

European Humanitarian Forum 2023: Monday opening remarks by Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Mr Johan Forssell

Brussels, 20 March 2023

As delivered

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the second edition of the European Humanitarian Forum, hosted by Sweden and the European Commission. I thank you for joining us, here in Brussels or online, to discuss how to tackle the urgent humanitarian challenges that the world is facing.

We meet here today amid an unprecedented global humanitarian emergency, and it is of course dramatically worsened by Russia's illegal and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine.

A record 339 million people will need emergency aid this year. That almost equals to the whole population of the United States, or more than 33 times of Sweden. This is a threefold increase in only a few years. And the gap between needs and available funding keeps growing.

How to close this gap must be the main focus for our discussions at this Forum. Let me kick off those discussions by outlining three areas where we need to see change.

First and foremost, more donors need to provide humanitarian funding. The humanitarian system today gets nearly 90 percent of its resources from the ten largest donors.

Secondly, we need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action, to save more lives despite limited resources. This means sharper prioritisation when humanitarian appeals are underfunded.

As donors, we must support by providing multi-annual but also flexible funding, so that the humanitarian system can respond more quickly and efficiently to sudden crises, such as the catastrophic earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria.

Thirdly, we need to reduce humanitarian needs by strengthening vulnerable people's resilience. We need to find ways to uphold basic services and ensure that development

actors can stay engaged in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. This will reduce the size and the cost of aid operations, but also restore the dignity of affected people.

I give you an example from the Horn of Africa, where climate change has triggered the worst drought in four decades, resulting in pockets of famine. This could, and should, have been avoided. We must build resilience to future shocks by scaling up anticipatory action.

Ladies and gentlemen, facing tremendous pressure, humanitarian workers continue to save lives. But the system is overstretched. We owe it to the many millions of people in need, to ensure that the humanitarian system can keep delivering and I hope that with the engagement of all of you, we will be able to close this Forum tomorrow with a clearer path forward. With an agenda for change, to not only ensure that we can meet needs of the most vulnerable, but also to reverse the trend and push humanitarian needs back.

Change is not only needed. It is also necessary. Thank you.