



CONCEPT NOTE

Harnessing the Power of the Private Sector for More Effective Humanitarian Action

OVERVIEW

Humanitarian aid is at a crossroads, and greater collaboration is needed to address growing global crises. The private sector is an increasingly important partner in humanitarian response, now accounting for more than one-fifth of global humanitarian financing - over \$7.3 billion in 2023 alone. Beyond financial contributions, businesses play a critical role in logistics, communications, cash transfers, and the distribution of aid. However, many private sector efforts remain uncoordinated with humanitarian actors, limiting their full potential to deliver impact at scale.

This session will focus on private sector partnerships for co-developing solutions to support humanitarian action, moving beyond traditional funding models toward strategic, solution-driven collaboration. Panellists from Amazon Web Services, DHL Group, and Desafío Levantemos Chile will share real-world examples of innovative partnerships that have enhanced disaster preparedness, accelerated response efforts, and supported long-term recovery. Through interactive discussions, participants will explore how public-private sector partnerships can be harnessed to co-develop and scale solutions that drive more effective, locally-led humanitarian action.

DATE AND TIME

Monday, 24 March 2025
15:00 – 16:30 Geneva (UTC+1)

LOCATION

[International Conference Center Geneva \(CICG\)](#), Plénière B

REGISTRATION

Advance registration is required.
[Please register online here.](#)

CONTACT

For more information, email
connectingbusiness@un.org.

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SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate how private sector actors contribute beyond financial assistance, leveraging their expertise in logistics, technology, infrastructure, and local networks to enhance humanitarian action.
2. Identify best practices and approaches for effective partnerships with the private sector, showcasing how businesses can co-develop and implement solutions that improve disaster preparedness, accelerate response efforts, and support long-term community recovery

PARTICIPANTS

Participants from the humanitarian, private sector, development, government, and academic communities are invited to this session, which will have a particular focus on how to strengthen collaboration in crisis response through technology, innovation and expertise from some of the leading private sector companies in humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery. The session aims to facilitate knowledge sharing, promote trust between public and private sector actors, and explore practical ways businesses can contribute to humanitarian action.

PROGRAMME

15:00-15:15 Welcome and Opening Remarks: Partnering with the Private Sector During Crises

- **Sarah Muscroft**, Chief – Response Support Branch, OCHA

15:15-16:15 Panel Discussion

- **Sarah Hengeveld**, Head of United Nations Business, Amazon Web Services
- **Kim Melville**, Vice President of Humanitarian Affairs and Sustainable Aviation, DHL Group
- **Askaan Wohlt Zwanzger**, Emergencies Director, Desafío Levantemos Chile

Moderator: Kareem Elbayar, Programme Coordinator, OCHA-UNDP Connecting Business initiative

16:15-16:30 Q&A and Closing Remarks

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Sarah Muscroft

Chief – Response Support Branch, OCHA

Sarah Muscroft was appointed as Chief of OCHA's Response Support Branch in September 2023. Sarah brings 30 years of humanitarian and development experience in operations and policy work on protection, transition, resilience, disaster risk management and the triple nexus in field operations and at Headquarters.

Sarah has worked with OCHA for 22 years, gaining experience across different operations ranging from protracted complex emergencies, slow-onset crises, and quick on-set disasters. She has served in management roles as either Deputy or Head of Office in five country operations: Sierra Leone (2002-2004), Ethiopia (2008), Haiti (2010), Jordan (2015-2018) and oPt (2019-2022). While based at Headquarters with the Policy Branch and the Coordination Division, Sarah worked on range of policy issues from the protection of civilians to transition and resilience working in collaboration with UN and IASC partners.

Prior to joining OCHA, Sarah spent a decade working with NGOs in field and headquarters including Concern, Save the Children, and the British Red Cross. Sarah began her professional career in the north of Ghana working on an education program with the Government. Sarah holds a Master of Philosophy in Anthropology and Development from the University of Cambridge.



Sarah Hengeveld

Head of United Nations Business, Amazon Web Services

Sarah Hengeveld is Head of Amazon Web Services United Nations Business. A seasoned sales and marketing leader with a successful history assisting global organisations to reach their most ambitious goals with cutting-edge technologies, Sarah is passionate about leveraging technology for good and dedicated to making a difference to the lives of others through her work. Sarah holds a BA in Modern Foreign Languages from the University of Southampton.



Kim Melville

Vice President of Humanitarian Affairs and Sustainable Aviation, DHL Group

Kim Melville holds significant experience in the logistics and aviation sectors, currently serving as the VP of Humanitarian Affairs and Sustainable Aviation at DHL. Previously, Kim held the position of Senior Director of Global Airside and Standards while also leading the Health and Safety Committee at DHL Express. Additionally, Kim has experience as Network Airside Manager for Europe and Ramp/Sort Manager at DHL Aviation. Kim is an alumnus of the Royal Agricultural University, with studies conducted from 1982 to 1984, and served in the UK's Royal Air Force from 1986 to 1987.



Askaan Wohlt Zwanzger

Emergencies Director, Desafío Levantemos Chile

Askaan Wohlt Zwanzger has worked at the Desafío Levantemos Chile Foundation since 2010 and specializes in reconstruction and support for communities affected by natural disasters. He started his work after the mega earthquake measuring 8.8 on the Richter scale, which destroyed three entire regions of Chile, coordinating the reconstruction of more than 40 schools that had been destroyed by the earthquake. After 13 years of work, he has participated in reconstruction processes in more than 20 disasters in Chile, Peru, Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

In Askaan's free time he enjoys trekking and camping in natural areas. He also maintains a garden and raises Araucana chickens in his house.



Kareem Elbayer

Programme Coordinator, OCHA-UNDP Connecting Business initiative (CBI)

Kareem Elbayer leads the Private Sector Unit at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and also serves as Programme Coordinator of the Connecting Business initiative, a partnership between OCHA and the United Nations Development Programme.

Previously, Kareem held positions as the Partnerships Manager for OCHA's Centre for Humanitarian Data (2018-2021) and Technology Partnerships Advisor for the Director of OCHA's Corporate Programmes Division (2016-2018). He also served as a Programme Manager for the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Iraq (2013-2016), overseeing a portfolio of law reform and emergency humanitarian relief projects in Baghdad and Erbil. Prior to joining the UN, Kareem worked as a Legal Advisor at the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, specializing in freedom of association in the Arab world.

Kareem holds a Juris Doctor and a Masters in International Affairs from the George Washington University in Washington, DC.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

OCHA-UNDP Connecting Business initiative (CBI)



Established and jointly managed by the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) and the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP), CBI is dedicated working with local businesses to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. CBI Member Networks are independent chambers of commerce, trade

federations, business associations and private foundations that are ready, willing and able to lead private sector disaster management in their countries. CBI empowers local businesses to work hand-in-hand with governments, civil society, humanitarian organizations and affected people to alleviate human suffering while building more resilient societies. Learn more at connectingbusiness.org or email connectingbusiness@un.org.