



World Humanitarian Summit

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises

**Statement by
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Your Worship Kadir Topbas, Mayor of the City of Istanbul,

Right Honorable David Miliband, President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee.

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be back in the Great City Istanbul, in the framework of this historical Summit launching the Global Alliance for Urban Crises: An initiative aiming at improving interventions in urban areas affected by crises.

It is not a coincidence that this debate is happening a few months before Habitat III: where the international and *local* community has opportunity to rethink the Urban Agenda, promoting equity, welfare and shared prosperity.

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises is the start of larger, global movement, mobilizing the necessary forces to make a difference at scale.

But it is also the first time that Mayors and Local Governments are at the table as an important actor in humanitarian response.

This unprecedented initiative draws on the interest and commitments of over 65 organisations representing local governments, humanitarian and development organisations, academics, and urban professionals motivated to drive a concrete agenda for change.

Climate change, disasters and conflict, combined with high rates of urbanisation, make humanitarian crises increasingly urban phenomena.

Yet urban areas also offer hope in the face of crises: the majority of internally displaced people and refugees seek sanctuary in towns which offer them opportunities for a better life.

18 of the 21 countries that have received the most humanitarian aid in the last 3 years also have some of the highest urbanization rates worldwide.

However, the humanitarian system has not yet fully come to terms with this new reality.

Humanitarian agencies have traditionally responded to floods, famines and refugee movements in remote and rural areas.

However, Urbanization demands and challenges our usual ways of working.

We must engage with new stakeholders ensuring local actors and local governments have central roles in crisis response and recovery processes.

We must concentrate on restoring or strengthening existing city systems, rather than creating parallel services or providing short-term, unsustainable solutions.

Maintaining electricity supply, collecting garbage, increasing and diversifying housing solutions are often critical interventions that prevent further worsening of the crises and can help to end need and consolidate peace.

We need to 'Think Urban' if we want to prevent, prepare and respond better to humanitarian crises.

Excellences,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Getting the humanitarian response side right is one key task, strengthening urban resilience is another.

Urban areas across the globe are fast accumulating risk as a result of a number of factors including poor planning, rapid population growth and climate change.

Thinking long term while reacting to immediate needs, putting the people and local governments in the lead, and leveraging the capacities of the aid community to work in an integrated manner contributing incrementally to increase urban resilience rather than simply 'building back better' is one innovative way forward.

The use of urban planning approaches to guide key early decisions during emergency response is essential.

A last point needs to be made on the challenges of managing the ever increasing flows of forcefully displaced populations within and beyond national boundaries.

This generates new challenges as displacement is increasingly urban and protracted, and can, and does last several generations.

Communities hosting displaced people face enormous pressures on, and competition for, scarce basic services, housing and jobs, creating social tensions.

Addressing these challenges, must be fully integrated into urban response, planning and growth strategies.

It is as much a humanitarian as a development challenge.

We need to adapt the commitments made at the Round Tables to our new urban world.

This will complement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the COP 21 commitments – all of which include an unprecedented focus on the urban environment.

The key three pillars of the New Urban Agenda: planning, regulation and economy can help to guide urban crisis response and most importantly provide leverage points for all of us, working together, to ensure we "Leave No City Behind".

Thank you very much for hosting me and for encouraging this debate at a crucial moment for Sustainable Urban Development and Humanitarian crises.