based violence.

- Promote the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for sexual and reproductive health.
- Support the access and effective contribution of women and girls to all relevant spaces for dialogue, negotiation and decision-making.

■ Protecting children, promoting their rights and advancing education in emergencies

According to UNESCO, 127 million children and adolescents live in a country affected by crisis or conflict, representing over half of the global out-of-school population. This situation predominantly affects adolescent and young girls, who account for two thirds of young people unable to pursue their secondary education. Faced with this reality, France will remain actively committed to supporting access to an inclusive and quality education for the most vulnerable children and adolescents in emergency situations. It therefore undertakes to:

- Adopt an approach based on children's rights and place the protection of childhood and children's rights, including the right to education, at the heart of the cross-cutting and systematic priorities of its humanitarian action.
- Increase funding dedicated to promoting access to inclusive, quality education in emergencies.
- Support the access and effective contribution of children and young people to all relevant spaces for dialogue, negotiation and decision-making.

INCREASING RESOURCES FOR FRENCH HUMANITARIAN AID AND TRANSFORMING HOW IT IS DELIVERED TO MEET GROWING NEEDS

■ Raising France's humanitarian contribution target to €1 billion per year by 2025

The previous strategy aimed to double the resources dedicated to French humanitarian action, setting a target of €500 million per year by 2022. This goal was exceeded, with contributions reaching €653 million in 2022. This increase of resources placed France among the top five European donors. France will continue to increase resources and transform its humanitarian aid by working towards the following objectives:

- Reach an annual budget of €1 billion and aim to become the second leading European donor and fourth worldwide.
- Better coordinate Team France.
- Hold an annual meeting of France's humanitarian partners and the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

■ Offering more flexible funding instruments and investing in humanitarian innovation

To strengthen humanitarian actors' operational capabilities and improve crisis response, France initiated efforts to rethink aid delivery methods, to better adapt them to the realities on the ground and the rapid evolution of crises. As a result of these considerations, the new strategy includes plans to:

- Test the implementation of a “partnership-based approach”, by setting up a multi-year funding channel for NGOs.
- Renew and expand the call for projects dedicated to humanitarian innovation.

■ Developing an appropriate risk control policy and increasing the visibility of France’s action

Since humanitarian aid targets geographic areas affected by crisis and conflict, it must be the subject of a robust risk control policy. Such a policy must nonetheless remain flexible and not become a disproportionate obstacle to a prompt and effective humanitarian response. In line with the statements made by the President of France at the National Humanitarian Conference in 2020, France will also develop a more partnership-based approach in terms of accountability and risk control, with a greater focus on dialogue with NGOs. To this end, it undertakes to:

- Strengthen its audit and evaluation policy to improve impact analysis of funded projects.
- Examine how partners could be afforded greater flexibility with regard to project monitoring.
- Continue efforts to harmonize, simplify and digitize procedures within the Ministry.
- Involve NGOs in the monitoring of the implementation of the strategy and maintain regular and inclusive dialogue with all relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure greater transparency in the delivery of aid through more active communication.

DEPLOYING AGILE AND EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN AID THROUGH DIVERSIFIED AND RENEWED PARTNERSHIPS

■ Implementing a common humanitarian policy at European level

The first European Humanitarian Forum was held in 2022, fulfilling a commitment made by President Macron at the preceding National Humanitarian Conference. At this first forum, the President of France called for the development of a “common humanitarian policy”, which the strategy must embody. In this regard, France undertakes to:

- Strengthen its partnership with the European Union and its Member States in the humanitarian field, in particular with regard to logistical support for partners.
- Ensure that humanitarian issues remain a priority for all European forums for dialogue.
- Support the European Commission in monitoring the implementation of the commitments of the Humanitarian Aid Donors’ Declaration on Climate and Environment.

■ Improving coordination with other humanitarian aid donors

In response to crises and conflicts, France promotes a comprehensive and long-term approach to more effectively anticipate risks and address the root causes of fragility. With this aim, it is already working to improve coordination between stakeholders involved in the humanitarian-development-peace

nexus. This nexus approach will remain the preferred framework of action for Team France. The strategy thus sets out to:

- Continue and increase France's participation in fora for dialogue for humanitarian aid donors.
- Encourage the development of new cooperation initiatives with emerging and potential humanitarian aid donors.

■ Envisioning new forms of partnership with local government and the private sector

The humanitarian funding gap means new forms of partnerships for the implementation of humanitarian action must be considered. Local government, foundations and the private sector already play a role in international emergency response action that could be strengthened in the future. To this end, France undertakes to:

- Increase exchanges with associations representing French municipalities, departments and regions to strengthen the role of local government in emergency response action.
- Strengthen the position of foundations and the private sector in humanitarian assistance in order to support the French emergency response.

■ Developing interministerial cooperation

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is increasingly playing an integrating role in emergency response, together with the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas France, the Ministry for the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Health and Prevention, among others. To step up France's capacity to act as a provider of humanitarian assistance, France undertakes to:

- Continue and strengthen interministerial cooperation efforts to respond to crisis and conflict situations.

■ Strengthening partnerships with local humanitarian stakeholders

Local humanitarian stakeholders are the best experts in crisis response, thanks to their knowledge of the situation on the ground and local populations. At the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, France had already committed to supporting the localization of aid to ensure that these stakeholders hold a central role in assessing needs and delivering aid. A broad consultation of 61 local humanitarian stakeholders launched in 2022 identified new recommendations to incorporate into the strategy. Based on these recommendations, France undertakes to:

- Promote increased participation and consultation of local humanitarian stakeholders in relevant fora for dialogue, cooperation and negotiation.
- Support increased funding for localization by improving local humanitarian stakeholders' access to various funding channels.
- Move towards more equitable partnerships by building local stakeholders' capacities and promoting the transfer of skills.
- Better include local humanitarian stakeholders in the development and implementation of humanitarian projects.

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