

# World Humanitarian Summit:

## NGO reactions to the Secretary-General's Report

---

*Event report*

18 February 2016

February 2016

**CONTACT**

International Association of Professionals in  
Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP)

Rue de Montbrillant 87

1202 Geneva, Switzerland

+41 22 518 04 58

[info@phap.org](mailto:info@phap.org)

DISCLAIMER: Neither PHAP nor any of its employees, nor any of their contractors, subcontractors or their employees, makes any warranty, express or implied, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or any third party's use or the results of such use of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed, or represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights. Reference herein to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by PHAP. The views and opinions of authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of PHAP.

# World Humanitarian Summit: NGO reactions to the Secretary-General's Report

18 February 2016

## Speakers:

**Virginie Lefèvre**, Program and Partnerships Coordinator, Amel Association International

**Anne Héry**, Director of Advocacy and Institutional Relations, Handicap International Federation

**Brooke Lauten**, Humanitarian Policy and Protection Advisor, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

**Ahmad Faizal Perdaus**, President, MERCY Malaysia, Chair of the Board, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

**Gareth Price-Jones**, Senior Humanitarian Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, CARE International

## Facilitator:

**Angharad Laing**, Executive Director, International Association of Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP)

# Executive Summary

On 18 February 2016, PHAP hosted an online event in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) on “One Humanity: Shared Responsibility,” the Report of the U.N. Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS).<sup>1</sup> The event provided a platform for NGO stakeholders to give their views on the report and provide an overview and analysis of key concerns and considerations. Attracting more than 185 participants who participated actively in the chat and Q&A, as well as in the interactive participant polls, the event helped initiate a discussion on these issues.

Representatives of Amel Association International, NRC, Handicap International, Mercy Malaysia, and CARE International presented on issues including localization, effectiveness, inclusivity, and implementation. The main points highlighted in these presentations and in the subsequent discussion included:

- The NGOs represented were in general positive about the report and the momentum it is creating in the run up to the Summit in Istanbul in May 2016.
- While there was some skepticism regarding meaningful commitments from states at the Summit to the five core responsibilities outlined by the Secretary-General, the event is well timed to build on the current momentum stemming from the political attention to the migration crisis and related humanitarian situations.
- The inclusion of localization of humanitarian action in the report is welcome, but concrete targets are needed for strengthening what already exists locally.
- Although the SG’s report includes fairly strong language on protection, the humanitarian community needs to be careful that the centrality of protection is included in the outcomes of the Summit.
- The proposed “grand bargain,” while generally seen as a positive move, raised serious questions about whether frontline responders – which are often smaller, local NGOs – would benefit. It is unclear how funding modalities will take into account the inclusion of the most vulnerable rather than just reducing costs.
- The report includes certain unresolved tensions where further clarity is needed, including that between local leadership and principled humanitarian action in crisis situations and between linking humanitarian action to the Sustainable Development Goals and the timely delivery of urgent life-saving assistance and protection.
- NGOs need to share information and work together both in the run up to and in the wake of the WHS in order to ensure commitment to change that will improve humanitarian action worldwide.

---

<sup>1</sup>A recording of the full event is available at <https://phap.org/WHS-18Feb2016>

# Presentations from NGOs

The event provided an opportunity for NGOs to present their views on the recently released Secretary-General's Report for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) entitled "One Humanity: Shared Responsibility," as well as the "Agenda For Humanity" outlining five core responsibilities, published as an annex to the report. Each of the five NGO representatives in the event focused on one of the issues that they found the most important in the report.

## Amel Association International: Localization

**Virginie Lefèvre**, Program and Partnerships Coordinator with Amel Association International, a Lebanese non-sectarian NGO working in the poorest regions of Lebanon that has been actively involved in the WHS consultations, focused her presentation on the issue of localization. She highlighted the following points:

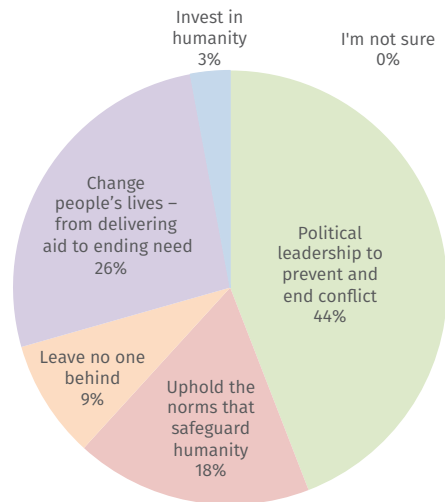
- The report addresses localization in a constructive manner, including through mentioning capacity building, partnerships, support to host communities, complementarity, and predictable financing for local NGOs. However, while it is mainstreamed in the core responsibilities, its implementation remains unclear.
- The SG's report does not stress enough that localization is an existing and ongoing process. The report should underline that the humanitarian community needs to strengthen and capitalize on what already exists nationally and locally to avoid duplication of efforts.
- There is a need for time-bound, realistic, and measurable targets in order to more effectively monitor whether the recommendations from the SG's report will be implemented post-Istanbul.
- We need to promote a compact for states and donors to commit, recognize existing practices, present measurable indicators, and propose concrete capacity building opportunities that can be implemented and monitored by all humanitarian actors.
- NGOs should actively share information and cooperate in the run up to the WHS in order to build synergies and to ensure that momentum is maintained after Istanbul.

## NRC: Protection and displacement

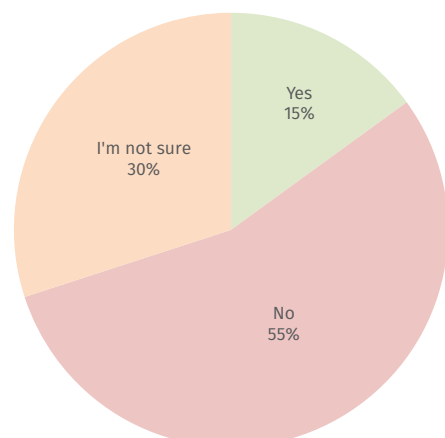
**Brooke Lauten**, Humanitarian Policy and Protection Advisor with NRC, looked at how protection and forced displacement was treated in the report. She brought up the following main points:

- The report is fairly strong on protection. Although the "centrality of protection" is only mentioned once, the report argues for the same concept through emphasizing the need to protect the safety, dignity, and worth of individuals. However, the humanitarian community will have to be careful that the centrality of protection does not get lost in the outcomes of the Summit.

**Which of the core five responsibilities in the Agenda for Humanity do you see as the highest prioritized for your organization in the run up to the Summit?**



**In your view, does the SG's report sufficiently reflect recommendations made in regional and thematic consultations?**



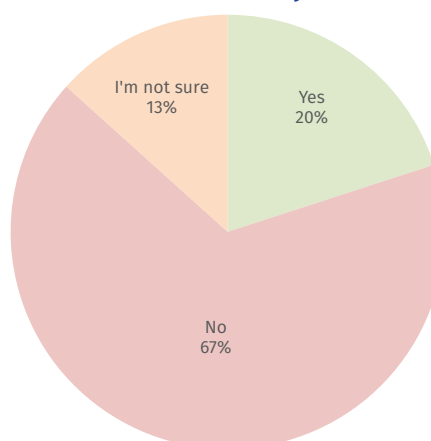
- The report lists protection threats and core issues of vulnerability and spends significant time on the capacity of individuals, communities, and states to deal with threats and vulnerabilities. If these are all fully addressed – the humanitarian community will effectively be addressing protection risks.
- The SG’s call for states to commit more strongly to norms of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) should be applauded. As the report makes strong recommendations for combatting impunity for violating IHL, it can be hoped that steps are taken to translate signing treaties and conventions into practical commitment from states at the WHS.
- The focus on forced displacement in the report is welcome but the framing of this topic needs to be shifted from just reducing displacement to respecting rights including protection, freedom of movement, and non-refoulement. Commitments to reduce displacement should not mean preventing people from moving or sending them back to unsafe areas. Instead, greater shared responsibility is required to ensure that key rights are upheld.
- The report addresses access relatively well, including through promoting respect of IHL, shifting approaches to assessment and response, and the call to focus on the most vulnerable. The call for principled humanitarian action is encouraging – integration and complementarity must not go so far as to compromise the possibility to uphold the principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence.
- Protection is less prominent than it should be in the SG’s discussion of collective outcomes. The concept of collective outcomes could help shift the way that the humanitarian community looks at needs, which – following on the controversial suggestion for a “whole of caseload” approach from the Whole of System Review on Protection – could lead to significant improvement in how protection work is carried out. NRC looked forward to working with other protection actors to ensure that the collective outcomes sufficiently include protection.

## Handicap International: Leave No One Behind

**Anne Héry**, Director of Advocacy and Institutional Relations with Handicap International – a federation of national associations working in 65 countries in the field of humanitarian assistance, mine action, disability, and development – concentrated her presentation on the issue of inclusiveness. She raised the following points:

- The report is ambitious in nature, spanning a whole range of issues, conventions, and principles, and linking emergency to development and international and national actors, helping to counter what has been seen as too much focus on aid effectiveness and cost reduction during the consultation process.
- Core responsibility 5 and the “grand bargain” fail to address how funding modalities will take into account the inclusion of the most vulnerable, relying too heavily on cost reduction.
- There is need for a high level and more detailed commitment on people with disabilities at the WHS along three axes:
  - Community endorsement of standards and guidelines to ensure that assistance is inclusive.
  - Adoption of mechanisms that enhance the participation of the disabled.
  - Application of more inclusive practices in the field.
- She highlighted three tensions that are not satisfactorily reconciled in the report:

**Referring to core responsibility 3 (“Leave no one behind”) and 4 (“Reinforce, do not replace, national and local systems”), do you feel that all relevant groups and actors are sufficiently included?**



### Poll question: Are there any groups that would need further mention in the report?

Young people are included, more than usual, but not referenced as leaders and actors in the humanitarian response. We need inclusive participation in the humanitarian response.

*Communication Officer,  
Donor agency (United Kingdom)*

Faith-based organizations and their role.

*Humanitarian Affairs Specialist,  
International NGO (Switzerland)*

Involvement of the private sector.

*Legal Assistant, NGO (Venezuela)*

**Full list of responses in annex**

- The tension between calling for enhanced leadership of national governments on the one hand and principled humanitarian action in conflict contexts on the other.
- The notion of collective outcomes based on multi-year plans versus an increased role for local actors.
- Collective outcomes focused on SDGs indicators versus the timely delivery of urgent life-saving aid and protection.

## MERCY Malaysia: The Grand Bargain

**Faizal Perdaus**, President of MERCY Malaysia, focused in particular on financing of humanitarian action. He called attention to the following:

- The report calls for increased funds and diversified financing to ensure that humanitarian outcomes are improved. There is, however, a concern that any eventual increased funds will only go to UN agencies and a few major international NGOs. Harmonized reporting comes at a high cost for small NGOs with small overheads that suffer from being bound to short term funding cycles.
- Improved transparency and reporting is needed, but it cannot come at a greater cost. The priorities of smaller NGOs need to be taken into account, as they have very little to spare in terms of overhead costs.
- Local NGOs are often the only ones working in complex situations – delivering humanitarian assistance on the frontlines – and they need more support. Reducing cost is not enough for ensuring aid effectiveness; the “grand bargain” must also achieve better aid delivery outcomes. It is crucial that money is not diverted away from those who are delivering at the front lines.
- Funding mechanisms should increasingly allow for local NGOs to receive multi-year funding and be consulted on an ongoing basis.
- Local NGOs need to do more to make their voices heard both in the run up to the Summit in Istanbul if they are to benefit from the implementation of the “grand bargain.”
- To ensure that NGOs are part of the post-Istanbul implementation, they need to get engaged now. They need to push for full inclusion in all parts of the Summit as well as in post-Istanbul forums, especially regarding the “grand bargain.”

### Highlights from the participant discussion on financing:

- It can not simply be an issue of more money alone but better usage, more flexibility, and greater transparency. And then more money.
- Better analysis and clearer strategy on what programs to fund rather than pressure to push the money out the door
- We must fight the idea that high overhead costs have a direct correlation to inefficiency.
- It would also help to reduce overhead if all donors would accept ONE report from a given NGO, rather than requiring tailor-made reports to each donor. Definitely agree that multi-year funding is preferable... we have been saying that for 35+ years!
- More money to more of the same agencies will not achieve anything new.
- Indeed we need to ensure the “Grand Bargain” doesn’t lead to monopolization, but recognizes the complementarities of different actors and find a way to improve direct financing to national/local actors.

## CARE International: How to make it reality

**Gareth Price-Jones**, Senior Humanitarian Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at CARE International, focused his presentation on how to ensure that the Summit leads to actual change. He made the following main points:

- In general, the report is good – especially the strong call for political action, as just improved service delivery can never be enough. Other positive points with the report includes its inclusion of gender, and its linking of the four major policy agreements from 2015 in related areas.
- The link made in the report between humanitarian action and development is welcome, but it is important that there is space maintained for Dunantist humanitarian actors.

- The proposal for a “grand bargain” is in general positive, but there is a danger that it will only benefit the larger humanitarian actors.
- States are not going to change simply because the Secretary-General calls for it. It is clear that certain governments, as well as non-state armed groups, are not ready for this responsibility.

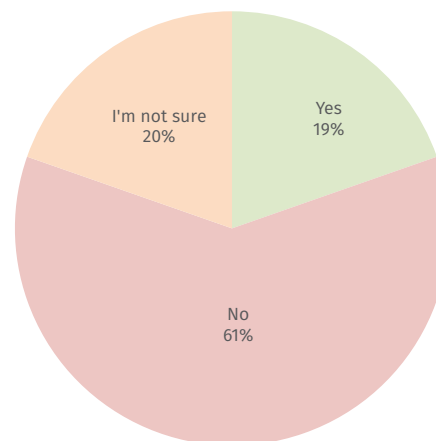
The WHS could, however, help change state behavior by playing into their enlightened self-interest and fear of the consequences if they do nothing. Over the last six to nine months, many states have realized that it is not possible to ignore the consequences if humanitarian action is not sufficient.

If there is general agreement, why does the humanitarian system not change? One reason is a lack of belief in that change will lead to something better – for example, many question whether more coordination will actually lead to better outcomes. There is also a lack of “bandwidth” in operations with a lack of time, resources, and leadership to improve issues, even if there is agreement on their being beneficial.

To overcome the resistance to change of humanitarian action, there is a need for more – and more predictable – resources, improved career paths that help develop effective leadership, and simpler and more effective models that help humanitarians focus on what is really important.

- Commitments from states at the WHS need to be open and not too detailed, address underlying issues, and build on existing tools. They need to focus on why stakeholders would change.

#### Do you think that the Summit will be able to influence state behavior?



#### Highlights from the participant discussion on changing state behaviour:

- It seems to me that a key section of report is the “Seize the Security Council,” which sounds great, but what is the incentive for the Security Council to take on these recommendations with two of the members viewed as violators of IHL? And what body would hold them accountable?
- If we go to Istanbul with the assumption states will not change, we better stay home. If we do not push for it, who will?
- WHS is just one event... It is the citizens of the country would influence state behaviour. WHS can build momentum around it but we need to be realistic about what it is as well.
- We can use the WHS to influence what citizens say to their governments
- Even if the Summit is able to influence its member nations, what influence could this summit have on non-state actors?
- States will change if we “make it happen”... i.e. keep monitoring, pushing, advocating following-up and making sure the “Agenda for Humanity” is implemented & replete with practical, concrete actions.



## Questions from participants

**Question: It was pointed out in the discussion among participants that the premise that there is little or no capacity at the local level and that it must be strengthened by outsiders is not valid. What is the root of the problem?**

**Virginie Lefèvre** answered that it is a matter of understanding and strengthening existing capacities. If we want to consider who or what is undermining local capacity, we must take a country specific approach and avoid generalizations. Local organizations are the first to respond and we need to recognize them – it is unfortunate that this has to be proven, but once it is, member states may start committing.

**Question: The WHS synthesis report described a “new deal” for refugees, essentially aimed at refugee hosting. The SG’s report seems to go farther, calling for a “new cooperation framework on predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing” for mass movements of refugees and “an international framework, national legislation and regional cooperation frameworks by 2025” focused on those displaced but without refugee status. What do you think this could or should look like? Is it realistic to expect a broader displacement deal with refugee hosting as one component of it or should the Summit focus more narrowly on solutions to the present refugee crisis?**

**Brooke Lauten** pointed out that the WHS is one of several major upcoming events that will be discussing this – for example the Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants taking place on 19 September 2016 – and the WHS is timed well to build up to those events. There is an initiative to broaden the discussion to look at durable solutions to refugees and IDPs and how responsibility is shared across states. Despite a need to manage expectations and keep them realistic, there is potential and optimism for the development of a shared responsibility mechanism in the run up to Istanbul and after.

**Gareth Price-Jones** added that the WHS should not be focusing on the refugee crisis but instead utilise the current political momentum in the discussion on this topic. The issue had not been on senior politicians’ agendas until it arrived at Europe’s doorstep. Although this may be frustrating for the countries that have been hosting the largest refugee communities, it is due to the recent attention to the refugee crisis that senior politicians are likely to get involved in Istanbul, which previously seemed unlikely. The political energy generated by European refugee crisis should be built on at the WHS to ensure impactful decisions are made.

## Closing remarks

**Faizal Perdaus** stated that there is no choice but to be optimistic of the outcome of the WHS. However, all stakeholders – NGOs in particular – must work very hard at making it a positive one. States will not change their behavior overnight but we must make them respect IHL more and ensure that any change in humanitarian financing leads to better localized response not only in rhetoric but also in practice. On the issue of the “grand bargain,” NGOs should give their input to ICVA and other organizations that lobby to ensure that our points regarding harmonization and reduction of costs are taken into account at the Summit.

**Virginie Lefèvre** reminded participants that there is still time to build commitment ahead of the Summit. She underlined the importance of information sharing among stakeholders in order to achieve concrete results. NGOs and affected communities must be present at the WHS, as they are best placed to suggest how to implement the recommendations that come out of the WHS.

**Brooke Lauten** remarked that with the SG's report, a door has been opened for NGOs to engage. What happens in preparation of the WHS will determine its success. At least in Geneva, all stakeholders are interested in how we are going to implement this call to action. It is important to now work together to achieve positive change.

**Anne Héry** stressed the importance of building commitment for condemning the use of explosive weapons. The division between international and local actors that was clear in the consultation process must be overcome – it is the diversity of NGOs that allows them to address different humanitarian contexts and their complementarity must be emphasized.

**Gareth Price-Jones** suggested increasing popular mobilization efforts around the report in order to build commitment and raise the costs for governments ignoring the need for change. The NGO community at the WHS needs to be propositional about the demands made, in order to achieve true commitments from political leaders to end conflicts, uphold the norms that safeguard humanity, change people's lives, and invest in humanity, leaving no one behind.

**Poll question: Is there something that you feel is missing from the report?**

No mention of how to effectively approach humanitarian accountability and how it integrates with development programming.

*Accountability Manager, International NGO (Philippines)*

No mention of the role/resourcing of informal networks in response.

*Communication Officer, Donor agency (United Kingdom)*

Prevention and control of corruption.

*Senior manager, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Switzerland)*

Women are most often portrayed as victims or disempowered. Not mention of gender equality and how this might be addressed, particularly in protracted crisis. We can't ignore GE/WR.

*Women's Rights Specialist (Canada)*

In his speech the SG said that 'decision making at all levels in a crisis must be a priority' but this did not come out in any sense as strongly in the report.

*Advocacy Adviser (United Kingdom)*

Guidance on way forward - how these commitments will translate into actions.

*Research Fellow (United States)*

**Full list of responses in annex**

## Annex: Free-text poll response

### What would be your main suggestion for actually implementing change?

Concrete steps on “call for better accountability and engagement with communities”.

*Accountability Manager, International NGO (Philippines)*

Helping informal/grassroots networks/organizations access funding and resources as they are often the first on the scene to humanitarian issues.

*Communication Officer, Donor agency (United Kingdom)*

UNSC reform is the only way out which is empowered enough to punish violators.

*Humanitarian Advisor (Switzerland)*

Lobbying (advocating) and engaging the society.

*Child Protection Officer, International NGO (Nigeria)*

Strong advocacy.

*Humanitarian Adviser, Military*

### Are there any groups that would need further mention in the report?

Emphasis on donor roles and contribution not only in terms of funding but in ensuring that affected population needs are put front and center and not each funding agency's biases.

*Accountability Manager, International NGO (Philippines)*

Young people are included, more than usual, but not referenced as leaders and actors in the humanitarian response. We need inclusive participation in the humanitarian response.

*Communication Officer, Donor agency (United Kingdom)*

Adolescent girls.

*Women's Rights Specialist (Canada)*

Must be an emphasis on not accepting or reinforcing inequalities.

*Advocacy Adviser (United Kingdom)*

Involvement of native/indigenous groups.

*Program Coordinator, Research group (United States)*

Academics. There is a great deal of research by academics which are not sufficiently referred to while planning for humanitarian actions.

*Chairperson, NGO (India)*

Those affected by pandemics.

*President, International NGO (Malaysia)*

Community based organizations and local NGOs not emphasized enough.

*Humanitarian Strategy Advisor (United States)*

Population and Development Service Center.

*Executive Director, NGO (Egypt)*

Faith-based organizations and their role.

*Humanitarian Affairs Specialist, International NGO (Switzerland)*

Involvement of the private sector.

*Legal Assistant, NGO (Venezuela)*

## Is there anything else you or your organization would have liked to see in the report?

There is no clear guide of how to apply.

*Legal Consultant, NGO (Lebanon)*

No mention of how to effectively approach Humanitarian accountability and how it integrates with development programming.

*Accountability Manager, International NGO (Philippines)*

No mention of the role/resourcing of informal networks in response.

*Communication Officer, Donor agency (United Kingdom)*

Prevention and control of corruption.

*Senior manager, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Switzerland)*

Women are most often portrayed as victims or disempowered. Not mention of gender equality and how this might be addressed, particularly in protracted crisis. We can't ignore GE/WR.

*Women's Rights Specialist (Canada)*

Limited attention to health.

*Senior delegate, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (United States)*

In his speech the SG said that 'decision making at all levels in a crisis must be a priority' but this did not come out in any sense as strongly in the report.

*Advocacy Adviser (United Kingdom)*

Not enough focus on implementation of IHL Treaties & Conventions.

*Humanitarian Advisor (Thailand)*

Affected Communities' perspectives.

*Policy Advisor, International NGO (Germany)*

Concrete recommendations and examples.

*Humanitarian Strategy Advisor (United States)*

Guidance on way forward - how these commitments will translate into actions.

*Research Fellow (United States)*

Easy way for communication and flexibility.

*Executive Director, NGO (Egypt)*

Local communities recognized as primary agents of response. And more reference to the role of civil society in general.

*Communication Officer, Donor agency (United Kingdom)*

More emphasis on the education in conflicts.

*PhD Candidate (Switzerland)*

Parent anti-corruption agenda addressed.

*Senior manager, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Switzerland)*

Gender equality - how can we continue to ignore this key issue.

*Women's Rights Specialist (Canada)*

Need to reform UNSC to make it an equitable platform for all nations of the world.

*Humanitarian Adviser, Military*

To take in account not only the communities in a general way, as well the local organizations, the humanitarian local actor as a valid interlocutor.

*Team Leader, NGO (El Salvador)*

More concrete suggestions about local NGOs should associate with their state in crisis situations.

*Chairperson, NGO (India)*

Direct participation in the WHS. NGOs are being relegated to the margins, permitted only to present side events and exhibitions.

*Representative, NGO (United States)*

We need the report of this activity.

*Teacher (Côte d'Ivoire)*

A mention of energy access for cooking, lighting, heating, and powering. Included in the Sphere standards but almost always overlooked.

*Senior Program Associate, UN agency (United States)*

Emphasis on Government commitment to supporting and engaging CSOs in responses.

*Child Protection Officer, International NGO (Nigeria)*

---

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONALS  
IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION (PHAP)

Rue de Montbrillant 87  
1202 Geneva, Switzerland  
[www.phap.org](http://www.phap.org)