

MEDIA RELEASE

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REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR, ACADEMIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY GATHER IN GENEVA TO LAUNCH AN INNOVATIVE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT: THE HUMANITARIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA

The Mayor of Geneva, Rémy Pagani, will welcome around one hundred Humanitarian stakeholders at Palais Eynard on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 to kick-start the *Humanitarian Encyclopedia – an interactive platform to better understand humanitarian concepts and practices*.

Geneva, June 1, 2017 – By launching the Humanitarian Encyclopedia in Geneva, the Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action (CERAH) echoes a statement of the Geneva State Council¹ about the challenges that characterize our century. Faced with the complexity of contemporary crises and the diversity and growing number of actors who respond to these, **International Geneva** has a facilitating role to play in addressing the need for more synergies and a structured exchange of experience.

A dynamic repository of knowledge in humanitarian action

The humanitarian sector is transforming globally. “Traditional” actors expand their activities and many new actors and individuals engage in crises. These humanitarians contradict themselves sometimes, adding to confusion in already demanding environments. Pressures of an expanding humanitarian burden, including protracted crises of a massive scale, are strongly challenging the humanitarian sector. Strong ties between emergency response, reconstruction, rehabilitation and development seem to become ever more necessary, though operationalization is a source of tension. Finally, the sector is witnessing a multitude of initiatives for standardization, accountability and coordination. These accompany the impetus for professionalization but, at the same time, make the sector ever more complex. **In that respect, the quest for a better quality of humanitarian response is a major challenge.**

The project is a “living²” encyclopedia of humanitarian action that engages a wide community of humanitarian and academic partners to support the growing ranks of humanitarian stakeholders in their strategic thinking, design and implementation of humanitarian responses and bring about more reflective, effective and innovative humanitarian action. At the center of the project, a digital platform will serve as open-access space to capture and confront existing knowledge, access different resources and research findings, and to generate new learnings.

After a dynamic preparation period, the foundations are laid and the Humanitarian Encyclopedia is ready to be launched. CERAH and its partners (academics, humanitarian organizations and related networks) will gather in Geneva from June 13 to 15, 2017, to mark the entry into the project’s launch phase with three days of working groups.

A formal reception hosted by the Mayor of Geneva Rémy Pagani – at Palais Eynard on Tuesday, June 13, at 18:30 – followed by a welcome address by the Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Nations Valentin Zellweger, will underline, more than just symbolically, the importance of this project for International Geneva. ...

¹ Rapport du 25 juin 2013 du groupe permanent conjoint Confédération Canton sur les priorités de la Genève Internationale, p. 16

² The term “living” Encyclopedia refers to the fact that it will be in continuous evolution, that it will be a co-creation and crowd-sourcing tool for all those concerned by humanitarian action and that it will be an online platform fostering debate and interaction

The launch of this collaborative project represents a historical opportunity – for Switzerland, International Geneva and its numerous institutions – to mobilize the humanitarian sector and support its transition into the 21st century by developing a new universal tool: the living Encyclopedia of Humanitarian Action.

Solidly anchored in its humanitarian tradition, International Geneva has a universal outlook to the future and therefore naturally comes as the host of this project.

A project with numerous beneficiaries all around the world

The Humanitarian Encyclopedia will benefit a wide community of stakeholders, e.g. humanitarian organizations, politicians, donors, researchers/academics and affected populations. This project has the potential to support the necessary evolution of the humanitarian sector towards a better implication of local and regional actors, thus improving the capacity and performance of the humanitarian system. *“We will stimulate exchange, dispel myths, bring further clarity, prompt reflections, allow the sharing of experiences to generate “lessons learned” across organizations and disciplines, inspire co-creation, and ultimately guide and empower a broad community of humanitarian stakeholders to be more responsive to the challenges of our century,”* highlights Prof Doris Schopper, CERAH Director.

The media are warmly invited to the launch reception which is followed by an aperitif. The welcome message by the Mayor will be in French, all other speakers will present in English.

Date and place: Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 18:30

Palais Eynard, rue de la Croix-Rouge 4, Geneva

For more information and to obtain a list of potential interviewees, please contact:

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CERAH

The Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action (CERAH) is a joint centre of the University of Geneva and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID). As an internationally renowned academic platform, CERAH offers a wide range of post-graduate qualifications for humanitarian professionals, develops a research portfolio in humanitarian studies and strengthens reflection on humanitarian action.

Based in International Geneva and reasserting humanitarian principles, CERAH’s mission is to develop a high-quality educational and research offer in humanitarian action. This approach is solidly anchored in strategic partnerships with, among others, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Pictures provided



#1: logo Humanitarian Encyclopedia



#2: logo CERAH



#3: illustration *How do you speak humanitarian*