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# FRANCE'S HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY (2018-2022): RENEWED AMBITION TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF CURRENT CRISES

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



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**France's humanitarian strategy (2018-2022) has three main pillars: promoting respect for International Humanitarian Law within international structures; increasing resources and employing them more effectively; and integrating humanitarian action into an approach that aims to resolve crises durably. The three main pillars are broken down into 15 commitments.**

**This mid-term review, which is an integral part of the strategy, documents the progress made so far. It looks in particular at the 15 commitments, taking stock of the results obtained and the difficulties encountered two years on. It also aims to identify emerging issues that the strategy may not cover fully.**



## TOWARDS RENEWED HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY?

Given the regular violations that take place, France has made promoting and strengthening respect for International Humanitarian Law one of the main pillars of its humanitarian strategy for 2018-2020, in contrast to its previous strategy. This commitment continues to be supported at the highest levels of the state: on 24 February 2020 Jean-Yves Le Drian declared "What we want to promote is a reinforced, action-oriented multilateralism, which provides a pragmatic response to the doctrinaires of chaos". However, due to the current crisis of multilateralism, this will require consolidated resources as well as unflinching coherence.

**COMMITMENT 1**  
In line with the initiative it launched on 31 October 2017 at the United Nations Security Council, France and Germany launched a Humanitarian Action Appeal via the Alliance for Multilateralism. The Appeal aims to reinforce the protection of humanitarian and

medical staff in conflict situations. The murder of humanitarian workers and their guide and driver in Niger in the summer of 2020 was another reminder of how important and complex this commitment is.

**COMMITMENT 2**  
Within the international community, France continues to promote the protection of children in conflicts. Resources are regularly given to UNICEF, notably for certain of its regional programmes. The amount of financial and human resources made available in this area is due to increase.

**COMMITMENT 3**  
France takes concrete action in favour of women's rights and empowerment in crisis-affected countries. The 3rd national action plan initially planned for March 2019 in connection with the 'Women, Peace and Security' agenda is in the process of being finalised.

**COMMITMENT 4**  
The creation of a discussion forum for states to promote and reinforce IHL was interrupted in March 2019 due to disagreements between certain states.

**COMMITMENT 5**  
France is continuing its efforts to further regulate the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities. However, the objective of obtaining signatures from 128 Member States by the end of 2018 was not achieved. On 27 October 2020, there were 105 signatories.

**COMMITMENT 6**  
France is continuing to take action to fight impunity both nationally, with the Crimes Against Humanity Unit at the Paris TGI and the *Office central de lutte contre les crimes contre l'humanité, les génocides et les crimes de guerre* (OCLCH), and internationally, by supporting the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM).

**COMMITMENT 7**  
France is very involved in the discussions about the application of IHL in cyberspace and the management of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). It has been involved in several initiatives both internationally and nationally.

**COMMITMENT 8**  
France maintains dialogue with certain of its partners involved in conflicts in order to promote IHL. However, certain of its strategic positions may affect its influence in terms of humanitarian diplomacy.

**COMMITMENT 9**  
The French army is involved in numerous foreign operations where its behaviour is deemed to comply with IHL.

## MORE RESOURCES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE ACTION?

According to the OECD in 2018: “the shortage of resources allocated by France for humanitarian aid continues to represent its main weakness” (Peer Review, 2018). The percentage of Overseas Development Aid (ODA) allocated to humanitarian aid – 1.3% - is the lowest of all the OECD’s Development Aid Committee’s members for whom the average is around 12.5%. The commitment to increase these resources is very positively received and there is great expectation that this commitment will be executed. For this, the monitoring system should be consolidated and management capacity should be adapted to accompany the increase in budgets, while simplifying and harmonising procedures.

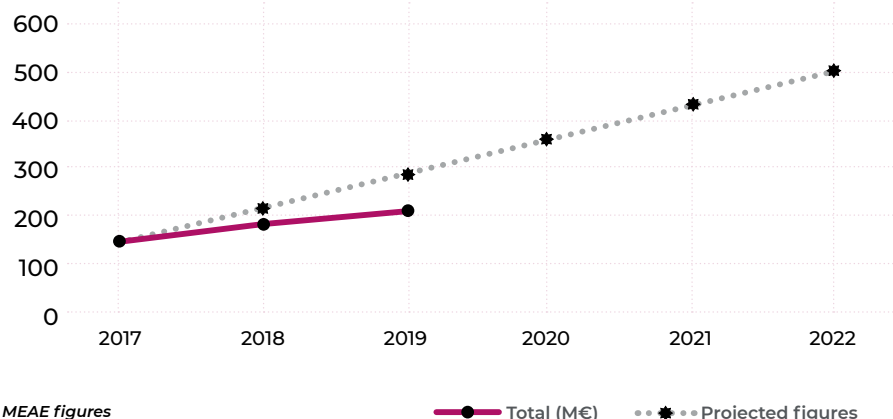


### COMMITMENT 10

France’s humanitarian contributions have increased and this trend should continue given the objectives that have been fixed (212 million Euros



## FRENCH HUMANITARIAN FUNDING (2017-2019) MEAE figures



MEAE figures

● Total (M€)    ●●● Projected figures

in 2019 and 500 million in 2022, in order to become one of the three biggest European donors and one of the five biggest donors globally) and the increase in humanitarian needs due to the COVID-19 crisis.



### COMMITMENT 11

As indicated in a study by the CDCS on humanitarian funding, it is urgent to improve the French aid sector’s international reporting mechanism.



### COMMITMENT 12

The pilot project to harmonise and simplify reporting developed in connection with the Grand Bargain, known as the ‘8+3 Template’ has been adopted by the French funding bodies (CDCS, DGM/HUMA). However, there are some questions about the strategies chosen and the capacity of these bodies to manage the growth in French humanitarian aid that will come with an increase in budget.

## HUMANITARIAN AID’S ROLE IN RESOLVING CRISES DURABLY

The French crisis management system is continuing to adapt in order to respond more effectively to current crises, and notably their protracted nature, but changes are not being made to doctrines at the operational level: an overarching approach that brings together both emergency aid and a long-term strategy is rarely applied in the field. What is more, the commitments regarding gender and localisation have not yet led to concrete improvements in programmes. Changes in practices will require further, sustained efforts that are supported over time.



### COMMITMENT 13

With regard to linking relief and development, there have been positive developments in terms of doctrines and mechanisms. At the operational level, the MEAE and the AFD have engaged in coordination efforts. However, there needs to be a shared strategic ambition between the managers of these teams to ensure that there is continuity of funding as soon as this is possible and appropriate.



### COMMITMENT 14

The gender equality marker now has to be included in all humanitarian project reports. Making sure it is taken into account at the assessment stage would allow the specific vulnerabilities of

women, men, girls and boys to be taken into account more in projects funded in crisis contexts.

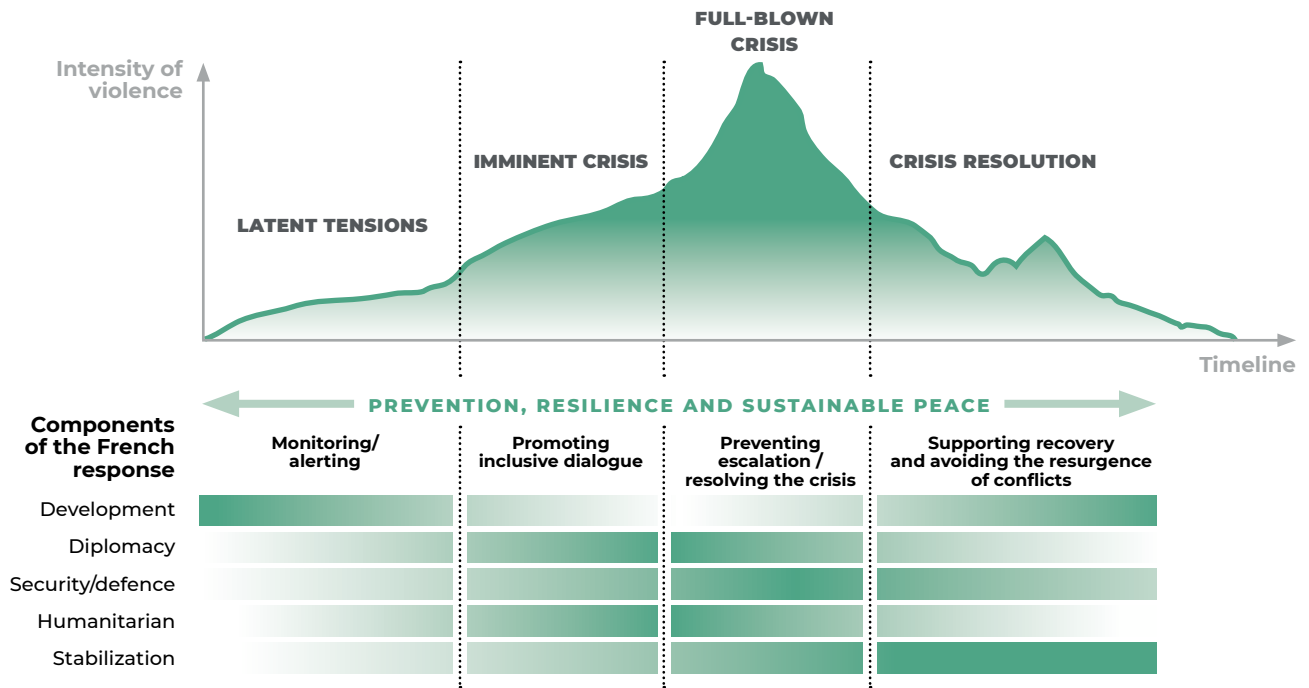


### COMMITMENT 15

The ‘localisation’ marker that was planned in the 2018-2022 strategy, which was supposed to measure the degree of localisation of France’s humanitarian action, finally has not been developed. MEAE nevertheless funds local NGOs in certain crisis contexts but the question of reinforcing the capacity of local actors does not appear to be a priority in terms of MEAE’s relations with its main French partners.



**“TEAM FRANCE’S” COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH  
IN RESPONSE TO THE FRAGILIZATION OF STATES AND SOCIETIES**



*Prevention, resilience and sustainable peace (2018-2022): A comprehensive approach to the fragilization of states and societies. MEAE/DGM, 2018.*

**TO CONCLUDE,** this mid-term review highlights the importance of the commitments made, the progress made, but also a certain number of issues to take into account for the second period of implementation (2020-2022).

**> REINFORCING TEAMS AND OPERATIONALISING HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY**

To achieve the objective of renewed humanitarian diplomacy, it appears necessary to consolidate the relevant teams so that the commitments of the strategy can be implemented more comprehensively. What is more, many of the people interviewed hope that a more operational humanitarian diplomacy will emerge, possibly by providing diplomats with training on humanitarian issues and by developing new relations within embassies, between NGOs and diplomats, in order to make dialogue smoother and help them work together more effectively in order to provide crisis-affected people with better protection.

**> ACCOMPANYING THE INCREASE IN RESOURCES:**

Efforts to increase the resources dedicated to humanitarian aid need to be pursued, including in the context of the post-COVID-19 economic crisis. At the same time, this growth will need to be accompanied with the relevant human and

technical resources. An appropriate monitoring system will need to be put in place, based on the contours of humanitarian aid, in order to provide a true picture of French humanitarian funding at the national and international levels. It would be useful to discuss with aid organisations how the additional funds should be managed so that this increase in means helps to achieve a genuine increase in effectiveness by avoiding the pitfall of automatically increasing existing funding to the detriment of other approaches (supporting local actors, broader geographic coverage, innovative projects, etc.).

**> A NEW POLICY BOOST:**

With regard to tackling crises durably, it would appear necessary to establish more in-depth links between emergency relief and development by overcoming differences in institutional approaches. It is also necessary to accompany and deepen the commitments that require a change in practices (gender and localisation) through further reflection, the sharing of experiences, training, etc. in order

to help bring about the changes that are being aimed for within programmes, organisations and the sector in general.

**> PRESERVE THE IMPARTIALITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF AID**

Finally, it will be necessary to check that the mechanisms in place allow genuinely impartial, effective and accountable humanitarian aid to be implemented both with regard to crisis-affected people and French taxpayers. The period we are entering is full of challenges due to the need to protect humanitarian staff, administrative and financial constraints, the increasing number of disasters related to climate change and the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. These issues will need to be taken into account in the second period of implementation of the current strategy, and during preparations for the next strategy.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, DISCOVER THE FULL REPORT:**

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