

World Humanitarian Day

KEY MESSAGES

1.

The humanitarian community's ability to respond rapidly, effectively and predictably to crises, natural or man made, has improved beyond all recognition in the last 20 years.

This is due largely to the dedication of the many thousands of aid workers who have devoted their lives to humanitarian work, matching idealism with action, and principles with practice. Their selfless and non-political endeavours are vital for the necessary acceptance by all concerned that assistance to the needy should be provided impartially and neutrally, without reference to religion, gender, or race.

2.

This inaugural World Humanitarian Day is in part dedicated to the memory of all those aid workers who have lost their lives while bringing assistance to others, the majority of them from the communities they are trying to help.

Among these dedicated professionals is one of the great humanitarians, Sergio Vieira de Mello, who died on this day in 2003 alongside 21 other colleagues in the Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad. His memory should serve as an inspiration to all of us who carry out humanitarian work today, even as our assistance efforts in many places continue to be limited by increasingly violent frequent and targeted attacks on humanitarian staff.

3.

While much has been achieved, the challenges faced by many millions of people around the world are still formidable, and the need for principled and effective humanitarian action is greater than ever.

Humanitarian needs are growing faster than our ability to deal with them. Long-running and intractable conflicts are still exacting an unconscionable toll on civilians. Natural hazards are becoming increasingly severe and frequent. The international humanitarian community is facing new threats generated by the combined effects of global mega-trends: climate change, chronic poverty, the food and financial crises, water and energy scarcity, migration, population growth, urbanisation, pandemics.

