

21st International Humanitarian Conference
Toward the World Humanitarian Summit

Thursday-Friday, February 18-19, 2016

Webster University Geneva's Department of International Relations, together with the Webster Humanitarian Association, will hold the twenty-first International Humanitarian Conference (IHC) on February 18-19, 2016. In view of the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016, the conference will be entitled "Toward the World Humanitarian Summit." The aim of the IHC will be to discuss and to assess many of the key issues on the agenda of the WHS, and to propose next steps and solutions.

In early 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon launched an ambitious initiative to address the main humanitarian challenges of the present and future. For example, the number of people affected by crises has doubled over the past decade, and humanitarian requirements remain underfunded. Furthermore, there are currently thirty-three wars raging, and over 51 million people have been displaced as a result. Global trends such as climate change, economic inequality, the lack of food security, and resource scarcity, also have had major adverse effects. Climate change in particular is a "stress multiplier," destroying ecosystems, disrupting food production and water supply, and forcing people to move.

As a result of the UN-led initiative, an initial round of international consultations dealt with four key questions, which will serve as the primary themes of the conference:

- **Improving the Efficacy of Humanitarian Action**
- **Reducing Human Vulnerability and Managing Risk**
- **Transformation and Innovation in Humanitarian Action**
- **Meeting the Needs of People in Conflict Situations**

Related to these themes are other questions which arose in subsequent consultations, which could also be explored and addressed at the IHC, such as providing protection to people in conflict zones, identifying new avenues of cooperation between humanitarian agencies and other actors to enhance the resilience of people experiencing shocks and disruptions (e.g., wars and natural disasters), increasing operational efficiency, and ensuring there is no gap between humanitarian needs and available resources.

In addition, the consultations have highlighted the need to focus on people affected by crises, who are at the heart of humanitarian action, and the need to empower them in order for them to surmount the challenges they face and rebuild their lives in dignity. Overall, the discussions to date have underscored the importance of five areas: dignity, safety, resilience, partnerships and finance.

People, especially women and girls, should be empowered to cope and recover in a dignified way through humanitarian action. Second, concrete steps need to be taken to ensure people's safety through humanitarian action. This includes conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and prevention of human rights violations and politicization of humanitarian action. Third, humanitarian and development actors should work with other partners to improve people's resilience through preparedness, risk management, reduction of vulnerability, finding durable solutions and adapting to new challenges. Fourth, diverse and inclusive partnerships need to be established that are at the grassroots level and are people-driven, since they are the major stakeholders. They ultimately need to assume the leadership role and be responsible for innovative action. Finally, it is of utmost importance to ensure that sufficient financial resources are available from diverse sources, and utilized in an efficient manner to support local organizations and people.

The IHC has become a longstanding tradition at Webster University, held annually in Geneva, a city long regarded as the international humanitarian capital, with the largest concentration of international organizations and NGOs in the world. Since 1996, the IHC has been organized in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). As in previous years, the conference will be held under the auspices of the Government of the Republic and Canton of Geneva.

This event aims to bring together practitioners, scholars, members of the Geneva-based international community, and representatives of civil society to address the issues and challenges on the WHS agenda. For more information, please visit and register online: www.webster.ch/ihc. Should you have any questions relating to the IHC, contact directly the conference chair, Dr. Oreste Foppiani, at: foppiani@webster.ch.