



General Policy Resolution

VOICE General Assembly

Brussels, 21 May 2003

The VOICE network,

COMMITTED to bringing impartial and non-political humanitarian relief to the most vulnerable populations in crises throughout the world in accordance with principles of international humanitarian law,

AWARE of the number and magnitude of current crises worldwide, and of the human suffering they imply,

CONVINCED by first-hand experience and years of professional practice that aid administered by NGOs can be the most appropriate and efficient for reaching the intended beneficiaries,

CONCERNED that the recent crisis in Iraq has overshadowed other humanitarian catastrophes and complex emergencies whose consequences for the civilian populations have been extraordinarily grave,

HAVING REGARD to the lessons learned in Afghanistan, where civilian humanitarian assistance and military action have not been clearly distinguished, and to the current situation in Iraq where, without coordination by the UN, humanitarian agencies and the military remain without mutually-respected rules or standards for their respective roles in the field,

NOTING with regret that crises neglected by the media are frequently neglected also by international donors,

AWARE of the support for humanitarian assistance in the eyes of European public opinion,

NOTING with satisfaction that EU humanitarian aid as administered by ECHO has won international recognition for the efficiency and promptness of its performance in the last years,

RECOGNIZING the potential of the Convention on the Future of Europe to ensure a space for independent, impartial, and needs-based EU humanitarian assistance in the future European Constitution,

WARY that developments in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) could result in humanitarian activities of the EU being influenced by political considerations,

CONCERNED that in the absence of a common position under the CFSP, EU humanitarian assistance could be used instead of political action,

1. CALLS UPON THE RELEVANT EU INSTITUTIONS to encourage respect for International Humanitarian Law, in particular the Geneva Conventions, which include obligations to provide access and security for independent humanitarian assistance agencies, in the international political arena;

2. CALLS UPON THE CONVENTION ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE to guarantee EU humanitarian assistance in the future Constitution, with recognition of its special character, based on needs and set apart from political considerations, maintaining as today its own budget and management structures;

3. URGES THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES to consider the detrimental impact on vulnerable populations worldwide of allocating disproportionate resources, in particular funding, to particular crises; and to give continued attention to the "forgotten humanitarian crises" outside the media's spotlight.