

Foreign development cooperation is one of the important tools for maintaining stability in the world. In the context of the current crises, it needs to be strengthened, according to experts gathered in Prague

We live in a time of unprecedented challenges. Millions of people in fragile regions of the world are affected by the impacts of climate change, armed conflicts and acute food shortages. For example, countries in the Horn of Africa are facing the worst drought in 40 years. The war in Ukraine is seeing millions displaced without a home. It is also resulting in a further deterioration in access to food for the people of the Middle East and Africa. The discussion on the topic how to strengthen the resilience of fragile regions to complex crises through development cooperation is the subject of an international conference taking place in Prague on 9 and 10 November. (1) It is organised by the Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FoRS) in the context of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU. The patronage was provided by Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský and Minister for European Affairs Mikuláš Bek.

"We very much appreciate the Czech government's approach to the need for assistance in Ukraine. In the period 2023-2025, half a billion crowns each year should be provided for humanitarian, stabilisation, reconstruction and economic aid. However, we must not forget about other regions of the world that are struggling with long-term problems", says Pavel Pribyl, Director of FoRS. For example, East African countries import up to 90% of their wheat from Ukraine and Russia. (2) Between the years 2016 and 2021, 34% of Ukraine's total grain exports were directed to Africa and 58% to Asia. Thus, its reduction and rising prices are increasing the pressure on the population of the developing world regions in the first place.

"In drought-stricken East and West Africa, the clock is ticking towards famine. And yet, what has been done? Donor countries are ignoring the terrible reality unfolding in front of our eyes and pledges remain severely underfunded. If we have learned one thing from the response to the Ukraine war and the pandemic, is that when money is needed, it can be found. What is lacking is the political will.", says Evelien van Roemburg, Head of Oxfam's EU Office in Brussels. Oxfam's latest analysis estimates that hunger is likely to claim a life every 36 seconds in East Africa. (3) Somalia is facing the worst hunger crisis in living memory. West Africa is facing its worst food crisis in a decade, with 27 million people going hungry. This number could rise to 38 million - an unprecedented level - unless urgent action is taken.

"Czech humanitarian organisations within FoRS have demonstrated for a long time that they can responsibly and effectively manage public and government support to relieve major humanitarian crises. After years of decline and stagnation, we would like to see government support increase not only for Ukraine, but also for Syria and the above-mentioned crisis in Africa, which has global causes and impacts.", says Erik Siegl, Head of projects abroad of Diaconia ECCB. According to the World Bank, the COVID-19 pandemic had already ended a phase of global progress in poverty reduction, but the war in Ukraine has caused a complete

reversal. On current trends, by 2030, 7% of the world's population will be living on less than US\$2.15 a day. (4) The world's poverty is also predicted to be deepened by the impacts of climate change. More and more people will be forced to leave their homes in the coming decades, especially in the poorest and most exposed countries. According to the World Bank, by 2050 this figure will be as high as 200 million people. (5) Already this year, the world has passed a historic milestone - there have never been more people forcibly displaced than today - 100 million. About 60% of them have not crossed the border and remain in the homeland.

"Syria is facing a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportions. Amidst a record increase in prices of more than 800% in the last two years alone, 90% of the population now lives below the poverty line and half of the population either internally displaced or sought refuge in other countries. Many children have not attended school in their entire lives, and government structures are unstable. Those who remain in the country despite the challenges might want to be involved in the recovery and reconstruction of the country. Therefore, it is necessary more than ever to combine humanitarian aid with more durable recovery and development interventions while strengthening social cohesion and peace building. NGOs can play a crucial role in such a transition.", adds Muhammed Hammady, Country Director Ukraine and Syria in Caritas Czech Republic.

However, the EU and its Member States continue to be lagging behind in achieving the EU's target to provide at least 0.7% of GNI per year for Official development assistance (ODA) by 2030, according to the AidWatch 2022 report published by CONCORD Europe in October (6). Only four European countries have managed to fulfill this promise in 2021. The Czech Republic, like other Member States that joined the EU in 2004, has committed to contribute 0.33% of its GNI to ODA. Its contribution in many recent years has not exceeded 0.13% of GNI, which has placed CR in the last places in the ranking of countries associated with the Development Assistance Committee at the OECD. (7) If it were not for the Russian war in Ukraine, this year's result might have been even lower.

"The first six months of 2022 have been a period of great humanitarian challenges. The conflict in Ukraine and its increasingly widespread economic impacts have escalated an already dire humanitarian situation around the world. It has been worsened in recent years by conflicts, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the long-term underfunding of humanitarian crisis response. More than 300 million people are expected to need humanitarian assistance by the end of 2022. However, current figures show that only 35-40% of global humanitarian appeals are funded, which means a record deficit. (8) We therefore recommend not only the Czech but also the European political representation to work on predictable and long-term financial frameworks that will allow NGOs to help effectively. In parallel, existing financial instruments should be analysed and their transparency, complementarity and real impact monitored. Investing in disaster risk reduction is the key to preventing disasters, and costs significantly less than dealing with an acute humanitarian crisis itself.", concludes Marek Štys, Head of Humanitarian Aid at People in Need.

Information for editors:

FORS - Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (www.fors.cz): The platform brings together 34

organisations. Its members consist of Czech NGOs and think tanks, universities and other entities focused on foreign development cooperation, humanitarian aid, education, and advocacy on development issues.

Notes:

(1) [Link to the conference programme](#)

(2) OXFAM INTERNATIONAL, 2022, [As many as 28 million people across East Africa at risk of extreme hunger if rains fail again](#)

(3) OXFAM INTERNATIONAL, 2022, [Hunger Likely To Claim A Life Every 36 Seconds In Drought-Stricken East Africa Over Next Three Months: Oxfam](#)

(4) THE WORLD BANK, 2022, [Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022: Correcting Course](#)

(5) THE WORLD BANK, 2021, [Climate Change Could Force 216 Million People to Migrate Within Their Own Countries by 2050](#)

(6) CONCORD Europe, 2022, [AidWatch 2022](#)

(7) FoRS, 2022, Basic data on the Czech Republic's financing of foreign development cooperation and humanitarian aid

(8) OCHA Services, 2022, <https://fts.unocha.org/>

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