

# Foreword

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On 26 December 2004, the world witnessed one of the most devastating humanitarian emergencies in history, the Indian Ocean tsunami. The world's response was the largest and most generous mobilization of humanitarian aid in history.

But this was only one of many natural and man-made catastrophes that took place during my tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations. And to most of these—as in so many other cases—the response from the international community was, at best, wanting. It is significant that even the sudden outpouring of solidarity for the tsunami victims was not sufficient to guarantee an effective response, and many crucial lessons were learned from this experience.

I also had the privilege of presiding over an extensive course of reflection and reform across the humanitarian community, not least among donor governments themselves. One such vital initiative was the formulation of the *Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* (GHD), now adopted by the 23 members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). By this means, the donor community has committed itself to safeguarding principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The equal worth of every human life demands that humanitarian aid be equitable, that is, free from geo-strategic interests, historical ties, domestic political agendas, or the attention of the world's media.

DARA's *Humanitarian Response Index 2007* is a new and innovative attempt to evaluate the performance of the 23 OECD-DAC members against their commitment to the GHD *Principles*. The *Index* is the first of its kind to rank donor countries individually, contributing to the transparency, accountability, and quality of humanitarian aid, and thus paving the way for more effective delivery on the ground. It will be updated on an annual basis, and will serve as a scorecard of the world's progress towards good humanitarian donorship.

I have no doubt that the *Index* will serve as an indispensable tool for dialogue among all stakeholders of the humanitarian community, assisting them to improve the implementation and effectiveness of humanitarian aid. Constructive criticism and feedback on the *Index* will shape this annual publication and help it to develop further.

I share DARA's conviction that this novel benchmarking mechanism will greatly strengthen donors' voluntary commitment to the GHD *Principles*. International benchmarking has had considerable success across various fields and offers the potential, through peer pressure, to motivate actors to make their work more effective and correct deficiencies in the policy framework.

At the heart of this new publication is the promotion of fundamental humanitarian principles which will save and protect lives and livelihoods. As former Secretary-General of the United Nations and President of the *Global Humanitarian Forum*, I heartily welcome and applaud DARA's effort.

Millions of victims of natural hazards and violent conflicts will continue to depend on humanitarian relief, not only for their very survival, but for their future protection from disaster and rehabilitation on the path to escaping poverty. I firmly believe that the *Humanitarian Response Index* will serve as an important tool to help ensure that no disaster is ignored, and that every dollar spent helps those most in need.