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NEWS RELEASE

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GLOBAL INDEX REVEALS GAP IN EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMANITARIAN AID AS ECONOMIC CRISIS BITES

Donor countries are not doing enough to promote humanitarian access and to prevent and reduce the risk of disaster and conflict

Washington DC – Almost half of the world's main donor governments are not doing enough to ensure that public funding for humanitarian assistance is reaching those most in need, when they need it most, according to DARA's 2009 Humanitarian Response Index (HRI)^(TM), launched today in Washington DC.

Now in its third year, the Humanitarian Response Index annually measures how well 22 of the world's main donor governments plus the European Commission comply with best practices for humanitarian aid, which were established in 2003.

Key findings include:

- **Norway replaces Sweden at the top of the rankings**
- **The US, the world's largest donor, gains a place but still ranks only 14th**
- **Canada and the UK slide to 13th and 9th place respectively**

Endorsed by Kofi Annan and Jeffrey D. Sachs, the HRI includes field research in 13 humanitarian crises and helps hold government donors to account for the quality and effectiveness of the aid they provide.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu affirms in the foreword to this year's HRI report, *"The lofty ideals contained in political declarations are not enough – concerted action must follow – and these efforts must be monitored vigilantly so that governments do not slip in their commitments. This is why the Humanitarian Response Index is so important."*

The HRI report shows that the global economic crisis, along with the increasing frequency and severity of disasters and ongoing crises are having a serious effect on the ability of humanitarian organisations to respond effectively to needs. Donor governments can do much more to focus and prioritise their aid budgets to have a greater impact.

“Given the global economic crisis, more effective use of public money and greater quality and impact in humanitarian aid has never been more important, said Silvia Hidalgo, DARA Executive Director and co-founder. “In places like Pakistan, Sudan, or Somalia, countless human lives could be saved and suffering avoided if government donors applied basic good practice in the way they fund and support humanitarian organisations”.

The United States improved one position in the ranking, moving to 14th place from 15th place last year, but remained in the bottom half of the donor group. The US does well in areas such as funding for forgotten emergencies and timeliness of funding for disasters, but continues to receive poor ratings for key indicators around the neutrality, impartiality and independence of its humanitarian assistance and for not doing enough to uphold international humanitarian law and human rights in crisis situations.

“The US has a tremendous opportunity to build on its strengths and regain a leadership role in humanitarian action,” said Hidalgo. “Any small improvements in its humanitarian policies and practices could give an enormous boost to international efforts to improve aid effectiveness and improve the quality of aid for millions of people.”

Overall, the HRI 2009 also highlights some serious gaps in how the international community deals with crises:

- Access to crisis-affected and at-risk populations is increasingly under threat and insecurity for both humanitarian workers and affected populations is at record levels.
- Inadequate crisis prevention and preparedness measures are failing to cope with a marked upsurge in disasters and conflicts.
- Insufficient efforts are being made to strengthen the capacity of local and international humanitarian organisations.

The report calls for donor governments to develop guidelines on how to best facilitate access and to significantly boost funding to support a more harmonised approach to conflict and disaster prevention and risk-reduction efforts.

HRI 2009 rankings compared with 2008 and 2007

Donor	HRI 2007	HRI 2008	HRI 2009
Norway	2	2	1
Sweden	1	1	2
Ireland	6	4	3
Denmark	3	3	4
European Commission	5	5	5
Netherlands	4	6	6
Luxembourg	12	7	7
Switzerland	10	9	8
United Kingdom	9	8	9
Australia	14	11	10
New Zealand	8	13	11
Finland	11	12	12
Canada	7	10	13
United States	16	15	14
Spain	17	16	15
Germany	13	17	16
Belgium	15	14	17
Austria	20	21	18
Japan	18	18	19
France	19	20	20
Italy	22	19	21
Greece	23	23	22
Portugal	21	22	23

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