



EU Council Conclusions: Protection in Humanitarian Settings Summary Analysis and Protection Advocacy Opportunities August 2024

1. Background:

The Global Protection Cluster, together with several other protection partners, engaged with Belgium as European Council President over the course of several months in 2024 with the aim of informing the European Council's positioning and action on current protection trends and priorities. This engagement included efforts to inform and contribute to the [Council Conclusions on protection in humanitarian settings](#), which were approved in May 2024.

These conclusions put forward a range of important priorities and commitments on protection. For protection actors, including the GPC, there are also opportunities to leverage the conclusions and drive forward their implementation as part of ongoing protection advocacy efforts in support of stronger protection outcomes across a range of crisis contexts.

This document aims to provide a brief summary analysis of some of the key provisions contained in the Council conclusions and offer suggestions for potential hooks and opportunities for further protection advocacy and engagement. It is not a comprehensive review but hopefully one that offers some initial ideas for further consideration by protection actors as part of their advocacy efforts with EU Member States.

2. Summary Analysis:

2.1 Overall:

The conclusions' stated aim is to help **reduce the lack of protection of affected people and constraints faced by protection actors**, including but not limited to breaches of International Humanitarian Law and lack of access. The conclusions also focus on the challenge that **funding for protection does not match the needs of populations affected by humanitarian crises**, points that have been strongly advanced by diverse protection actors in recent years.

The Council suggests in its conclusions some action points and collective commitments and invites the EU and its member states to **increase funding** specifically dedicated to protection interventions to respond, mitigate and reduce risks based on context specific protection analysis. As outlined in the [press release](#) accompanying the conclusions, these include:

- encouraging the EU and its member states to **invest in and support, whenever relevant, responsive activities aiming at preventing and/or interrupting the cycle of violence**;
- recognising that **investments are needed to develop and increase humanitarian actors' protection capacity**, including national and international humanitarian workers and organisations and affected communities, in particular when it comes to preventing and interrupting the cycle of violence;

- inviting the EU and its member states to support **proactive advocacy for the reduction of protection risks and threats** by engaging directly in public and behind the scenes advocacy efforts;
- encouraging humanitarian actors to **better align with communities' own identification of protection risks** and ways to address them as the basis of protection programming.

2.2 Some Specific Elements for Consideration:

Proactive, Responsive Approaches to Protection, Interrupting Violence

- **Specific references in the text of the conclusions include:**
 - Para 8 - "The Council recognises that the European Union and its Member States' main support to protection currently tends to focus on remedial actions aimed at restoring people's dignity. The Council highlights the need to expand and reinforce responsive actions aimed at reducing the protection threats and needs in humanitarian contexts. Indeed, reducing these risks is not only imperative for the purpose of preventing human suffering, but also a way to limit the needs of assistance and thereby to make humanitarian assistance more effective."
 - Para 14 d) - "Encourages further investments by all humanitarian actors in responsive actions aimed at preventing and interrupting all acts and behaviours threatening, or perceived by populations to be threatening their safety, dignity and security. The Council strongly highlights the role of donors and Member States to support these investments through advocacy and funding."
 - Para 15 b) - "encourages the European Union and its Member States to invest in and support, whenever relevant, responsive activities aiming at preventing and/or interrupting the cycle of violence, including but not limited to humanitarian diplomacy, negotiation for protection, humanitarian mediation, early warning systems, protection by presence, civil military coordination for protection, and evacuation. Increased capacity is also needed in the monitoring and evaluation of protection activities."
- **Advocacy considerations include:**
 - For the GPC and other protection actors, the conclusions can be referenced as part of advocacy efforts in support of greater visibility, support and resourcing for responsive protection actions and interventions, including at the height of crisis and when greater complementarity with the delivery of material assistance and remedial services is needed to drive a comprehensive protection response.
 - For the GPC and other protection actors, the conclusions can support calls for needed funding and capacity building for protection actors in relation to responsive, front-line interventions that may include negotiations for protection, community-based early warning systems and/or civil military coordination for protection, for example.

Protection Funding

- **Specific references in the text of the conclusions include:**
 - Para 15 a) – "invites the European Union and its Member States to increase funding specifically dedicated to protection interventions to respond, mitigate and reduce risks based on context specific protection analysis. Additionally, the European Union and its Member States present in the decision-making organs of humanitarian organisations, should enable discussions on prioritising protection activities within their core programming. They should also encourage the

inclusion of such activities in Humanitarian Response Plans and programmes of their humanitarian partners.”

- Para 15 b) – “encourages the European Union and its Member States to invest in and support, whenever relevant, responsive activities aiming at preventing and/or interrupting the cycle of violence, including but not limited to humanitarian diplomacy, negotiation for protection, humanitarian mediation, early warning systems, protection by presence, civil military coordination for protection, and evacuation. Increased capacity is also needed in the monitoring and evaluation of protection activities.”
- Para 15 c) – “recognises that investments are needed to develop and increase humanitarian actors’ protection capacity, including national and international humanitarian workers and organisations and affected communities, in particular when it comes to preventing and interrupting the cycle of violence. For instance, the European Union and its Member States are encouraged to support (i) country-specific or sub-national protection analyses, (ii) evaluations of protection programming with the development of protection indicators and disaggregated data collection systems, (iii) research and tool development including the development of tools and guidance in relation to preventive approaches as well as capacity-building, and (iv) trainings and peer-to-peer workshops to stimulate reflections and innovation in the field of protection. Efforts to localise aid should specifically be accompanied with protection-related capacity building and sharing. The monitoring and evaluation of such investments are encouraged in order to improve them.”
- **Advocacy considerations include:**
 - For the GPC and protection actors to leverage the Conclusions in support of enhanced funding for protection interventions, programming and capacities. This could include specific calls for implementation of the conclusions through:
 - enhanced funding for responsive protection interventions and capacity building, particularly including and based on analysis of protection risks, and to include protection efforts as part of HRPs.
 - Support for capacity building with communities and partners with approaches to interrupting violence, including on the basis of strong protection analysis capacities, evaluations and data collection systems, research, tools and trainings, workshops.
 - Support for the prioritization of protection interventions and actions by organizations across the sector.
 - Support for embedding protection capacity at the heart of localization efforts.

Humanitarian Diplomacy and Protection Advocacy

- **Examples of specific references in the text of the conclusions include:**
 - Para 15 – “invites the European Union and its Member States to support proactive advocacy for the reduction of protection risks and threats by engaging directly in public and behind-the-scenes. They are also invited to provide political support to Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and other humanitarian leaders engaged in advocacy to reduce protection risk, while ensuring all actions and interventions support humanitarian principles and the do-no-harm approach.”
 - Para 16 - “The Council encourages the European Union and its Member States to increase their efforts regarding humanitarian diplomacy, understood as the use of political and diplomatic instruments to promote the respect for International Humanitarian Law, its implementation, to facilitate humanitarian assistance, and to raise awareness about the needs of affected populations and the general humanitarian agenda, while recognising the specific roles that states,

international and regional organisations can play in advocating for better protection outcomes for populations in humanitarian settings, and ensuring all actions and interventions support humanitarian principles and the ‘do no harm’ approach. Additionally, the Council invites the European Union and its Member States to support and promote initiatives to develop and strengthen humanitarian diplomacy.”

- Para 17 – “The instruments employed by humanitarian diplomacy include, but are not limited to, (i) fostering dialogue with national authorities and non-state actors to gain meaningful and qualitative humanitarian access to the persons affected by natural crises or armed conflicts, (ii) coordinating with relevant UN agencies, ICRC, other international organisations as well as relevant NGO partners to facilitate humanitarian assistance, access and protection, and to ensure accountability in cases of violations of International Humanitarian Law, (iii) including, on a systematic basis, humanitarian advocacy in political dialogue with third party governments, and coordinating with like-minded partners, (iv) leveraging the participation in decision making organs at the United Nations and other international organisations to ensure that all parties involved actively pursue the protection of civilian populations in humanitarian situations and take protection needs into account at the highest possible levels, (v) promoting capacity building and training activities that focus on the protection of vulnerable persons in humanitarian settings, and (vi) cooperating with civil society organisations to place protection at the top of the humanitarian agenda. The Council emphasises that humanitarian diplomacy’s instruments should be used to have a positive impact on humanitarian space, the perception by all parties of humanitarian actors and their capacity to protect; this includes ensuring humanitarian exemptions in sanction regimes.”
- Para 18 – “The Council invites the European Union and Member States to regularly exchange views on relevant developments on protection and to liaise directly with established actors, whether international, national or local. The Council highlights the importance of enhancing the efforts to promote effective protection in humanitarian settings and agrees to discuss it regularly in relevant Council working groups, at the European Humanitarian Forum, in relevant networks and at local level in order to keep protection high on the humanitarian agenda.”
- **Advocacy considerations include:**
 - For the GPC and other protection actors to leverage the conclusions in support of joined-up, protection-focused humanitarian diplomacy by Member States and other high-level actors, seeking to ensuring all channels of influence are leveraged in support of protection. Such efforts should seek to complement related protection negotiations and advocacy-focused actions being carried out by protection actors and be informed by protection actors at local and national levels.
 - For the GPC and other protection actors to leverage the conclusions in support of strengthened diplomatic, political and funding support from Member States for protection advocacy efforts of humanitarian and protection leaders at the country level.
 - For the GPC and other protection actors to leverage the conclusions in support of the commitments made in relation to accountability of violations of International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law and International Refugee Law and regularly follow-up on protection in humanitarian settings.

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