

WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Who instituted World Humanitarian Day?

A. The General Assembly determined in December 2008 that World Humanitarian Day should be marked on 19 August every year to “contribute to increasing public awareness about humanitarian work and the importance of international cooperation, and to commemorate all humanitarian and UN and associated personnel who have worked in the promotion of the humanitarian cause and those who have lost their lives in the course of duty.”

Q. 19 August is the same day as the Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad in 2003 that led to the death of 22 people including the Special Representative of the Secretary- General, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Is this day to commemorate that?

A. The day is also to put emphasis on current humanitarian needs and challenges worldwide, such as threats to aid workers by conflicting parties, challenges to reaching the people we are trying to assist, and the increasing complexity of the humanitarian environment due to, for example, food price shocks, global market turbulence, water shortages and climate change. Focus will be particularly placed on the people on whose behalf we work. The Day was designated in memory of those who died in 2003 but also the many other aid workers who have lost their lives in the humanitarian cause.

Q. Is World Humanitarian Day about the humanitarian aid workers themselves, or the humanitarian cause?

A. Both. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals agreed that there would be three main areas of focus for the commemoration of the Day in 2010:

- To draw attention to humanitarian needs worldwide;
- To explain, in simple, visual terms what humanitarian work entails;
- To remember those who have lost their lives in humanitarian service.

Q. Who does the campaign target?

A. As stipulated by the General Assembly, the campaign’s target audience is the global general public.

Q. Does this campaign specify which people or organizations call themselves humanitarian aid workers?

A. No – quite the opposite. The point is to show that the aid sector is truly global and encompasses people from diverse backgrounds and nationalities, working together under many different umbrellas but with a shared set of principles that guide their activities.

Q. How much aid money is the United Nations spending on this campaign?

A. None. The General Assembly instructed that the Day be marked “within existing resources” which means no additional staff or other items have been budgeted for the day.

Q. Why is there no World Humanitarian Day logo?

A. The day is not about individual agencies but about humanitarian work. Humanitarian organisations have agreed that this day is an opportunity to explain why and how we do the work that we do, to talk about the principles of humanitarianism, and how that is reflected in our joint endeavours.

Q. What events are already planned?

A. In both New York and Geneva commemorative events are being planned. It is our hope that there will be many events around the world. Last year the day was marked in 41 countries. We are hoping that many more Member States and humanitarian organisations will join us in commemorating this important day in 2010.

A few examples of events from World Humanitarian Day 2009:

- The European Commission used the day to focus attention on forgotten crises.
- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, commemorative events were held in Kinshasa, Bukavu, Goma and Bunia.
- In Ethiopia, the World Humanitarian Day film played in the main square in Addis Ababa.
- An OpEd written by the Emergency Relief Coordinator appeared in 41 newspapers around the world.
- In Nepal, the Minister of Home Affairs presided over a ceremony to commemorate World Humanitarian Day.
- Events were also held in 38 other countries around the world.

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