

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 assistance activities worldwide and the importance of international cooperation in this regard, as well as to honour 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 cause 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 SRSg, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Is this day to commemorate that?

A. The GA chose that date as an appropriate one and the focus this, the first year, will be primarily on commemorating those whose lives have been lost while engaged in humanitarian operations at a time when humanitarian work is becoming more dangerous every year. But the purpose of the day is also to put emphasis on current humanitarian needs and challenges, and particularly on the beneficiaries on whose behalf we work.

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

A. Both. The IASC principals agreed to there being three main areas of focus for the commemoration of the Day in 2009: (i) to honour those who have lost their lives in humanitarian service; (ii) to acknowledge the ongoing work of humanitarian staff around the globe; (iii) to draw attention to humanitarian needs worldwide. For 2010 and beyond it is anticipated that the Day will be used to focus on particular humanitarian themes.

Q. Who is the campaign targeted at?

A. As stipulated by the General Assembly, the target audience of the campaign is the general public, both in donor countries and in aid recipient countries.

Q. How much aid money is the UN 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 does World Humanitarian Day not have a logo on it?

A. The IASC principals requested UN OCHA to coordinate the humanitarian community in its marking of the day and to raise awareness of the inaugural day through the UN Secretariat’s networks, including the Department of Public Information and UN Information Centres, through UN agency distribution mechanisms, and via NGO networks. However the day does not ‘belong’ to the UN or any other agency or organization.

Q. What can other agencies and the general public do to support World Humanitarian Day?

A. Help ensure that colleagues and members of the general public are made aware of the Day, through dissemination of the WHD leaflet and the one-minute film; using the key messages as points for senior political figures and officials to use in any press interviews or encounters organised specifically for the day; disseminating the information provided as widely as possible through formal and informal networks; lobbying major international and national broadcast networks to show the version of the film incorporating the statement of the Secretary-General; where possible encouraging humanitarian workers to speak to the press about their work; organising public events featuring humanitarian work.

Q. What events are already planned?

A. This year, a commemorative event is being organized in cooperation with the Swiss authorities in the Parc des Bastions in Geneva.

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As of 2010, the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation will be honouring the memory and legacy of Sergio Vieira de Mello by establishing an Annual Prize in his name to be awarded to individuals, institutions or communities in recognition of their outstanding and unique work undertaken to achieve peaceful reconciliation between peoples and parties in conflict. Beginning in 2010, the winner/winners of the Prize will be announced on World Humanitarian Day.

