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WORLD  
HUMANITARIAN  
SUMMIT

ISTANBUL  
23-24 May 2016

## UPHOLD THE NORMS THAT SAFEGUARD HUMANITY

### HIGH-LEVEL LEADERS' ROUNDTABLE

Core Responsibility Two of the Agenda for Humanity

**“Even wars have limits. Minimizing human suffering and protecting civilians requires strengthening compliance with international law.”**

**Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit**

#### BACKGROUND

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit will take place from 23 to 24 May 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey. Three years of extensive consultations reaching more than 23,000 people in 153 countries clearly called for change in how the international community addresses humanitarian need and suffering and called for a renewed commitment to humanity. Istanbul is the moment to demonstrate global unity and solidarity to prevent and end suffering, and to take all steps necessary to make humanity the driver of decision-making and collective action.

In his report for the World Humanitarian Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General calls upon Member States and other stakeholders to accept and act upon five core responsibilities that he believes are critical to delivering better for humanity. His Agenda for Humanity outlines the key actions and strategic shifts necessary to deliver on these responsibilities. The Secretary-General urges global leaders at the Summit to commit to taking the Agenda forward.



This should be a framework for action, change and mutual accountability to measure progress over the next three years and beyond.

The High-Level Leaders' Roundtable entitled "Uphold the Norms that Safeguard Humanity" is an opportunity to commit to taking forward Core Responsibility Two of the Agenda for Humanity.

## CONTEXT

Every day, civilians are deliberately or indiscriminately injured and killed. Airstrikes rip families apart. Humanitarian and healthcare workers are kidnapped and killed, medical facilities and ambulances looted and destroyed as a tactic of warfare. Access for humanitarian workers is being arbitrarily denied and obstructed to exacerbate suffering. Women and girls are abused and sold as sexual slaves. Schools, hospitals and places of worship are regularly bombed. Monuments that have stood for millennia as emblems of culture and civilization are deliberately reduced to rubble. Civilians are being displaced at levels not seen since World War II.

The brutality of today's armed conflicts and the utter lack of respect for the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law threaten to unravel 150 years of achievements, and risks leading to an era of war without limits. Flouting the most basic rules governing the conduct of war has become contagious, creating further opportunities to reinterpret and blur their application. The failure to demand and promote respect for our shared norms, to enforce the law, and to support or cooperate with national and international monitoring and accountability mechanisms all contribute to the erosion of the rule of law and bring about profound human suffering.

This High-Level Leaders' Roundtable offers the opportunity to recommit to protecting civilians and the human rights of all by respecting the rules States have already agreed upon. Leaders will reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that the centrality of protection and preserving the humanity and dignity of affected people in all circumstances drive our individual and collective action, while also focusing on ways to advance specific aspects of the Agenda for Humanity.

## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this High-Level Leaders' Roundtable is to mobilize resources and exert influence as part of a global effort to reduce human suffering and enhance the protection of civilians, with a particular focus on reducing the humanitarian impact of the conduct of hostilities and enabling humanitarian action and health care.

In line with the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity, the roundtable will address the following questions and seek concrete commitments from leaders on issues including:

- *How can Member States and other stakeholders generate global support and commitment to strengthen respect for international humanitarian and human rights law?*
- *What commitments can be made to ensure populations in need receive unimpeded and timely humanitarian assistance?*
- *What measures must be taken to minimise civilian harm and protect the humanitarian and medical missions in the conduct of hostilities?*

In answering these questions, leaders at the roundtable are expected to offer commitments



which operationalize the Agenda for Humanity, for instance through systematic tracking, effective fact-finding, speaking out on violations, adhering and encouraging accession to key treaties and international instruments, adopting robust laws and policies, sharing best practices, monitoring progress, and engaging in regular multilateral dialogue. Through joint action, change and mutual accountability, leaders can end and prevent violations, and significantly reduce human suffering

## FORMAT AND STRUCTURE\*

The High-Level Leaders' Roundtable will be convened and moderated by a Chair and supported by a Rapporteur. The roundtable will result in a Roundtable Summary which will include the individual and collective commitments made by participants and a way forward. The Roundtable Summary will contribute to the Chair's Summary of the World Humanitarian Summit.

This High-Level Leaders' Roundtable will last for two hours, with interventions from between 35 and 50 global leaders. Each leader may be accompanied by two advisors. Leaders will speak from assigned seats (roundtable format) and their interventions should not exceed three minutes. The roundtable will be open to media and be broadcast and webcast live. The time and location for this session will be made known shortly.

## REGISTRATION AND ROUNDTABLE PREPARATIONS

The objective of this roundtable will be for Member States and other stakeholders to announce commitments to make tangible progress against the recommendations under Core Responsibility Two of the Agenda for Humanity. Please register your interest in the roundtable and the level of participation you envisage for this event at [leadersroundtables@whsummit.org](mailto:leadersroundtables@whsummit.org) by March 11, 2016.

The WHS secretariat will contact interested Member States and other stakeholders over the next two months to work together to prepare each High-Level Leaders' Roundtable, including by identifying and securing concrete commitments aimed at making progress against each of the five Core Responsibilities of the Agenda for Humanity. This interaction will build upon and expand existing partnerships with Member States and stakeholders.

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\*The format and structure of the roundtable are subject to modification.