

European Humanitarian Forum 2023: Tuesday closing remarks by Swedish State Secretary for International Development Cooperation, Ms Diana Janse

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As delivered

Commissioner, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

We have gathered in a time of unprecedented humanitarian needs.

339 million people around the world require lifesaving humanitarian assistance. 1 in every 23 people on the planet needs emergency assistance to survive.

During the last two days, we - a wide range of actors - have gathered here to discuss some of the most pressing humanitarian challenges we are facing. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your valuable contributions to the discussions.

This year's Forum takes place in the shadow of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine. The aggression has caused enormous suffering and destruction in Ukraine. 17.6 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance inside Ukraine alone. Moreover, the war has, in the past year, had an alarming impact on global food security and nutrition, significantly worsening the food insecurity for those who already had the least. We face the risk of famine on the Horn of Africa, but also in the Sahel, in Yemen, and in Afghanistan. The forum also takes place some weeks after the horrifying earthquake in Türkiye and Syria – the deadliest in Türkiye in more than 100 years.

Despite this extremely bleak outlook, my main take away from these two days is the great capacity, commitment, and courage of the collective humanitarian community – that is you. Despite an often difficult political context, severely underfunded appeals and daunting logistical challenges, the humanitarian system continues to provide an indispensable global public good. In Ukraine, we see humanitarian action carried out in an environment of extreme levels of conflict. Thank you for your work to provide

assistance to the people suffering the most. To save lives. To restore dignity and hope. Thank you.

In the panel sessions yesterday and today, we have explored ways to tackle soaring humanitarian needs by mobilising resources, brainstormed on how to improve performance and better anticipate climate-related crises, and together set out strategies to improve humanitarian access. The discussions have aimed to provide innovative, sustainable, and efficient solutions for humanitarian action in light of our new global realities.

Crucially, we have tried to identify ways to preserve humanitarian space and enable safe and efficient humanitarian action - also in conflicts and hard-to-reach areas - to ensure that people with the most severe needs, wherever they are, can be assisted first.

I also want to emphasise that I see no contradiction between, on the one hand, supporting the humanitarian principles and, on the other hand, taking a stance against Russia's illegal war of aggression. The war is a breach of another set of important principles, namely the UN Charter, designed to prevent war, conflict, and human suffering. When a permanent member of the UN Security Council, with the utmost responsibility to uphold the UN charter, breaches it, by invading a peaceful neighbour, targeting civilian infrastructure and residential areas as a strategy, it should, and must, matter to all of us. I am sure this is not the world order any of us want. And it is certainly a world order that causes humanitarian suffering and increases humanitarian needs.

As co-host of this Forum, I am proud that the EU and its Member States here in Brussels have come together in a display of leadership for sustainable humanitarian funding and for principled humanitarian action. A total of 8.4 billion euro in humanitarian funding has been pledged, to save lives, alleviate suffering and uphold human dignity.

But as Foreign Minister Billström said at the opening of the forum, the EU's humanitarian commitment is not only financial. We will continue to work to ensure

effective delivery of life-saving aid. We will continue to call for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access – always and everywhere. And we will continue to encourage others to join us in these efforts.

I am pleased that Belgium, has agreed to co-host, together with the European Commission, the third edition of the European Humanitarian Forum.

I will be there, and I hope that you will be there too. Until we meet then, let us work for – in our different capacities – breaking the vicious circle of ever growing needs. Let us work for narrowing the funding gap – be it by bringing more donors to work with us, be it by finding ways to partner with the private sector, be it by working more and better with anticipatory action, be it by decreasing the needs and by working more effectively and smarter.

Until then, let's go to work. And once again, a final thank you.