

Statement by the Development Policy Committee: Adequate resources needed for both pre-emptive development cooperation and humanitarian aid

The acute refugee crisis is diverting attention from long-term development cooperation to the growing humanitarian needs. This is not sustainable as a policy. Adequate resources are needed for both purposes, says the Development Policy Committee in its statement.

Currently there are over 19.5 million UN-registered refugees in the world and 1.8 million asylum seekers. Additionally, over 38 million have been displaced internally because of conflicts and violence (UNHCR 2015). The numbers exceed all previous figures and are growing. The greatest burden of refugees is born by poor, conflict-prone countries and regions, such as the Horn of Africa and the countries bordering on Syria. The international community appears alarmingly unwilling and poorly prepared to respond to this situation. For example, the UN's call for emergency assistance has so far generated only half of the funds required.

Currently, up to 80% of all humanitarian aid is needed in conflict areas. At the same time, however, climate change is causing natural catastrophes that claim a growing portion of the already inadequate funding for humanitarian aid. Further humanitarian needs are created by population growth, increasing inequality, environmental deterioration, the fight for natural resources, a lack of food and poor administration. All these factors increase instability and escalate conflicts. Another risk is that acute humanitarian crises become chronic.

As it is, people are also fleeing developing countries which have so far been relatively stable. The situation may become increasingly aggravated in the future. For instance, the UN predicts that the population of Sub-Saharan Africa will increase by one billion by 2050. The percentage of younger age groups has already reached an all-time high.

In the absence of opportunities to earn a decent living and get an education, it is highly likely that the flows of refugees will only intensify. Consequently, rural development, the creation of livelihoods and educational opportunities, sustainable management of natural resources, the generation of decent jobs and the promotion of equality are more important than ever before. Sexual health and rights improve the quality of life and curb population growth. Peacebuilding and the promotion of democracy help lay down the foundation for stable and well-functioning societies. The prevention of social exclusion and widespread frustration calls for a respect for human rights, good governance and an active civic society. Finland is committed to promoting these objectives as part of the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Long-term development cooperation will play a key role in these efforts and it is imperative to secure adequate funding for this purpose. A high level of preparedness for the provision of humanitarian aid and risks will help protect the results already achieved in development cooperation. At the same time, it is important to improve the communities' resilience in the face of natural catastrophes.

“The scale and urgency of this challenge have not yet fully grasped. Finland needs to determine how it will allocate resources to the efforts to support long-term development cooperation which is instrumental to preventing humanitarian crises. At the same time, Finland needs to respond to the growing need for humanitarian aid,” says Aila Paloniemi (Centre Party), Chair of the Development Policy Committee.

- **The Development Policy Committee proposes that the pre-emptive development cooperation carried out in developing countries and actual humanitarian needs be assessed separately while understanding the links between these two areas. Development cooperation and humanitarian aid should be more mutually complementary.**

- **Finland should ensure adequate and appropriate resources for both purposes. The steep cuts being made by the present Government are eroding the resource base to an alarming extent.**
- **Finland needs to be active in the EU and as a member of international organisations in the efforts to find solutions to the crises leading to the displacement of people.**

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Appointed by the Government for its four-year term of office, the Development Policy Committee is the only body monitoring and evaluating Finnish development cooperation and policy on a systematic and broad basis. Its members include representatives of parliamentary parties, advocacy organisations, NGOs and universities in the UniPID network.