

# Humanitarian Leadership Group on Supply Chain

Supply Chain - The Humanitarian Lifeline  
Linking the Network, Multiplying Impact

High-Level Conference  
Conclusions



# **Humanitarian Leadership Group on Supply Chain**

## **High-Level Conference**

***Supply Chain – The Humanitarian Lifeline  
Linking the Network, Multiplying Impact***

**Brussels, 10 December 2025**

**Conclusions**

## CONCLUSIONS

We, representing donors, UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, Non-Governmental Organisations, the private sector, and academia, gathered in Brussels on 10 December 2025 in the framework of the Humanitarian Leadership Group on Supply Chain.

We expressed, as a community, the shared recognition that the humanitarian supply chain is the lifeline enabling aid to reach millions of people in need – and the importance of charting a path towards making it more efficient and effective.

### 1. Urgent need for change

The humanitarian system is no longer configured to respond to the scale and complexity of today's crises. It faces unprecedented challenges, marked by the multiplication of new emergencies and a high number of protracted crises, resulting in soaring needs against a background of diminishing funding. In this context, the role of the humanitarian supply chain — accounting for an estimated 60-80% share of total humanitarian expenditure— has never been more critical.

The current humanitarian supply chain model is also under growing structural strain. Fragmented, siloed approaches, duplication, and a predominantly reactive mindset slow delivery, reduce efficiency, and limit localisation.

A system-wide transformation is urgently needed. Inaction will lead to increasing financial and social costs, seriously eroding our ability to help crisis-affected communities. This transformation is not a technical adjustment. It is imperative to reform the model in order to maximise humanitarian impact. It is a necessary paradigm shift in which supply chain is no longer seen as a support service but is recognised as a key strategic function that enables and drives the humanitarian system.

Building on valuable efforts and initiatives so far, significant opportunities for true change can be achieved, making the humanitarian supply chain fit for today's challenges and those ahead.

Towards this objective, the inaugural meeting of the Humanitarian Leadership Group on Supply Chain, convened by the European Commission in December 2024, called for a coherent vision for the future of the humanitarian supply chain. Thematic workshops dedicated to the intertwined areas of procurement, environmental sustainability, digitalisation, preparedness, and localisation, were held in 2025 under inclusive co-leadership<sup>1</sup>. We acknowledge the outcomes of these workshops, reflected in a report, as a basis for follow-up work.

In parallel, at global level, complementary initiatives, including the Humanitarian Reset and the UN80 processes, have also underscored the need for systemic reform of the humanitarian supply chain - moving towards integrated, coordinated, and optimised approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> The **procurement** and **environmental sustainability** workshops (Lyon, 12-14 May 2025) were hosted by France, and co-led respectively by France and UNHCR, and by WFP and NRC. The **digitalisation** workshop (Geneva, 1 - 2 July 2025) was hosted by WFP which co-led it with IRC and the advisory support of the Kuehne Foundation. The **preparedness** and **localisation** workshops (Copenhagen, 29 September - 1 October 2025) were hosted by UNICEF and co-led with IFRC and DRC.

## 2. A Shared Vision of the Humanitarian Supply Chain System

We share the vision of:

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*“A supply chain system that moves from fragmentation to a collaborative, coherent network;*

*multiplying impact through alignment, interoperability, and exchange of data;*

*maximising the use of joined-up platforms and operations.”*

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### **A system**

where **collaboration is the fundamental principle**, ensuring greater **efficiency and effectiveness**, and underpinning:

- Mutualisation of resources and procurement, and mutual recognition in supply and logistics, facilitated by alignment of policies and standards;
- Transparency and sharing of data to enable interoperable, predictive, and inclusive systems and tools;
- A collective approach to anticipatory planning, and preparedness;
- Operations anchored in environmentally sustainable practices.

### **A system**

as **local** as possible and as **international** as needed, complementing and supporting national capacities.

### **A system**

that integrates **humanitarian, development, private sector and academic actors** as strategic partners, at both global and national level, through shared efforts and collective accountability.

### **A system**

supported by **sustainable long-term financing** and relying on a **professionalised workforce** upheld by a strong duty of care.

### **Ultimately, a system**

that **works better for people** — delivering assistance faster, more predictably, and in ways that strengthen local capacities and resilience in line with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.

### 3. Transforming the Humanitarian Supply Chain System

We identified the following priorities to achieve this vision:

- Fully integrating supply chain in **strategic decision-making**, from the very start; embedding supply chain planning and optimisation practices across all operations.
- Fostering a **structured whole-of-sector approach** that balances the value of pluralism among humanitarian actors, regardless of their size with the need for greater integration; respecting diverse mandates, roles, and capabilities, and the specific contexts of humanitarian operations;
- **Working jointly** by default, notably through mutualised approaches such as joint procurement, shared services and pooling of resources (e.g. warehousing, transport and fleet), as well as mutual recognition;
- Using **shared platforms for data exchange** based on common standards, with a view to better informed and connected decision-making enabled by predictive tools, tracking and monitoring of performance, and progress;
- Fostering **collaboration among donors**, notably with a view towards a more aligned compliance and regulatory approach, as well as funding priorities.
- Leveraging innovative and sustainable **financing**, securing long-term investments through flexible and inclusive funding models where supply chain, digital and environmental costs are considered as essential programme expenses, and part of operational costs;
- Engaging with **private sector** at structural level in co-designing system transformation;
- Strengthening **professional capacity** with a view to securing a highly skilled and adaptive workforce through cross-sector collaboration and continuous development;
- In light of these priorities, we also identified key areas of actions to accelerate this sector-wide transformation (*see table attached*).

The interdependencies among the different areas and issues, and the cross-cutting nature of key barriers and enablers highlight the need for integrated reform. Progress in one area unlocks potential in others - and neglecting one can undermine the entire system.

#### **4. The Way Forward and Follow-up**

Bringing this urgent transformation into practice will require leveraging existing structures and initiatives while fostering cross-sector collaboration.

We will continue working together, including at expert level, to follow up on the report on the overall outcomes of the thematic workshops. In early 2026, a collaborative framework based on a shared work programme will be initiated with all stakeholders. This will capitalise on existing engagement in the thematic areas, linked by regular review of cross-cutting aspects to foster synergy and coherence.

We will reconvene by the end of 2026 to assess progress in the implementation, share lessons, and adjust priorities based on experience and emerging needs. This approach aims to advance the reform path through closer collaboration and collective accountability. It is time to move from vision to action, to strengthen the humanitarian lifeline in tangible ways to better protect the life and dignity of people affected by crises.

## Key Areas

**Procurement** needs to evolve from a primarily transactional process to a strategic level, driving efficiency and value by fostering collaboration.

Today, procurement processes are often disconnected from strategic, programmatic, localisation, and sustainability goals, thus weakening market shaping and integrated planning.

Fragmentation, misalignment of regulatory frameworks, duplication of supplier assessments, and lack of shared market intelligence reduce purchasing power and delay delivery. Meanwhile siloed planning and short-term funding limit sustainable supplier engagement and preparedness.

Elevating procurement as a strategic level requires a shift in terms of governance, financing, and institutional culture. This includes:

- Promoting **information exchange**, (e.g. on suppliers and contracts where feasible);
- Encouraging **mutualised approaches** such as joint procurement, piggybacking of contracts, and shared services, as well as mutual recognition through e.g. guidelines;
- **Standardising key relief items** within a market and improving production practices for relief commodities to increase quality, reduce costs, and decrease environmental impact, as well as fostering collaborative category management;
- Addressing compliance and regulatory misalignments by **reducing duplication and complexity** across donor requirements to enable faster, more efficient response;
- Better integrating **procurement planning** throughout humanitarian operations, supported by guidance and performance indicators;
- **Strengthening human resource capacity** through training and talent development, using common standards across the sector.

**Environmental sustainability** needs to be embedded into all humanitarian operations to reduce carbon footprint and protect the environment in line with international commitments.

Current barriers include limited incentives, inconsistent measurement, and a tendency to deprioritise environmental considerations during emergencies.

Transforming the system requires shifting from short-term cost reduction to long-term value optimisation, where emissions, waste, and environmental impact are considered alongside timeliness and efficiency. This includes:

- **Measuring emissions**, including Scope 3 emissions, according to international standards, while offering support to organisations when needed;
- Prioritising as much as possible the **procurement of eco-friendly products** based on life-cycle assessments or similar evidence, and prioritising suppliers with sustainable practices;
- Improving **mutualisation of warehousing** and freight, prioritising freight by sea, and prepositioning closer to humanitarian operations;
- Promoting effectively **context-adapted sustainable waste management**;
- Proactively engaging with the private sector, through a **tailored approach** with different type/level of suppliers/producers, with particular attention to the local level.

**Digitalisation** needs to evolve from fragmented, proprietary tools towards an interoperable and inclusive digital ecosystem that drives greater efficiency, transparency, and measurable impact. Such a system should enable accountability, inclusive access, and continuous learning across the humanitarian network, as well as anticipating the longer-term trajectory of technological innovation.

Barriers today include non-interoperable systems, inconsistent data standards, and the limited inclusion of local actors in digital infrastructure. This limits potential benefits of planning based on predictive information, a clear operational overview, shared tools, and other opportunities requiring harmonised data, notably AI.

Overcoming these challenges requires a shift towards common, open, and co-developed approaches that promote interoperability while ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, and allow for anonymisation where required. This includes:

- Promoting **open, fit-for-purpose standards** and flexible architectures to enable interfacing, interoperability and data sharing, recognising that standards are a means to an end, and resources should focus on practical, field-level impact;
- Building **integrated, shared digital platforms and tools** that strengthen collaboration, transparency, and real-time information exchange, based as much as possible on use and enhancement of existing platforms;
- **Empowering local actors** by ensuring accessible digital tools, infrastructure, and co-developed solutions, fit for local contexts;
- Positioning **IT as core infrastructure** and an enabler of efficient supply chains, with long-term, coordinated investment and funding models that prioritise collective value and interoperability.

# Key Areas

**Preparedness** needs to become a system norm, grounded in local capacities.

Preparedness is currently constrained by unclear governance and role definition at local and international levels, limited funding, fragmented coordination and planning, and limited systems integration (international, national, local).

The humanitarian supply chain system needs to evolve into a proactive, risk-informed system where forecasting, impact-based scenario planning, and pre-positioning are core functions, supported by predictive analytics, and preparedness financing as well as governance and accountability frameworks. This includes:

- Developing **common voluntary frameworks**, at global and national level to align preparedness activities such as mapping, risk analysis, and local engagement, while clarifying roles and responsibilities, and supporting monitoring to strengthen supply chain system maturity over time;
- **Leveraging shared data, forecasting tools and interoperable systems**, integrated with national disaster management systems and logistics platforms;
- Using **national maturity frameworks** to enable coordinated investments in national and regional logistics infrastructure, workforce development, and local supplier capacity;
- Reinforcing **locally led planning, financing and decision-making** supported by direct funding to local actors, wherever feasible;
- Promoting response models in which international support complements and **reinforces national leadership** as required;
- Ensuring that preparedness efforts contribute to **local resilience and system maturity**.

**Localisation** requires empowering local actors through equitable partnerships that transfer not only responsibility, but also authority, resources, and leadership to national actors and local systems. Advancing a shared vision of locally led emergency response, in which the international community supports national and local ownership and leadership with technical expertise, surge capacity, and global assets – as needed.

Today, local organisations are constrained by limited access to funding, data, decision-making, and coordination mechanisms, as well as by regulatory complexity and risk-transfer models that perpetuate dependency. These barriers reduce local leadership, inclusivity, agility, and the overall efficiency of humanitarian operations.

International actors need to progressively transfer authority, financing, and decision-making to nationally owned and locally led systems, guided by maturity models and capacity development, taking into account the role of regional hubs. This includes:

- Recognising and **promoting local leadership** in coordination and decision-making structures where contextually feasible, with mutual accountability mechanisms between international and local partners;
- **Aligning localisation actions and strategies** adapted to different contexts, clarifying roles, governance, ways of working, and accountability and assessing existing capacities and leadership readiness within humanitarian supply chains;
- **Co-designing tools, systems and frameworks** with local actors;
- Enabling **investment in local logistics infrastructure**, market development, and workforce capacity to enhance national capabilities;
- Establishing **inclusive financing and risk-sharing mechanisms**, including direct funding to local organisations where feasible, to strengthen sustainability and reduce dependency
- Using **agreed standards and approaches** to emergency response.