

Global Forum for Improving Humanitarian Action

New York, 4–5 June 2015



Ambassador Dr. Badre Eddine Allali Assistant Secretary General, League of Arab States

Opening remarks to the Global Forum for Improving Humanitarian Action
4 June 2015, New York

As delivered

It is with great pleasure that the League of Arab States (LAS) as a co-host participates in today's important **Global Forum for Improving Humanitarian Action**, aiming at discussing a wide range of substantive ideas for adapting the international system to respond effectively to new crises as a preparation to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), due to be convened in Istanbul in 2016.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation for the sense of partnership that is leading our preparations and discussions so far to stimulate further thinking and ideas in order to explore how we – governments and non-governmental actors – can promote efficient dialogue to reduce vulnerability and alleviate human sufferings.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the complexity of the nature of humanitarian crises and the increased number of affected people, particularly in the Arab region, show how much the current world humanitarian system needs to be more inclusive, effective and responsive. It is unfortunate to note that, the crises in the Arab region have definitely reached very high peaks caused by man-made disasters, thus generating life threatening situations such as insecurity, poor shelters, water scarcity, failure of health care or mass populations' displacements.

The League of Arab States, like other international and regional organisations, believes that the nature of today's humanitarian crisis requires **comprehensive and collective responses**. Humanitarian tasks and needs are complex, challenging, and too large for an organisation or a country to address alone. Together we can more effectively respond to the needs.

The World Humanitarian Summit is an important step towards building a better humanitarian system **that fits today's new** challenges and obstacles. The League of Arab States, which contributes to the holding of this Summit, has been actively involved in its preparation including the co-chairing of its preparatory consultation for the MENA region (Jordan, 3-5 March, 2015). Furthermore, the LAS has built a successful partnership with UNOCHA in the humanitarian field since the signing of a memorandum of understanding and the launching of two successive Plans of Actions. Internally, the League of Arab States' Summit in Kuwait in 2014 has adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of an Arab Humanitarian Coordination Mechanism as an administrative tool, aiming at improving Arab readiness and responsiveness toward humanitarian issues. These initiatives reflect the high interest devoted to the humanitarian sector by the LAS.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today's Forum is another chance for us to provoke a wide and intense debate about how national, regional and international humanitarian actors should work together in harmony to address needs and cover the gaps that prevent effective response. A debate that – no doubt – will enrich the World Humanitarian Summit and add value to the whole humanitarian system.

In this respect, I would like to raise some concerns and remarks to consider:

1. Our discussions may need to concentrate on specific practices and examples and be field oriented rather than reopening debates on generalities.
2. Humanitarian standards and principles should be reinforced and respected, not only among humanitarian actors, but most importantly by decision and policy makers and even between conflicted parties.
3. We should focus on how to free humanitarian funds from political conflicts. Our ultimate concern should always be about how to alleviate human suffering, which should never be subject to political bargaining.
4. Humanitarian actors should follow a concrete transparency and accountability set of rules that encourage partnership among different stakeholders. We need to build solid trustful relationships between humanitarian actors and donors as well as with affected targeted communities.
5. Humanitarian intervention should never be politicised or used as a tool to implement hidden agendas. Furthermore, humanitarian intervention should be a cooperative collective effort and not subject to political competition.
6. Humanitarian intervention is a short term solution to a crisis and is not intended to lengthen the status quo. While humanitarian intervention should be linked to development, it remains a temporary solution while political settlements are being sought.
7. The management of humanitarian action should be improved as it is sought today through this Forum, contributing therefore to saving resources, and ultimately to saving more lives.
8. Advocacy and raising awareness are among the main tools for improving humanitarian effectiveness. This should be also conducted according to agreed codes and special designed programs.

Last but not least,

9. Capacity building at national and local levels should be programmed and strengthened in order to train interested young people to be humanitarian volunteers.
10. Manuals and booklets should be conceived to serve as a guide to potential humanitarian volunteers.

And teaching of basic humanitarian principles should be introduced in our schools (as part of civic education).

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are few ideas for your consideration and I am sure that all participants will bring their valuable contribution to this Forum through concrete recommendations for the WHS.

In concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate, on behalf of the LAS, our pleasure and satisfaction to be a co-host of this Forum and express our appreciation and gratitude to our partners in the organisation of this Forum, namely the Government of USA, the OIC, ALNAP and the WHS Secretariat.

Our thanks and appreciation are also addressed to all the stakeholders (Governments representatives, NGOs, academia, media, donors, private sector associations and others) for their contribution to the humanitarian action and their most welcomed participation today to this Forum.

Wishing you all a pleasant stay and fruitful discussions.

Thank you.