

Confronting Common Challenges: A Transatlantic Partnership for Improving Humanitarian Assistance?

A Roundtable Discussion hosted jointly by GPPi and Erika Mann, MEP

Brussels, Belgium, 27 April 2009

Humanitarian assistance is a field in flux. The signing of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and a new Administration in the White House, coupled with the growing need for humanitarian aid mean that the next few years are a critical moment for shaping this field. In this changing landscape, new actors have been engaged to provide aid and the principles have been challenged in the name of pragmatism. This has led to certain rifts within the humanitarian system. The U.S. and the EU are global leaders in this field and the two biggest donors to humanitarian ventures. Joining forces, the transatlantic partners can heal some of these rifts and strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian aid.

However, increased cooperation between and leadership from these Western powers could also undermine efforts to ensure humanitarian aid is perceived as universal, ensuring access to all people in need. Further, closer cooperation could lead to overly standardized approaches, which in turn could endanger context-sensitivity. Lastly, the EU and the U.S. have different policies towards some aspects of humanitarian aid and there are institutional barriers to change in the aid organizations on both sides.

With these issues in mind, the Global Public Policy Institute and the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University have come together to work on an 18 month research project designed to enhance transatlantic coherence and cooperation in humanitarian action. The project is developing an Action Plan for increased transatlantic cooperation and coordination, as well as mutual learning in humanitarian assistance, which will feed into the 2010 EU-US summit. More information on the project can be found at www.disastergovernance.net.

The round-table discussion and reception will serve to present key findings of the project and stimulate debate on these important issues. We would like to examine the potential of increased cooperation in humanitarian aid.

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Agenda

(Altiero Spinelli Building, Room A 5 G 305)

6.00 pm – 6.15 pm Welcome and opening address

Erika Mann, MEP

6.15 pm – 7.45 pm Statements (10 minutes each) and discussion

Julia Steets, Associate Director, GPPi

- Research, results and proposed action of the Raising the Bar project
- Should humanitarian assistance become a focus area for transatlantic cooperation? Why and How?

Jonathan Addleton, USAID Representative and Counselor for International Development at the US Mission to the European Union in Brussels

Recent developments under the new U.S. Administration in humanitarian assistance:

- Which policy and institutional changes relating to humanitarian assistance are emerging under the new U.S. Administration?
- What implications do policy changes under the new Administration have for transatlantic cooperation?
- What are the potential benefits and risks of enhanced transatlantic cooperation in humanitarian assistance?

Jan van Elst, Development Unit of the EU Council Secretariat

Recent developments in Europe regarding humanitarian assistance.

- What are the most important reforms that were recently implemented in the European Commission relating to humanitarian assistance concerning the institutional set up, as well as relevant policies (the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the ECHO-DG Environment MOU etc.) and what are their implications?
- Which institutional and policy changes could occur in the near future (adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon, adoption of new humanitarian policies) and what would they entail?
- What are the major challenges that Europe should address as a priority for improving the humanitarian system (possibly together with the U.S.)?

Shannon M. Meehan, Director of Advocacy and Policy, International Rescue Committee

The need for humanitarian reforms and the role of the transatlantic partners from an operational perspective.

- Which elements of the current humanitarian system need to be reformed to ensure a more effective delivery of humanitarian aid and respect for the humanitarian principles and what role can the EU and the U.S. play in bringing about these reforms?
- What is the right balance between a globally coordinated and standardized approach to humanitarian assistance and respect for different contexts, cultural sensitivity and tailor-made approaches?
- How can the principles of neutrality and impartiality be maintained and communicated in a system of humanitarian assistance dominated by Europe and the U.S.?

7.45 – 8.30 pm

Reception: Continue the debate over a glass of wine and juice.

List of Participants

Organisation	Name	Position
European Parliament	Erika Mann	Member of the European Parliament
European Parliament	Helena Seibicke	Assistant to Erika Mann
European Parliament	Marie Møgelvang	Assistant to Margarete Auken, MEP
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - OCHA	Guadalupe de Sousa	OCHA Liaison Officer
European Peacebuilding Liaison Office – EPLO	Philippe Bartholme	Senior Policy Officer
UNICEF Brussels – Relations with the EU Institutions Public-sector Alliances & Resource Mobilization Office (PARMO)	Sylvie Fouet	Programme Adviser
Médecins Sans Frontières	Katherine Derderidan	Humanitarian Advisor/Policy Issues
Embassy Sri Lanka	H.E. Ravinatha Pandukabhaya Aryasinha	Ambassador
United States Agency for International Development - USAID	Jonathan Addleton	USAID Representative to the European Union in Brussels
GTZ Brussels	Katja Laudemann	
VOICE	Virginie Vuylsteke	Advocacy and Communication Officer
VOICE	Katrin Schick	Director
International Council of Voluntary Agencies, ICVA	Manisha Thomas	Policy Officer
UN World Food Programme - WFP	Gemmo Lodesani	Director, Brussels office
Solidar	Andrea Maksimovich	
Terre de Hommes	Maria Chiara Campisi	Assistant, European Office
Terre de Hommes	Giorgio Algeri	
World Bank	Manuela Chiapparino	
UN Refugee Agency - UNHCR	Rossella Pagliuchi-Lor	Head of Unit, Donor Relations and Resource Mobilisation
European Commission, DG RELEX	Jan van Elst	Member of the Development Unit of the EU Council Secretariat
International Rescue Committee – IRC	Shannon M. Meehan	Director of Advocacy and Policy
European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development - CONCORD	Romain Philippe	Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) Officer
DG Relex	Tomas Abadia Vicente.	International Relations Officer - Co-desk USA and Canada
Global Public Policy Institute - GPPi	Julia Steets	Associate Director
Global Public Policy Institute - GPPi	Kelly Johnson	Research Associate
Global Public Policy Institute - GPPi	Maxie Matthiessen	

