



General Assembly

GA/11038

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-fifth General Assembly
Plenary
66th & 67th Meetings (AM & PM)

SURGE IN DEMAND FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN HIGH-RISK ENVIRONMENTS INFORMS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON STRENGTHENING UN DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

Assembly Adopts Resolutions on Haiti, Humanitarian Personnel Safety, Assistance to Palestinian People, Minimizing Effects of Chernobyl Disaster

The surge in demand for humanitarian assistance in often high-risk environments — geared to support the growing numbers affected by the increase in frequency, scale and scope of emergencies — required effective, sustained and well-financed intervention by the international community, said delegates today during the General Assembly's annual wide-ranging debate on strengthening the United Nations coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

The meeting culminated in the consensus adoption of six draft resolutions spanning a broad agenda, from enhancing the safety and security of humanitarian personnel to enhancing assistance to the Palestinian people, to the international response to the massive earthquake in Haiti and the Chernobyl disaster.

During the day-long debate, many delegates recalled the earthquake that had struck Haiti on 12 January, devastating the island and affecting millions of people. Several noted that the humanitarian situation in Haiti was now worsening as Hurricane Tomas and a rapidly expanding cholera epidemic battered the island. "Haiti needs our renewed and continued support," one speaker said, calling on the Assembly to adopt a draft resolution to that effect.

By adopting a text focused on humanitarian assistance for Haiti, the Assembly noted the huge loss of human life and the large number of people wounded and affected by the severe impacts of the disaster on, among other areas, food security and the education, shelter and health, as well as of the continued needs arising from the vulnerability of the affected populations. It also recognized the continued need for international support to address the humanitarian emergency in Haiti, and called on Member States, the United Nations system and relevant humanitarian organizations to continue to cooperate with the Haitian Government for the provision of humanitarian assistance to the affected population.

In a related resolution, the Assembly expressed its deep regret at the number of persons killed, missing and negatively affected as a result of the hurricane, which struck the islands nations on 30 and 31 October and Haiti on 5 and 6 November, and appealed to all Member States and all organs and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as international financial institutions and development agencies, to provide speedy support for the relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and assistance effort for Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other affected countries. It encouraged the Governments of those countries, in conjunction with relevant partners, to develop further strategies aimed at preventing and mitigating natural disasters.

By a text on strengthening the Organization's humanitarian assistance, the Assembly

expressed its deep concern about the humanitarian impact of current global challenges and crises, and emphasized the need to mobilize adequate, predictable, timely and flexible resources for such assistance based on and in proportion to assessed needs, with a view to ensuring fuller coverage of all sectors and across humanitarian emergencies, and recognizing, in that regard, the achievements of the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Recognizing the largely civilian character of relief work, the Assembly condemned the increasing number of deliberate threats and violent attacks against humanitarian personnel and facilities and the negative implications for the provision of assistance to populations in need. It recognized the high numbers of persons affected by humanitarian emergencies and the importance of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, "which include a vital legal framework for the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, including the provision of humanitarian assistance".

Several speakers today expressed serious concern about the targeting of relief personnel, especially in high-threat environments around the world, which they felt required security investments commensurate with programme needs. By the terms of a related resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed the need to ensure adequate levels of safety and security for such personnel, including locally recruited staff, which constitutes one of the Organization's underlying duties. And, it urged all States to make every effort to ensure the full and effective implementation of the relevant principles and rules of international law related to the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

Under an item on special economic assistance to individual countries or regions, the Assembly moved a consensus text reaffirming the international community's commitment to support and assist the Palestinian people. By that resolution, the Assembly expressed its grave concern at the difficult living conditions and humanitarian situation affecting the Palestinian people, in particular women and children, throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. It also called on the international donor community to expedite the delivery of pledged assistance to the Palestinian people to meet their urgent needs.

The representative of Belgium, who introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the European Union, said that sustained international donor support was essential for Palestinian State-building efforts, to strengthen the Palestinian economy and to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people. His delegation reiterated its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid and other resources into the occupied Gaza Strip.

By the terms of the text on strengthening international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, the Assembly expressed profound concern at the ongoing effects of the consequences of the accident on the lives and health of people, in particular children, in the affected areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as in other affected countries.

Stressing the significance of the upcoming twenty-fifth anniversary of the accident the Assembly welcomed the initiative of Ukraine, co-sponsored by Belarus and the Russian Federation, to convene the International Conference "Twenty-five Years after the Chernobyl Disaster: Safety for the Future" in April 2011 in Kyiv. It also requested the Assembly President to convene, on 26 April 2011, a special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the catastrophe.

Ukraine's representative introduced the draft resolution on strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (document A/65/L.25).

Speaking on behalf of the European Union, Belgium's representative introduced the draft resolutions on Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (document A/65/L.31) and assistance to the Palestinian People (document A/65/L.46).

Sweden's representative introduced the draft resolution on strengthening emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document A/65/L.45), while Brazil's delegate introduced

the draft on Humanitarian assistance, emergency relief, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction in response to the humanitarian emergency in Haiti, including the devastating effects of the earthquake (document A/65/L.47).

The representative of Saint Lucia introduced the draft on Emergency and reconstruction assistance to Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries affected by Hurricane Tomas (document A/65/L.48).

Also speaking today were the representatives of Yemen (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Belgium (on behalf of the European Union), United States, United Arab Emirates, Honduras, Russian Federation, South Africa, Cuba, Pakistan, Philippines, Japan, Kazakhstan, China, Belarus, Switzerland, Australia, Monaco, Mexico, India (also on behalf of Sweden), Colombia, New Zealand, Chile, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Liechtenstein and Canada.

The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations also spoke, as well as representatives of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Speaking in explanation of position were the representatives of Israel and Belgium (on behalf of the European Union).

Japan's representative spoke in a point of order after action.

The Permanent Observer of Palestine spoke in general statement after action.

The General Assembly will reconvene at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 16 December, to consider the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict.

Background

The General Assembly met this morning to discuss strengthening the effective coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including economic assistance.

For that discussion, the Assembly had before it the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) report of the Secretary-General (document A/65/290), which covers activities from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010. In that period, the Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated \$448.3 million from the Fund to implement life-saving activities in 52 countries and territories. Funding was provided to 15 humanitarian agencies, many of which carried out their programmes in conjunction with non-governmental partners. Conflict-related emergencies accounted for \$294 million, which was a 12 per cent increase from the previous year. The Fund's largest allocation for any natural disaster in its history was made during the current cycle, with \$38.5 million allocated to the Haiti earthquake response.

Within the area of humanitarian financing, the Secretary-General states in the report that the Fund — as the primary contributor of flash appeals — had continued to provide a rapid and reliable source of financing, with the flexibility to respond to a diverse and challenging range of humanitarian emergencies. In that regard, the Fund fulfilled its mandate by helping to ensure a timely and predictable response to humanitarian emergencies, whether in response to a sudden, devastating disaster, such as the earthquake in Haiti, or a complex protracted crisis, such as the ongoing situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In addition, the Fund established itself as an important tool that brought consistency, reliability and equity to protracted conflict-related response situations, by addressing gaps in existing responses, and as a source of funding for chronically under-funded emergencies.

Moreover, the report says the Fund acted as a catalyst for cluster-based coordination, encouraged broader engagement of non-United Nations stakeholders and affirmed the United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinator role. Further, its ability to adapt and improve was demonstrated by the successful incremental changes implemented since the two-year evaluation. Initiatives including the revised Secretary-General's bulletin, the umbrella letter of understanding

and the performance and accountability framework had made the Fund more effective and more accountable. The forthcoming five-year evaluation would provide a further opportunity for the Fund to develop in accordance with evolving needs and demands.

Contributors had shown great resolve in continuing to support the Fund's life-saving humanitarian work, even in the most challenging of financial contexts. The report says the Fund enjoyed broad support from the Member States that created it, but notes that continued commitment was needed to maintain that momentum. Finally, the Secretary-General notes that governance and performance accountability mechanisms were further regulated during the reporting period.

Also before the Assembly was the report of the Secretary General on assistance to the Palestinian people (document A/65/77), covering activities from May 2009 to April 2010. The report describes efforts made by the United Nations agencies, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to support the Palestinian population and institutions. The Palestinian Authority issued its governmental programme outlining a forward-looking agenda, including security and institutional reforms, to further strengthen the institutions of a Palestinian State. To that end, the United Nations reoriented its work to support the Palestinian State-building efforts as a critical complement to the continued response to humanitarian needs.

The report also states that the overall socio-economic and political situation remained challenging, despite notable economic growth in the West Bank prompted by Palestinian efforts and Israel's easing of closures. Intensive efforts by the international community, however, did not result in the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations or Palestinian unity. The political, administrative and economic rift deepened between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and popular protests took place in the Occupied Palestinian Territory on a number of occasions. Donors disbursed approximately \$1.35 billion to finance the recurrent budget of the Palestinian Authority.

Citing other developments, the report notes that in November 2009, the Government of Israel announced a 10-month moratorium on the construction of the West Bank settlements, excluding East Jerusalem, which the report says fell short of Israel's road map obligations to freeze all settlement activity. In Gaza, the continued closure had contributed to a "de-development" process and the erosion of the private sector. Key elements of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) remained unfulfilled, in particular, a durable and sustainable ceasefire. Further, despite recent positive steps to allow the entry of materials for some United Nations projects, including glass, aluminium and wood, and a limited variety of goods for the private sector, Gaza's needs remained largely unmet.

The report notes that humanitarian and development efforts were an essential component of the creation of a Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution, but were no substitute for the progress on the political track. To that end, the United Nations would continue working towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions, and an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the establishment of a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, existing side-by-side in peace with a secure Israel.

Also before the Committee was the report of the Secretary General on the Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document A/65/82), which covers activities from June 2009 to May 2010. The report describes the major humanitarian trends and challenges over the past years, and analyses two thematic issues of current concern: operating in high-risk environments, and vulnerability and its implications for humanitarian response. The report also provides an overview of current key processes to improve humanitarian coordination. It concludes with recommendations for further strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. Among them, Member States are urged to promote greater respect of the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and independence and to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian personnel and supplies to affected communities. In addition, Member States are called upon to maintain a diversity of humanitarian funding channels, strengthen efforts to address sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, and strengthen the new international humanitarian order, among other recommendations.

The Assembly then turned its attention to the Secretary-General's report on Humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for selected countries and regions (document A/65/335), which covers the period from November 2009 to July 2010. The report provides updates and analyses the current challenges encountered in the delivery of both humanitarian relief and rehabilitation assistance provided by the United Nations and its partners to Haiti and El Salvador, which were both affected by natural disasters. The information provided in sections A and B of the report was based largely on the six-month report of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the response to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti, introduced during the humanitarian affairs segment of the 2010 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), held in New York.

The above-mentioned section of the report says that the humanitarian response in the immediate aftermath of the devastating earthquake was led by the Haitian population, followed by the international humanitarian organizations established in the country prior to the disaster, which began to provide assistance within the first 72 hours. However, many humanitarian actors present in Haiti prior to the earthquake themselves suffered losses, in terms of staff killed and injured. An initial \$575 million six-month flash appeal was prepared within 72 hours to cover the immediate needs of 3 million affected people, and was revised upwards to \$1.5 billion later that week. At the end of August, the appeal was 67 per cent funded, with another \$18 million pledged. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), in coordination with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the logistics cluster and other key partners, established a "one stop shop" for humanitarian actors seeking the assistance of the Mission's military and police capacities.

The humanitarian community's response was a considerable achievement, the report says, and represented a major test of the capacity, resources, response readiness and modus operandi of the global humanitarian community. The devastation was compounded by underlying vulnerabilities, including systemic poverty, structural challenges, weak governance and almost annual exposure to floods, hurricanes and related disasters. Within the first six months, approximately 4 million people had received food assistance, emergency shelter materials had been distributed to 1.5 million people, safe water made available to 1.2 million, and 1 million benefited from cash-for-work programmes.

Despite significant achievements, there was a perception of a leadership/coordination deficit in Haiti ruining the initial phase of the response. The report goes on to outline the findings and lessons learned. First and foremost was the need to better understand the various actors outside the humanitarian context, including military entities and the private sector.

Regarding early recovery activities, the report notes that the United Nations country team had worked in consultation with the Haitian Government to implement and integrate various programmes. In order to be successful, the humanitarian response in Haiti must dovetail with the recovery and reconstruction efforts, having clear priorities and benchmarks. The establishment of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission was an important step in that regard. The importance of providing people with the right incentives to move out of the camps and return to their communities and neighbourhoods and the importance of participation were also among key findings. Further, the report states that the Organization must become better at talking and listening to communities and involving them as partners. It says disaster risk reduction must be addressed early in the humanitarian and recovery processes.

Turning to El Salvador, the report highlights the humanitarian, emergency relief and rehabilitation assistance provided in the wake of Hurricane Ida, which caused severe flooding and landslides in seven of the country's 14 geographical areas and resulted in 199 casualties. In total, more than 120,000 people were affected, with some 15,000 fleeing to emergency shelters during the initial weeks following the disaster. Post-disaster needs assessments indicated that damage and losses amounted to approximately \$240 million, representing 1.1 per cent of the country's gross national product (GNP). This included \$89.4 million in losses associated with infrastructure damage, as well as a slowdown in productive and social activities. El Salvador also suffered \$42.5 million in agricultural losses, with heavy damage to irrigation systems and losses in terms of crops such as coffee, sugar cane and red beans. The housing sector registered losses and damage totalling some \$18.4 million, with 20,000 homes destroyed, severely damaged or at risk.

The Government estimated that \$343 million was needed to ensure the recovery of affected areas.

Overall, the United Nations system invested \$16 million to provide assistance to more than 120,000 people in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida and to support the Government of El Salvador in coordinating the humanitarian response in key areas: food assistance, education, temporary shelter, agriculture, health care, water and sanitation, coordination and early recovery.

Unfortunately, the report says, the overall donor funding of the appeal stalled at 46 per cent (\$6.7 million). As is often the case in similar emergencies in Latin America, the Fund was the single largest funding source, representing 37 per cent of all resources mobilized by the flash appeal and approximately 14 per cent of the overall international humanitarian funding received by El Salvador.

Assistance was also provided in the areas of food assistance, agriculture, health care, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and protection and temporary housing. In order to strengthen the national civil protection system the United Nations supported five technical committees in preparing and updating their preparedness and response plans. In an effort to strengthen local institutions, the Organization also supported the establishment of municipal civil protection commissions in the most affected regions — Verapaz, Tepetitán and Guadalupe — to strengthen emergency response and preparedness capacities relating to first aid, the legal aspects of civil protection, emergency management, inter-institutional communication and the management of temporary shelters.

Finally, in addressing the disaster risk reduction, the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction had been advising the national civil protection directorate of El Salvador in developing a risk reduction plan and strengthening its national disaster risk reduction platform, in close consultation with the Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America. The United Nations country team devoted considerable effort to the integration of risk management into a national urban and rural poverty programme. In two municipalities, the initiative built the capacities of partner institutions in terms of risk management and prevention and emergency response. It will be replicated in 25 other municipalities.

Also before the Assembly was the Secretary-General's report on Safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel (document A/65/344), describing the security environment in which the United Nations and associated personnel work. It includes the latest information on measures taken to implement a new strategic vision for the Department and strengthen the unified security structure through well-designed programmes and policies.

In the report, the Secretary-General says he remains deeply disturbed by the trend of politically and criminally motivated targeting of humanitarian relief workers, citing frequent threats from terrorism, armed conflict, crime, abduction and harassment. Specifically, he expresses great distress over the deaths in 2009 of 31 United Nations civilian personnel from violence and 14 from safety-related incidents. In that context, he highlights the benefit of having a refined approach to information collection and analysis, urging that fact-based, security risk management decisions be made.

Managing risks in high-threat environments around the world required security investments commensurate with programme needs, he says, calling on States to recognize that the security management system must be focused on enabling critical programme activities. He also reiterates that States, both hosts and donors, support the "Saving Lives Together" framework and requests that those that had not yet done so ratify or accede to the Operational Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

The Assembly also had before it the Secretary-General's report on Humanitarian assistance and reconstruction of Liberia (document A/65/357), covering the period from September 2008 to August 2010, which provides a status update and an analysis of the current challenges to the delivery of both humanitarian relief and rehabilitation assistance by the United Nations and its partners to Liberia. In particular, the report looks at major developments in consolidating peace and

security, revitalizing the economy and strengthening governance and the rule of law, as well as major developments in food security, disaster risk reduction, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Also before the Assembly was the Secretary-General's report on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development (document A/65/356), which provides an overview of the occurrence of disasters associated with natural hazards and highlights emerging trends, their implications for humanitarian action and key challenges. In 2009, says the report, 328 such disasters affected approximately 113 million people and caused more than 10,000 deaths worldwide. Floods were the most common type of disaster recorded, followed by storms and landslides. The report states that the risk of disasters had clearly been rising, owing to more frequent and intense weather-related hazards and greater numbers of people living in exposed coastal and urban areas. Climate change was a major driver of disaster risk.

In order to respond more effectively and equitably, the report says, the humanitarian system must undergo a shift from its current "shock-driven" approach to one that is more needs-based and vulnerability-led.

From June to October 2009, the report finds, major climate-related hazards recorded included devastating floods in several West African countries; flooding caused by cyclones in Southern Africa; three consecutive typhoons in South-East Asia, particularly in the Philippines; landslides and flooding in northern Myanmar; and a third consecutive year of drought in the north-eastern region of the Syrian Arab Republic. Geological hazard events included a tsunami triggered by a submarine earthquake in American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga and an earthquake off the coast of Chile. Epidemics recorded included the emergence and spread of a novel influenza, the A (H1N1) virus.

On 12 January, the multilateral response to the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti, killing more than 220,000 people and affecting some 2 million, was rapid and large-scale, says the report. However, there were clear lessons to be learned, including the need for stronger engagement of the international humanitarian community with civil society and local authorities. In addition, says the report, the operation in Haiti showed that further attention should be given to risk reduction and emergency preparedness and the identification of the most vulnerable. Considerable challenges remained in Haiti, the report adds.

Another critical concern in a post-disaster setting addressed in the report is strengthening the transition from relief to development. Experience had increasingly shown that, if adequately managed, the post-disaster recovery phase provided an important opportunity to reduce vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian assistance. Examples of productive work in this area were "cash-for-work" programmes in post-cyclone Bangladesh and post-quake Haiti. While effective transition remains limited by gaps in strategy, capacity and financing, steady progress was made during the reporting period to improve the effectiveness of the system in a transition context. Additionally, the strategy gap was being addressed through a number of initiatives, including an Inter-Agency Standing Committee Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery.

The report addresses the need to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance through improved use of information and analysis. Relevant, timely and reliable information being integral to humanitarian action in both natural disasters and complex emergencies, the ability of the international community to collect, process, analyse, disseminate and act on key information was fundamental to disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Additionally, strengthening the use of vulnerability and climate information in humanitarian action was essential, says the report, and a functioning and effective information management system and information management strategy were key components of response preparedness. Credible, multisectoral needs assessments are essential in improving the effectiveness of aid delivery, in strengthening decision-making and in ensuring that the broad and interrelated needs of beneficiaries were duly considered.

Finally, the report addresses the importance of enhancing capacities for disaster preparedness and response, in particular through the work of the United Nations Disaster

Assessment and Coordination System with Member States, and it discusses financing for disasters associated with natural hazards, for which the total requirements for the flash appeals during the reporting period amounted to more than \$1.5 billion. The report makes various recommendations, including early and multi-year financial commitments to CERF and other United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian financing mechanisms, increasing efforts to strengthen the capacity of local and national actors to undertake disaster preparedness activities, and other items related to humanitarian response and risk reduction.

Also before the Assembly was the Secretary-General's report on optimizing the international effort to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (document A/65/341), which presents a midterm review of the United Nations action plan for Chernobyl recovery up to 2016 and records the activities undertaken by the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations to promote recovery from the Chernobyl disaster. The report emphasizes the importance of the ongoing inter-agency cooperation, including in the framework of the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network, and outlines the role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in coordinating inter-agency efforts on the implementation of the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016).

The report finds that the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system are committed to fostering long-term development of the affected regions. It emphasizes the continuing need for community development efforts and the provision of accurate information to the affected populations. Annexes to the report provide an update on the efforts of the three most affected countries — Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — to facilitate recovery in the affected regions.

In implementing General Assembly resolution 62/9, UNDP prepared an Organization action plan on Chernobyl to 2016 as a practical framework for cooperation during the Decade. The present report before the Assembly presents a midterm review of that action plan, including a review of the coordination of the Organization's work on Chernobyl and a review of that work itself. The activities of the United Nations assistance efforts on Chernobyl fell into several main categories, says the report: the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network; community-based development; policy advice; infrastructure; health; radiation mitigation and standard setting; reactor safety and nuclear waste management; emergency preparedness; and environmental security.

In the area of community development, UNDP, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) started the implementation of a three-year initiative aimed at enhancing human security in Chernobyl-affected communities of Belarus. Supported by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, the project aimed at increasing the incomes of farm holders and addressing health issues, including through healthy lifestyles and the early diagnosis of breast cancer. Similar initiatives with affected communities were in place in Ukraine, says the report.

The report further addresses policy advice provided by UNDP in the affected region, addressing subregional cooperation, infrastructure development, and health. Regarding the latter, the report refers to 2008 findings from the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which found that persons exposed as children to radioiodine from the Chernobyl accident and the highly irradiated emergency and recovery operation workers were at increased risk of radiation-induced effects. The Committee said that most area residents, who were irradiated at levels comparable to or a few times higher than the yearly dose of natural background radiation levels, "need not live in fear of serious health implications".

The report also addresses radiation mitigation and standard setting; reactor safety and nuclear waste management; emergency preparedness; environmental security and other related matters. Advocacy, information and public awareness campaigns, in particular, commemorations of anniversaries of the Chernobyl disaster, are also discussed. Among its conclusions, the report notes that the twenty-fifth anniversary of Chernobyl would take place in 2011 and would be an opportunity for the international community, not only to remind people of the disaster, but also to reinforce donor interest in assistance to affected communities.

Also before the Assembly was the Secretary-General's report on Humanitarian assistance and reconstruction for Liberia (document A/65/357), which provides a status update and an analysis of the current challenges to the delivery of both humanitarian relief and rehabilitation assistance by the United Nations and its partners to Liberia. In particular, it looks at major developments in consolidating peace and security, revitalizing the economy and strengthening governance and the rule of law, as well as major developments in food security, disaster risk reduction, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

During the reporting period, which spanned from September 2008 to August 2010, immediate humanitarian needs were further decreasing, and attention was focused on sustainable recovery, the report finds. The presence and increased visibility of peacekeeping troops associated with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) continued to help stabilize the security situation. The main challenges facing the country were reconstruction and stability. The United Nations was supporting the Government in taking on responsibilities as humanitarian programmes ended. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees continued to assist 11,000 people. Identifying appropriate and durable solutions for those people remained a challenge. Over 64,000 refugees remained in countries of asylum, while more than 169,000 had returned to Liberia.

Additionally, states the report, important national reconciliation processes had concluded during the reporting period, with the national demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration programme declared completed in July 2009 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issuing its final report in December. Despite advances in human rights protection, several concerns persisted, owing to significant capacity and resource constraints in the legal, judicial and corrections sectors. Rape and other sexual crimes remained prevalent, as did the traditional practice of female genital mutilation. Children continued to suffer from various forms of violence at home, school or in their community. The adjudication of disputes through trials by ordeal was also deeply entrenched and continued to be widely practised with impunity.

Delegations were also set to consider a number of draft resolutions, including a text on Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (document A/65/L.31), which would have the Assembly reaffirm the need to ensure adequate levels of safety and security for such personnel, including locally recruited staff, which constitutes one of the Organization's underlying duties. It would further urge all States to make every effort to ensure the full and effective implementation of the relevant principles and rules of international law related to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel.

The Assembly would strongly urge all States to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associate personnel and to respect and ensure respect for the inviolability of United Nations premises. The resolution would further have the Assembly call on all Governments and parties in complex humanitarian emergencies, particularly in armed conflicts and in post-conflict situations, to cooperate fully with United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations and to ensure the safe and unhindered access of their personnel and delivery of supplies and equipment.

Noting with appreciation the progress reported in implementing the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide, including on accountability, the Assembly would request the Department of Safety and Security to further strengthen the analysis of threats and to continue to improve and implement an effective, modern and flexible information management capacity in support of analytical and operational requirements, including the ongoing system-wide analysis of best practices and information on the range and scope of safety and security incidents involving humanitarian personnel, "in order to make objective and evidence-based decisions on how to reduce the risks arising in the context of United Nations-related operations".

By a resolution on Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document A/65/L.45), the Assembly would express its deep concern about the humanitarian impact of current global challenges and crises, including their effect on the increasing vulnerability of populations and their negative impact on the effective delivery of relief assistance, and would emphasize the need to mobilize adequate, predictable, timely and flexible resources for such assistance based on and in proportion to assessed needs, with a view to

ensuring fuller coverage of the needs in all sectors and across humanitarian emergencies, and recognizing, in this regard, the achievements of the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Concerned about the challenges posed by the magnitude of some humanitarian emergencies, including some of the most recent natural disasters, in particular to the capacity and coordination of the humanitarian response system, the Assembly would recognize that building national and local preparedness and response capacity is critical to a more predictable and effective response. It would also emphasize that enhancing international cooperation on emergency humanitarian assistance is essential.

Recognizing the largely civilian character of relief work, the Assembly would condemn the increasing number of deliberate threats and violent attacks against humanitarian personnel and facilities and the negative implications for the provision of assistance to populations in need. It would recognize the high numbers of persons affected by humanitarian emergencies, and recognize also the importance of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, "which include a vital legal framework for the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, including the provision of humanitarian assistance".

The Assembly would request the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue her efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance. It would call on relevant United Nations organizations and other intergovernmental organizations and other humanitarian and development actors, to continue to work with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to enhance the coordination, effectiveness and efficiency of such assistance, and it would encourage States to create an enabling environment for building the capacity of local authorities and of national and local non-governmental and community-based organizations to ensure better preparedness in providing timely, effective and predictable assistance. The United Nations and humanitarian organizations would be encouraged to provide support to such efforts.

The Assembly also had before it a draft resolution on Humanitarian assistance, emergency relief, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction in response to the humanitarian emergency in Haiti, including the devastating effects of the earthquake (document A/65/L.47), by which it would note the huge loss of human life and the large number of people wounded and affected by the severe impacts of the disaster on, among other areas, food security and the education, shelter and health sectors, as well as of the continued needs arising from the vulnerability of the affected populations.

Conscious also of the huge material losses sustained in respect of homes, schools, hospitals, Government facilities and basic infrastructures in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and elsewhere in the country, the Assembly would recognize the continued need for support from the international community to address the humanitarian emergency in Haiti, especially the cholera epidemic, as well as the importance of contributing to stability and enhancing recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Welcoming the Secretary-General's leadership in ensuring a speedy response by the United Nations system to the tragic events and welcoming also the efforts of the Special Envoy for Haiti to mobilize international support for emergency relief operations, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction, the Assembly would affirm the leading role of the Government of Haiti in all aspects of the humanitarian response and development plans for the country, and would underline the coordinating role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in assisting the Haitian Government.

The Assembly would call on Member States, the United Nations system and relevant humanitarian organizations, including the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, to continue to cooperate with the Haitian Government for the provision of humanitarian assistance to the affected population, and would emphasize the importance of improved coordination in this regard. It would urge the international community to provide increased and prompt support to the efforts of the Government, led by the Ministry of Public Health and Population, to respond to the cholera epidemic.

By a related text on Emergency and reconstruction assistance to Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries affected by Hurricane Tomas (document A/65/L.48), the Assembly would express its deep regret at the number of persons killed, missing and negatively affected as a result of the hurricane, which struck the islands nations on 30 and 31 October and Haiti on 5 and 6 November. It would express deep concern at the tremendous damage to crops, homes, basic infrastructure, tourist and other areas and the economies of those countries, which could adversely affect their economic and social development plans.

Further to the text, the Assembly would appeal to all Member States and all organs and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as international financial institutions and development agencies, to provide speedy support for the relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and assistance effort for Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other affected countries, and encourage the Governments of such countries, in conjunction with relevant partners, to develop further strategies aimed at preventing and mitigating natural disasters.

A draft resolution on Assistance to the Palestinian people (document A/65/L.46) would have the Assembly express its grave concern at the difficult living conditions and humanitarian situation affecting the Palestinian people, in particular women and children, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It would welcome recent steps to ease the restrictions on movement and access in the West Bank, while stressing the need for further steps to be taken in this regard. Acknowledging the recent measures announced by Israel regarding access to the Gaza Strip, the Assembly would stress the importance of the regular opening of the crossings for the movement of persons and goods, for both humanitarian and commercial flows.

Calling on relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to intensify their assistance in response to the urgent needs of the Palestinian people in accordance with priorities set forth by the Palestinian side, the Assembly would call on the international donor community to expedite the delivery of pledged assistance to the Palestinian people to meet their urgent needs and stress, in this context, the importance of ensuring free humanitarian access to the Palestinian people and the free movement of persons and goods.

Also before delegations was a text on strengthening international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (document A/65/L.25), by which the Assembly would express profound concern at the ongoing effects of the consequences of the accident on the lives and health of people, in particular children, in the affected areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as in other affected countries.

Stressing the significance of the upcoming twenty-fifth anniversary of the accident for the further strengthening of international cooperation to study, mitigate and minimize its consequences, the Assembly would welcome the initiative of Ukraine, co-sponsored by Belarus and the Russian Federation, to convene the International Conference "Twenty-five Years after the Chernobyl Disaster: Safety for the Future" in April 2011 in Kyiv. It would call on the relevant United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to actively engage in and fund, within existing resources, the preparations for the conference. It would also request the Assembly President to convene, on 26 April 2011, a special commemorative meeting of the general Assembly in observance of the catastrophe's twenty-fifth anniversary.

Opening Remarks

Opening the meeting, General Assembly Vice-President SYLVIE LUCAS, of Luxembourg, said the earthquake that devastated Haiti and Hurricane Thomas that struck this year exemplified the need for a strengthened humanitarian assistance system. It also showed the pressing need to carry out disaster reduction efforts, notably through building the capacity of local and national authorities, as well as of non-governmental organizations. In that context, she noted a plan to hold an informal thematic debate on the prevention of natural disasters next year. Also vital was to improve the safety of humanitarian personnel, who faced attacks that were sometimes violent, to the detriment of the aid provided.

Security conditions must be strengthened, and in that context, she underlined the

importance of coordination, thanking Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos for her work. She called on all stakeholders, agencies and programmes working with other humanitarian actors, like development agencies, to work closely with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Concluding, she called on Member States to ensure that adequate resources were made available to the United Nations and other international organizations to enable an efficient response to humanitarian emergencies.

Introduction of Drafts

OLEKSANDR PAVLICHENKO (Ukraine) introduced a draft resolution on strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (document A/65/L.25). Ukraine traditionally supported the disaster relief efforts of the affected countries on a bilateral basis, said the representative. It had a strong willingness to enhance its participation in the United Nations responses to emergencies and crisis situations. In 2010, Ukraine had become a donor country of the United Nations Central Emergency Relief Fund, contributing more than half a million dollars. Regarding the Chernobyl disaster, which was marking its twenty-fifth anniversary next year, it was essential to ensure that the United Nations strategy for Chernobyl and the related action plan, aimed at the implementation of the "Decade of recovery and sustainable development of the affected regions", (2006-2016), were implemented in an effective and timely manner. The draft text before the Assembly took stock of the progress made so far in that respect and sought to further map out the plans for additional assistance, said the delegate.

PIETER VERMAERKE (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, introduced the draft resolutions on Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (document A/65/L.31) and assistance to the Palestinian People (document A/65/L.46). Concerning the first draft, the Union supported increased efforts to protect the safety and security of humanitarian, United Nations and related personnel. On the second draft text, the Union reaffirmed its commitment to assisting the Palestinian people. Sustained international donor support was essential for Palestinian State-building efforts, to strengthen the Palestinian economy and to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people. The Union commended the work of the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of the future State of Palestine and reiterated its full support for such endeavours and the Fayyad plan.

At the same time, he said, the Union remained extremely concerned by the prevailing situation in Gaza, and he reiterated its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. It also reiterated its readiness to assist in the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza in close partnership with the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government. The draft text before the Assembly today embodied the wish of the European Union and of the international community as a whole to help the Palestinian people in its State-building efforts, and urged Member States to open their markets to exports of Palestinian products on the most favourable terms.

Introducing the draft resolution on Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (document A/65/L.31), he said that the European Union, along with Belgium and European Union Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva in particular, attached great importance to the resolution. The delegation was "worried and aghast" at the increasing number of casualties and accidents of humanitarian personnel in recent years, especially when attacks were deliberately targeted or politically motivated against United Nations personnel. This year, the Union welcomed the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. He hoped that more States would become parties to those instruments in the coming years.

He said that the work, the commitment and the courage of humanitarian workers, especially of locally recruited personnel, were highly valued. This year, the international community focused in particular on female humanitarian personnel and the specific threats they faced, as well as on the issue of road safety. A new approach in security management, which had received expressions of support, had provided guidance to humanitarian personnel on "how to stay, instead of when to leave", he said, especially in situations where the delivery of humanitarian assistance had become more complex.

MÅRTEN GRUNDITZ (Sweden), introducing a draft resolution on strengthening emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document A/65/L.45), said the established consensus on the global humanitarian agenda sent a strong message to the international community. The world's humanitarian response capacity had been substantially upgraded in recent years, but during the same period, humanitarian disasters had increased in frequency, intensity and complexity. Therefore, as needs had grown, further improvement of the humanitarian architecture was needed, as well as a better understanding of the role of humanitarian actors in complex emergency situations.

With that in mind, he said the draft before the Assembly expressed deep concern about the effects of recent global crises and their impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It also expressed deep concern about the United Nations and wider international community's emergency response capacity to such crises, natural disasters and the effects of climate change. It condemned the increasing number of violent attacks against humanitarian personnel and facilities and highlighted the impact of such attacks, threats and interference on aid delivery. Also, the draft highlighted the circumstances of internally displaced persons, as well as the need to address gender-based violence.

Next, MARIA LUIZA RIBEIRO VIOTTI (Brazil) introduced a draft resolution on Humanitarian assistance, emergency relief, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction in response to the humanitarian emergency in Haiti, including the devastating effects of the earthquake (document A/65/L.47). She said that the past year had been marked by disasters of great magnitude, including the 12 January quake that had devastated Haiti. Such events had revealed that humanitarian emergencies were exacerbated when they occurred in areas already struggling with poverty and other ills. The international community had learned that it needed to respond better and faster. It had also learned that the United Nations humanitarian mechanisms needed to be strengthened.

She said that Brazil believed it was essential to ensure a mutually supportive relationship between humanitarian assistance and domestic socio-economic development. As for Haiti, the humanitarian situation was worsening as the devastation wrought by the 12 January earthquake was being exacerbated by the effects of Hurricane Tomas and the rapidly expanding cholera epidemic. The draft before the Assembly recognized, among other things, the need for the international community to step up support of the Haitian Government in tackling the recovery effort, as well as in addressing issues such as land rights and rubble removal. It also highlighted the need to help the country confront the cholera epidemic and to upgrade its water and sanitation facilities. "Haiti needs our renewed and continued support," she said, calling on the Assembly to adopt the resolution by consensus and help the country overcome the current trying times.

Finally, SARAH FLOOD-BEAUBRUN (Saint Lucia) introduced a draft text on Emergency and reconstruction assistance to Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries affected by Hurricane Tomas (document A/65.L.48), saying the text was a manifestation of support by the international community for all countries in the Caribbean affected by that hurricane. Tomas had wrecked many local economies and caused widespread death and destruction. The draft would have the Assembly acknowledge the vulnerability of Caribbean States to natural disasters, due to their geographical location, which put pressure on region-wide efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The text called on the international community, as well as on United Nations specialized agencies and international financial institutions and development agencies to assist those States to the extent possible in their efforts to recover from the disaster.

Statements

ABDULLAH M. ALSAIDI (Yemen), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries and China, said humanitarian challenges resulting from complex emergencies and natural disasters continued to increase in developing nations, and as such, it was essential to redouble efforts to alleviate the suffering of millions around the world. Reiterating the Group's commitment to the principles outlined in resolution 46/182 (1991), he said that those of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence should remain the basis of all responses to such emergencies. He also emphasized the primary role of the concerned State in the initiation, organization, coordination and

implementation of humanitarian aid.

Moreover, he said, developing country efforts in building humanitarian capacities, among others, should be supported, and States must comply with their international legal obligations to protect and assist civilians in occupied territories. The Group would submit a draft resolution on international cooperation in humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters in the belief that such assistance should transcend the concept of relief and be linked with national priorities and particularities. Efforts to reduce disaster risks must be systematically integrated into policies, plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction, while those early recovery efforts should also enable countries to address the underlying "risk drivers".

Condemning all attacks against humanitarian workers, he said the United Nations should consider the increasing number of humanitarian operations and provide training, capacity-building and cultural awareness about the varied challenges. Also strengthening financial mechanisms and ensuring timely, predictable, adequate and flexible funding for both complex emergencies and natural disasters were essential for an effective response. The Group looked forward to the adoption of the text entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" and others that would help in coping with humanitarian challenges.

JAN GRAULS (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance was at the core of the United Nations activities. Yet, despite some extremely hard work and many positive developments over the past year in Haiti, Pakistan and elsewhere, many challenges remained, as access to beneficiaries in a growing number of countries was becoming more difficult and the security situation for beneficiaries and relief workers was getting worse. Further, climate change had sparked an increase in the magnitude and frequency of natural disasters such as floods, droughts and cyclones. The poorest and most vulnerable people, especially in the world's poorest countries, remained the most seriously affected.

He said that building resilience through disaster risk reduction could help curb the effects of natural disasters in the short- and medium-terms. Further, lessons learned from large-scale disaster response had shown that involving development actors at the earliest stages and linking short- and longer-term development cooperation activities would ensure smoother emergency-to-development transitions. The humanitarian reform agenda was now in its consolidation phase, and the Union welcomed the positive impact of such changes, including the "cluster approach", which had helped to close gaps in efforts to meet needs in the field. That approach had also improved stakeholder accountability and promoted broader inclusiveness. Nevertheless, efforts to improve coordination should be stepped up, including by further empowering and strengthening Humanitarian Coordinators.

Also, the European Union supported efforts to develop a framework for common needs assessments, which would be vital for providing solid information in the early phases of humanitarian crises, he said. Such a framework would also contribute to more optimal allocation of resources, as well as to a more effective overall response that was targeted to affected populations. On other matters, he noted that protecting and assisting internally displaced persons remained among the greatest challenges in humanitarian response. While the number of people currently thought to have been displaced by armed conflict stood at some 27.1 million, it was believed that some 50 million more were displaced each year by natural disasters. With so many millions of people left destitute with little or no access to basic services, he called on all States in their role as primary duty bearers to provide durable solutions in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, said assistance from countries and international organizations alike had empowered Palestinians to build strong national foundations and institutions for their State. Since the 2009 launch of his Government's two-year plan "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State", international assistance had focused on State-building, with much of the aid centred on helping Palestinians build functional, transparent and accountable institutions. Despite serious difficulties on the ground, Palestinians had implemented reforms of social welfare, economic policies, governance and security. Citing a World Bank report acknowledging that those reforms had positioned Palestinians well for independence, he noted an additional finding of the report that the Palestinian Authority would remain "donor dependent"

unless obstacles to private sector development were addressed.

"The road ahead remains difficult," he said, citing examples of escalated destruction by the occupying Power, and a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report concluding that Palestinian economic recovery would "remain elusive" under occupation. The picture was most bleak in the Gaza Strip, where Israel's crippling blockade had impacted all aspects of life in a "brutal form of collective punishment", which amounted to a war crime. Israel appeared to have made the dangerous choice of illegal settlements and entrenched occupation at the expense of peace, despite international condemnation. Further, Israel's illegal settlement expansion continued at an unprecedented rate, especially in and around East Jerusalem. More than 500 checkpoints and roadblocks also impeded the movement of persons and goods in the West Bank.

Such practices had cost the Palestinian economy billions of dollars in potential income, he said, and it was unrealistic to discuss assistance without addressing the drain on international resources caused by Israeli occupation. He wondered how much longer the international community was willing to pay for such illegal acts. Palestinians were taking the final steps towards realizing their national goals, unwavering in their commitment to rebuild and exercise their inalienable rights. "We will not waver in our pursuit of the two-State solution for peace and justice" on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map, he said. In those efforts, he called on States to step up their support, stressing that Palestinians neither planned nor wished for permanent dependence.

FREDERICK BARTON (United States), recalling recent tragedies of the earthquake in Haiti and flooding in Pakistan, said attacks against humanitarian workers continued to pose dangerous and unacceptable impediments to the delivery of critical relief assistance. The United States deeply regretted the loss of life and injuries to those offering help, and condemned the "vile" attacks against aid workers. As for how to deliver assistance in high-risk environments, the United States applauded the "Saving Lives Together" effort to strengthen coordination among the United Nations and non-governmental organizations on security matters.

"Getting the right people in the right place in the right time is vital to meet the urgent needs of those affected by disaster," he stressed, urging every effort be made so that resident coordinators had the necessary experience and training to coordinate a complicated humanitarian response, while advocating for historical principles, including access. Gravely concerned about gender-based violence and its global prevalence, the United States supported the "United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict" initiative and welcomed the leadership of the new Under-Secretary-General, Valerie Amos, who had catalysed efforts to improve international relief coordination in various crises.

AHMED AL-JARMAN (United Arab Emirates) stated that the number of persons in need of immediate relief and long-term humanitarian assistance continued to rise, especially in developing and poor countries. The catastrophic earthquake in Haiti and the floods that had hit Pakistan were recent examples where urgent humanitarian assistance had been delayed from reaching affected people, owing to weak national capacities. He stressed the need for implementation of United Nations recommendations and resolutions on national and international strategies for disaster risk reduction, and urged Member States to support such efforts.

He said the United Arab Emirates was a major partner in the international partnership for development and assistance of countries affected by natural disasters, climate change and armed conflicts. In addition to providing direct humanitarian relief, it contributed financing for long-term development activities. Moreover, it was a primary member in several international groups concerned with the rebuilding and reconstruction of countries affected by armed conflict and natural disasters, including "the Group of Friends of Yemen" and "the Group of Friends of Pakistan". It played an important role in coordinating and strengthening the efficiency of international humanitarian activities through local specialized centres, such as Dubai International Humanitarian City, Office for the Coordination of Foreign Aids — the first of its kind in the region — and the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent.

Regarding the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, the country

remained committed to providing humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority until the liberation of their land from Israeli occupation, he said, adding that the international community must compel Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza. He reaffirmed his country's support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and urged the donor community to continue their assistance to the Palestinian people and Government.

MARY FLORES (Honduras) said that, as part of a region affected by disasters, Honduras stood in solidarity with countries that had recently suffered from the forces of a "relentless Mother Nature". The "shameful situation of vulnerability", in which a large part of the most fragile sectors in our societies coexisted, was the fuse that ignited the humanitarian crises of the day. Natural disasters, like armed conflicts, destroyed without mercy. Honduras, having experienced a "great deluge" of its own, was only too familiar with the terrifying presence of that painful reality, including the loss of more than half a century of modest material and social progress. However, despite the after-effects that still remained of that nightmare, Honduras had managed, on that occasion and thanks to the strength of international unity, effective leadership and international solidarity, to emerge from the disaster, rehabilitating and reconstructing as quickly as possible. The international community should learn something from that "terrible ordeal", in order to improve early warning systems, train contingency teams, redefine processes needed to come to the assistance of communities, and be better prepared to respond to future adversities.

In closing, she said that Honduras shared the optimism about the results of the recent Cancún environmental summit and felt that "the world community's confidence in multilateralism was restored" there. It applauded the establishment of the "green fund", which would manage the assistance to developing countries, which the industrialized nations had pledged to provide.

MIKHAIL SAVOSTIANOV (Russian Federation) said that in the light of the negative consequences of the global financial crisis, the rise in the scale of natural disasters, and continued armed conflicts, the services of the United Nations were needed more than ever before. It had "coped well" with the mandates assigned to it, despite some difficulties. The very nature of humanitarian assistance was changing, as it was beginning to reflect the need for response to chronic needs engendered by constant crises. The international community had not yet agreed on relevant benchmarks in that regard, but that those benchmarks were necessary. New forms of assistance should not undermine humanitarian principles based on sovereignty and humanitarian access, among others. Instead, the basis for enhancing humanitarian assistance was to strengthen capacities at all levels, including at national and local levels. The Russian Federation supported the work of the United Nations in developing early warning systems, among other mechanisms. Recently, certain progress had been made regarding the security and safety of humanitarian personnel, due to the commencement of the work of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, but more remained to be done.

He said that the use of military resources was a significant factor of modern United Nations humanitarian responses. However, the practice of rendering humanitarian assistance had been conceived as a mainly civilian endeavour, and military resources should only be used when no other options were available. The use of troops should uphold the principles of independence. The Russian Federation supported the United Nations humanitarian sectors. Both the uninterrupted activities of that sector, as well as the emergence of new humanitarian systems, were needed. Humanitarian appeals were essential, as was their coordination, especially in the so-called cluster systems. The delegate commended the activities of the CERF in that regard, which had provided "appropriate and timely financing". The coming year was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. Commemorative events were planned in Ukraine and within the United Nations. He offered thanks to the international community for its work in that regard over the years, and supported the resolution before the Assembly on continuing support to mitigate the effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

D. MASHABANE (South Africa) condemned the increasing attacks on humanitarian personnel and urged all Governments to "bring those perpetrators to book and allow the law to take its course". However, members of the international humanitarian community should not lose sight of the goal — to strive to assist those in need to the best of their ability. The major incidents this year had led to massive loss of life, immense infrastructure destruction and disrupted development prospects. While saluting the international community for its positive and swift response, everyone

knew that more needed to be done. Global partnerships remained very important, and in that regard, he welcomed the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the African Union Commission and OCHA. He invited the private sector and financial institutions to play a role in such initiatives. A closer partnership between humanitarian and development actors also needed strengthening, as there was still a gap between early recovery and development.

CERF was an important instrument, he said, calling on all Member States to support it and to consider increasing their contributions. However, increased funding for humanitarian assistance should not come at the cost of funding to development aid. In that vein, he supported the call for timely and predictable funding to the United Nations humanitarian agencies. The core humanitarian principles required humanitarian actors to provide assistance, not in accordance with nationality, race, religion or politics, but based on need alone. It was critical, therefore, for the international humanitarian community's support to be based on needs; it should not respond only to news headlines, but also to "slow-onset" disasters. That also applied to people living under foreign occupation, whose access to humanitarian aid should not be limited. The humanitarian community must work together to address the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse — particularly acute in emergency situations. Regarding the safety of humanitarian workers, he sought a balance between sufficient funding for security arrangements and well-funded responses to humanitarian emergencies.

PEDRO NÚÑEZ MOSQUERA (Cuba) said the consequences of climate change and ecological damage — both direct results of man's "predatory" tendencies and certain States' lack of commitment to address them — had sparked a sustained up-tick in natural disasters. The economic costs of coping with such disasters continued to grow, even as the measures taken to tackle them had been exposed as inadequate. Developing countries remained the most severely impacted even though they had contributed least to the environmental degradation that had led to such destructive disasters. Humanitarian assistance must respect the principles outlined in Assembly resolutions and the United Nations Charter. Cuba rejected "ambiguous concepts" that had not been agreed upon, but which were used to justify actions that contravened the sovereignty and territorial integrity of some States.

He highlighted his Government's leading role in initiating, coordinating and delivering humanitarian assistance to tackle natural disasters that affected the island nation. Cuba had an effective civil defence system and it carried out efforts in line with international norms to minimize human and material losses in the wake of disasters. Protection of human lives was at the heart of Cuban civil society's work in that field, and all emergency response and assistance activities were carried out in a coordinated manner, with close cooperation among national and non-governmental entities.

As for the United Nations, he said the world body must continue coordinating international humanitarian efforts and fostering programmes to enable effective support to countries with the greatest needs. In addition, it was important for the Organization to continue building human and institutional capacities related to humanitarian assistance, by endowing them with greater access to new technologies and financial resources.

ABDULLAH HUSSAIN HAROON (Pakistan) said that earlier this year, a large portion of his country had been devastated by unprecedented floods affecting some 20 million people, destroying nearly 2 million homes, and washing away 1.3 million hectares of standing crops. While the floods had receded, some provinces, including his own, were still under many feet of water. The Government had mobilized all its resources to provide relief to its citizens, and in that effort, the international community's support had proved vital "in steering us through the rescue and relief phase". The people of Pakistan had been in the lead during the massive recovery effort, and the revised Pakistan Floods Emergency Response Plan for 2010 for some \$41.94 billion to undertake 397 projects had been launched jointly by the Government and the United Nations. His country's experience with the 2005 earthquake had helped it in creating the necessary institutional, legislative and infrastructure frameworks in the wake of the current floods, including a National Disaster Management Authority.

Turning to wider issues regarding humanitarian response, he encouraged OCHA to improve its coordinating mechanisms, which would be crucial, not only for effective delivery of assistance,

but also to effectively and comprehensively present on-the-ground realities through the eyes of the United Nations system. In addition, it was necessary to outline and implement more methodical processes when preparing needs assessments, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Among other suggestions, he highlighted the need to increase local sources for material procurement and staff hires, ensure accountability of all actors on the ground, and promote capacity-building in countries that were the most likely to be affected by natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

EDUARDO R. MENEZ (Philippines), noting that his country had a considerable number of nationals employed by the United Nations, strongly supported calls for Governments to ensure that they were accorded the requisite protection for them to render assistance without hindrance. There had been concerns about the safety of humanitarian workers in the Philippines, which was of paramount importance to the Government. Action had been taken on the Secretary-General's request to consolidate the main offices of various United Nations agencies into one site in Manila. Premises had been identified and the relocation process was ongoing. The "culture of hospitality" in the Philippines made it unlikely that any harm to a humanitarian worker would be due to their targeting because of their work.

On other matters, he said the CERF had been provided quick, impartial and broad assistance to all types of emergencies. The Philippines had benefited from it as part of the United Nations flash appeal in 2009, when \$7 million was allocated to address the effects of typhoons Ketsana and Parma. His Government had supported the Fund since its inception. Thanking OCHA for the more focused work undertaken in his country, he said increased personnel on the ground would provide quicker and more informed assistance as needs arose. On the whole, the United Nations humanitarian operations in the Philippines had been running smoothly under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator. His country remained a steadfast supporter of the Organization's humanitarian and disaster relief assistance work.

SHIGEKI SUMI (Japan) said that, because of the priority it attached to human security, Japan had a special interest in the protection and empowerment of vulnerable people desperately in need of assistance. Recalling the recent earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan, the delegate said that Japan, in addition to providing emergency assistance that included dispatching a disaster relief team, had pledged \$500 million in financial assistance in response to the flood in Pakistan, of which \$267 million would be disbursed through international organizations that contributed to the revised appeal for that crisis. It had also made a new contribution of \$30 million to the Haiti Reconstruction Fund. As Japan was among those countries most frequently affected by natural disasters, it had expertise on preparedness to share with other nations. It would continue to cooperate with the international community in that regard.

Turning to disaster risk reduction, he said that the Hyogo Framework for Action provided an international strategy in that regard, and should be fully utilized. Japan valued the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which contributed to those efforts through worldwide advocacy. Japan had co-sponsored, with OCHA, the first Global Meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), in Kobe, in September. At the end of that meeting, the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration had been adopted. Japan hoped that the document would serve as a set of guidelines for the implementation of cooperation in that field.

Japan was extremely concerned about persistent attacks against relief personnel around the world, he said. In order to guarantee humanitarian access, humanitarian activities should be governed by the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Long-term efforts to build confidence were also needed. As Japan had been calling for efficient and effective humanitarian assistance, it was gratified that the cluster approach was working effectively. Continuing reform of the system for humanitarian assistance was essential.

MURAT TASHIBAYEV (Kazakhstan) noted with deep regret the difficult situations that had emerged due to climate change. Since 2009, more than 300 cases of natural disasters had affected about 113 million people and killed more than 10,000. Asian countries were the most affected, accounting for some 40 per cent of reported cases of such disasters, 68 per cent of deaths and 34 per cent of related economic losses. Kazakhstan, therefore, put particular emphasis on cooperation with the United Nations and its subdivisions in the area of humanitarian assistance,

primarily in connection with two projects: the creation of the Kazakhstan Central Asia Centre for disaster response and risk reduction, and the relocation of a sub-office of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and Almaty, Kazakhstan.

During the year, he noted, the heads of emergency departments of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan had met in Almaty to sign a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the Central Asia Centre, which had been created through the framework of a new United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project called "Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia" and funded by the European Union. Additionally, Kazakhstan had provided through the CERF \$100,000 in aid to the flood response in Pakistan, as well as official humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova.

WANG HONGBO (China) said the global humanitarian landscape had changed dramatically in the 20 years since the Assembly had adopted its landmark resolution 46/182. Yet what remained unchanged was the compassion shown by people when disaster struck. Indeed, in the wake of humanitarian crises over the past year, the international community had witnessed the courage, resilience and unity displayed, especially by the Governments and peoples of affected countries. China had always believed humanitarian affairs to be an important endeavour and over the years, the Government had gradually put in place an effective crisis response system aimed at saving lives and protecting property.

As a developing country prone to earthquakes and other natural disasters, disaster reduction, preparedness, emergency relief and post-disaster reconstruction had been an arduous task facing the Chinese governments at all levels every year. While "going all out" to cope with those frequent natural disasters, the Chinese Government had succeeded in the post-disaster reconstruction in the Wenchuan quake zone, investing over the past two years a total of \$130 billion in reconstruction work there. With strong international support, China had achieved continuous success in dealing with massive disasters within its territory, which, itself, was a great contribution to the global humanitarian relief efforts. While receiving international humanitarian assistance, China had also done what it could to actively engage in multilateral and bilateral humanitarian relief activities in affected countries. It was also sharing extensively its experiences in the South-South and regional frameworks.

China's humanitarian relief practice proved once again that the guiding principles set forth at the forty-sixth General Assembly session were an effective prerequisite for implementation of humanitarian assistance. Insufficient capacity was a key restraint, and since that session, United Nations resolutions had reiterated the importance of supporting developing countries in empowering their capacity for disaster reduction, preparedness and relief. The United Nations system should strengthen its existing humanitarian responsiveness, knowledge and institutions, and he urged parties concerned to fulfil their commitment to transfer disaster relief and reduction technologies and expertise to developing countries. The United Nations should play a bigger role in global humanitarian assistance, and he called on OCHA to improve its coordination mechanism and strengthen the linkages among needs evaluation, programme planning, resources allocation and programme implementation and evaluation. He congratulated CERF on setting a solid base yesterday towards the goal of raising \$450 million for 2011.

ZOYA KOLONTAI (Belarus) said his country had been among those most affected by the catastrophic meltdown of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor, and some 25 years later, coping with and mitigating the impacts of that disaster remained a key concern for the Government. Experts had estimated cumulative damage from the incident at some \$235 billion, and the Government had thus been forced to tackle a raft of complex issues, including providing social protection and health care and radioecological restoration and rehabilitation of affected areas that were home to more than 1.7 million people. Her Government had implemented a series of national recovery programmes, with the latest iteration — 2006-2010 — amounting to some \$1.5 billion. That initiative would specifically focus on measures to decrease radiation and support production of goods from local materials that met radioecological requirements.

She said that the international community's support, including that of the United Nations, remained of great importance for the success of Belarus' home-grown initiatives. Her country also appreciated the Secretary-General's comprehensive report, which stressed the international effort to

study the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and to help mitigate its consequences. Belarus shared the Secretary-General's view that one of the major pending issues, along with continuing to help affected communities return to normal, was the need to mobilize more donor resources in support of local initiatives to ensure long-term sustainable development of those affected communities. The action plan for Chernobyl and the participation in its implementation of UNDP and other agencies was a sign that relevant activities would not only be scaled up but better coordinated. She looked forward to Belarus' active participation in the international conference on Chernobyl to be held in Kiev in April 2011.

PAUL SEGER (Switzerland) stated that the year 2010 had been notable for two major disasters, the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan, which had highlighted both the way the humanitarian system functioned and the challenges facing it. Much still needed to be done to strengthen the coordination of that system. Switzerland welcomed the Secretary-General's conclusions and recommendations on the issue, supporting in particular those results which reflected humanitarian principles, humanitarian access, and efforts to combat sexual violence. All partners much respect humanitarian law and principles.

He said his country also stressed the importance of harmonizing needs assessments, which was crucial to attuning the United Nations system to the "real needs" of victims. Switzerland welcomed the fact that partners continued to increasingly harmonize and integrate their respective needs assessments. Regarding recruitment in the field, Switzerland supported the establishment of an emergency response roster to facilitate rapid responses in the field by humanitarian workers. Also, more systematic cooperation between OCHA and the Department of Field Support was needed.

Concerning disaster prevention, he said the year was marked by the powerful earthquake in Haiti, which had affected 3 million people there, as well as severe flooding in Pakistan. Better planning, especially at the national, regional and local levels, would help the international community to respond better. Switzerland supported the Secretary-General's call on Member States to consider adopting investment objectives in that regard. Further, Switzerland noted that civil-military relations had become important in the humanitarian context, raising a number of questions, such as the maintenance of a "humanitarian space", roles and responsibilities in the command structure, and the role of the United Nations. Another related question was the problem of private military and security forces. It would be helpful for the United Nations to take a position on that issue, which was a major challenge to the implementation of international humanitarian law.

GARY QUINLAN (Australia) said that while the international community had been working over the past 20 years to bolster coordination of humanitarian assistance, real progress had been achieved in the last few years. Among other efforts, the "cluster system" was beginning to demonstrate its value — though much more must be done to ensure the system worked effectively on the ground. CERF was now well-established as an essential mechanism for facilitating timely humanitarian response, and there had been larger investments in national disaster response preparedness and coordination mechanisms, thus enabling more effective, locally-led responses. The United Nations and the wider international community should take further steps to support national capacities wherever possible.

He noted that in times of crisis, people already living in precarious situations due to poverty, discrimination or other ills, were easily pushed to the edges of survival. Indeed, the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, experienced the greatest hardships. Persons with disabilities made up 20 per cent of the poorest individuals in developing countries, and for every child killed in conflict, three more were injured, resulting in permanent impairments that could lead to disability. Disabled women and girls faced multiple discrimination and, therefore, were at higher risk of violence, sexual abuse neglect and exploitation. Australia took its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities very seriously and was working with humanitarian partners to ensure that such persons benefited equally from all aspects of humanitarian policy, planning and response.

ISABELLE PICCO (Monaco) said her Government's commitment to helping vulnerable people in emergency situations stretched back some 50 years. It supported the principle of impartiality and neutrality in the provision of humanitarian assistance, as all in efforts to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers. Monaco was gravely concerned that relief workers

were increasingly targeted with threats and violence when they tried to carry out their important work. She called on all stakeholders and host Governments to do their utmost to ensure the safety of such workers, and also stressed the need for United Nations agencies and local actors to work together to set out strategies and assessments aimed at keeping relief workers safe.

She said that in the face of unprecedented humanitarian emergencies over the past year, in Haiti, Pakistan and elsewhere, Monaco had decided to multiply its assistance by 2.5 per cent and pursue measures to boost its support for United Nations agencies, help establish reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes and support staff training. That was part of a long-term strategy that would help Monaco assist other countries in meeting their development goals. Monaco would also maintain its support for the important work being carried out by OCHA.

YANERIT MORGAN (Mexico) said that the annual debate on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance gave Member States the opportunity to address challenges in the humanitarian sphere. In previous debates, Mexico had expressed its concern at the challenges, in particular the limited access to those who required humanitarian assistance. Touching upon two aspects in that regard, the delegate turned first to capacity-building for emergency response, which she said was key for humanitarian response. Mexico welcomed the consideration of a framework for capacity-building in that regard, as an ongoing opportunity in which all must invest. "It does not matter when and where humanitarian assistance is required," she said, adding that the entire international community was affected.

She noted that next year marked the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Assembly resolution 46/182 (1991) on humanitarian assistance. Additionally, Mexico supported the gradual minimizing of the use of CERF through the creation of a fund to finance projects for the prevention of humanitarian crises. In closing, she reiterated Mexico's support for OCHA's work, as well as that of the Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Valerie Amos.

MANJEEV SINGH PURI (India), speaking also on behalf of Sweden, said natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies disrupted progress and destroyed hard-won development gains. Such events often pushed nations' development progress back decades, seriously impacting economically weaker segments of affected populations. The unprecedented magnitude and scale of some of the natural disasters that had occurred this year and the trauma resulting from them had once again underscored the key role played by the United Nations in supporting relief efforts in affected countries. The impact of those events had been compounded by the ongoing fallout from the economic and financial crisis, revealing the need to coordinate and ensure the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. Sweden and India reiterated their full commitment to strengthening the United Nations humanitarian efforts, as well as their call for international solidarity to that end.

He said that the Indian and Swedish Governments were pleased to note that five years after its creation, CERF was working to mobilize resources and implementing its mandate effectively. The Governments were also happy to see that the Fund had raised its profile as a vital mechanism for rapidly delivering emergency aid, especially in the wake of the 12 January earthquake in Haiti and devastating floods in Pakistan. India and Sweden believed that emergency response must be inclusive and that community-based collectives, civil society and private sector actors all had roles to play. By supporting local and national recovery processes, the United Nations should strive to close the relief-to-development gap and to transform emergency situations into opportunities for sustained development. The United Nations should likewise support local, national and regional emergency response, disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness strategies.

NÉSTOR OSORIO (Colombia) stated that challenges related to humanitarian assistance were not limited to economic, environmental and social spheres, but demanded increasingly effective coordination, as well. The delegation of Colombia joined with all efforts towards improving the coordination and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations system and other relevant actors of the international community, and was willing to participate actively in all discussions on the matter. Colombia conceived humanitarian assistance in a comprehensive perspective with actions that supported the process of rebuilding the "social tissue" of affected populations, and at the same time, contributed to the development of physical and economic development once the crisis had been overcome. In the framework of assistance and response to natural disasters, Colombia considered that emergency humanitarian assistance must

be temporary and should provide measures that went beyond relief, strengthening local capacity. In that context, it was necessary to strengthen and integrate management and risk reduction in policies, development and poverty reduction strategies.

Over the year, he said Colombia had supported recovery efforts in Haiti with actions amounting to \$18 million, had sent more than 650 experts and had provided support for the benefit of more than 850,000 Haitians. Additionally, it had made progress in meeting its financial commitments, allocating \$4 million to the Haiti Reconstruction Fund administered by the World Bank. Expressing Colombia's sympathy to the victims of Hurricane Tomas in the Caribbean, he noted that Colombia was the Latin American country with the highest average incidence of natural disasters related to climate in the last 30 years. Colombia currently faced emergencies due to extreme weather, including heavy rains and resulting floods. In that context, the delegate thanked the United Nations system and international community for its support, and was confident that it would continue.

JIM MCLAY (New Zealand) said his Government supported the United Nations and its leadership and coordination of international humanitarian action in both preparedness and response. More specifically, he endorsed OCHA's central role and stressed that his Government would continue to provide "un-earmarked" core funding to the Organization and other international agencies to ensure predictable and flexible support. He encouraged further work to ensure that "clusters" were put in place quickly and that they were able to communicate effectively with relevant players, local and international non-governmental organizations, national Governments, and military actors.

Against a backdrop of shrinking humanitarian space and increasing risks faced by relief workers, he said New Zealand endorsed the work of the Secretariat's Department of Safety and Security, and of individual agencies to strengthen their relevant approaches and systems. New Zealand also supported efforts to craft a humanitarian response system that was less driven by shocks than by needs and vulnerability. As the international community became more effective at risk reduction and disaster preparedness, all actors could better deal with complex situations where chronic vulnerabilities existed. Further, it remained critical for the international community to do much more in the areas of mitigation and adaptation to deal with the effects of climate change. The small island nations of the Pacific and other regions were among the most vulnerable to weather anomalies, and the international community must invest more in early recovery to bridge the gap between life-saving humanitarian work and longer-term development.

OCTAVIO ERRÁZURIZ (Chile) welcomed the reports of the Secretary-General before the Assembly and the information provided therein, drawing attention to the main challenges requiring coordinated international response. Indeed, the reports highlighted the need to better manage the challenges to alleviate the suffering of populations affected by complex emergencies. Certainly, States bore the primary responsibility for providing assistance to their populations, but some situations, owing to their magnitude or institutional limitations, required international assistance. Chile supported the principle of neutrality and territorial integrity when carrying out humanitarian actions.

He said that the United Nations had a central role to play when international assistance was necessary and CERF had proved to be an important tool to that end. At all times, the Organization and its agencies and mechanisms must support national initiatives aimed at providing relief to populations in need. Recent experience had shown that civil society and private sector groups — often the first to mobilize and come to the aid of local or far-flung communities — also had an important role to play. While the international community must scale up its efforts to mobilize resources in the immediate aftermath of catastrophe, it must also devote attention and resources to long-term measures aimed at promoting socio-economic advancement, job creation and reconstruction.

MORTEN WETLAND (Norway) said that "we must use the experiences from Haiti and Pakistan to improve the international humanitarian response system, take the lessons into account, and learn from them." Overall, he said, the United Nations response to the earthquake in Haiti was "acceptable", given the difficult circumstances, but leadership was too weak, inter-cluster coordination was fragile, and support to the Government was insufficient. Similarly, in Pakistan, the

Pakistan Emergency Response Fund did not respond as quickly and flexibly as anticipated. Important delivery and coordination of humanitarian assistance in the field would be a priority for Norway when it took on the role of chair of the OCHA Donor Support Group in July 2011.

He said that urgent and flexible responses to disasters, especially in rural communities and informal urban settings, was crucial for saving lives, and must be "locally owned". As humanitarian needs continued to increase, owing to armed conflict, natural disasters and global structural challenges, it was crucial to ensure a rapid, flexible and effective response to the affected populations, many of which were among the world's poorest and most deprived. Additionally, there was a need to strengthen United Nations-led coordination in that regard and to hold the United Nations accountable. Currently, 95 per cent of the funding for OCHA was provided by voluntary contributions from 39 Member States, while only 5 per cent came from the regular United Nations budget. That was not acceptable, nor was it sustainable. Strengthened delivery in the field, better preparedness and recognition of the role of the State, and increased and more predictable funding for OCHA would be key humanitarian priorities for Norway in 2011 and beyond.

NEDRA MIGUEL (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) stated that her delegation was deeply grateful to the co-sponsors of the draft resolution offering solidarity with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as other States affected by Hurricane Tomas. During that storm, more than 1,200 homes had been destroyed in only a few short hours, and independent assessors had determined that banana cultivation in the northern half of the State was 100 per cent destroyed. The estimated cost of recovery was in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

She said that the draft resolution before the Assembly correctly noted that the Caribbean region was extremely vulnerable to the physical and economic aspects of tropical storms and hurricanes. Unfortunately, that vulnerability would continue to increase. She thanked Governments, institutions and organizations that had assisted them in their time of need. Even as her delegation thanked all those actors, however, it wished to stress the importance of the resolution's call for "continued effective humanitarian, technical and financial assistance" to its country and to all those affected by Hurricane Tomas.

SWEN DORNIG (Liechtenstein) said the international community's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance to populations in need was increasingly jeopardized by the growing number of attacks on relief workers, facilities and vehicles. The changing nature of armed conflicts, often characterized by increased criminality and banditry had been a key factor in the uptick in such attacks. In addition, in many conflicts, humanitarian workers were no longer seen as neutral and attacks on them were thus political in nature. To increase the acceptance of humanitarian assistance in high-risk environments, it must be separated from political and military goals. Such assistance must also be carried out in conjunction with constant outreach to community leaders and local authorities.

Continuing, he said the safety of those delivering humanitarian assistance could be improved by ensuring that relief strategies were accompanied by sufficiently funded security management measures. To that end, Liechtenstein supported the new United Nations security management approach, which aimed to more effectively support humanitarian operations. His delegation further welcomed efforts to increase security collaboration between the United Nations, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, by enhancing the "Saving Lives Together" framework, which Liechtenstein had supported from its inception. He also called on all States to become parties to the Convention on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated personnel and its additional protocol, which had entered into force earlier this year.

JOHN MCNEE (Canada) said the devastating earthquake in Haiti, extreme flooding in Pakistan, along with other serious natural disasters in Benin, Chile, Indonesia and elsewhere, had severely tested the international community's humanitarian response capacity. Moreover, the humanitarian community continued to work with affected Governments to tackle the aftermath of those disasters, and the recent cholera outbreak in Haiti further highlighted the importance of sustained commitment to effective and coherent international humanitarian action. Those crises, along with complex emergencies in countries, such as Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia and Democratic Republic of the Congo directly threatened and affected the lives of millions of people.

"And more challenges lie ahead," he continued, citing migration, rapid urbanization, proliferation of humanitarian actors and increasing restrictions on humanitarian space as trends that could soon make the task of responding to humanitarian needs more complex. All of that made clear that it was time to assess, not only whether the international community was prepared to address current complex emergencies, but whether it was armed with sufficient capacity to address future challenges. Canada supported all efforts to strengthen the international response capacity and it advocated for strengthening the cluster coordination, developing flexible financing mechanisms and enhancing the role and capacities of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators. Canada also encouraged the United Nations to strengthen its partnerships with host Governments and local actors on the ground providing life-saving assistance. Indeed, it was important for the United Nations to keep enhancing its dialogue with local communities in all stages of planning and decision-making.

MARWAN JILANI, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), recalled that during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and 2005 Pakistan earthquake, some of the most critical constraints facing the humanitarian system were the availability of adequate experienced human resources and the timely deployment of teams and equipments. Indeed, investment in the preparedness of a highly trained national staff was a worthy one. Outlining four key messages to States and partners, he said that overall investment in risk reduction and preparedness was essential and cost effective in mitigating the human toll of disasters. Strengthening the capacity of local actors on the ground as first responders was the best model.

He said that the availability of "adequate, predictable and timely" funding was also critical to the humanitarian response. In that context, IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund had responded to 96 disasters in 2009, benefiting over 20 million people, more than twice the year before. Communicating with beneficiaries was also critical. He recalled that large disasters often acquired media attention, while those suffering the effects of small and medium disasters, including slow-onset disasters, were often forgotten. IFRC had some 52 active appeals representing a need for more than 1.8 billion Swiss francs to cover disasters of all scales and in all corners of the world.

WALTER A. FÜLLEMANN, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), recognized that coordination was not an end in itself, but a means to provide better and timelier humanitarian services. It should take place first in the field, and be both reality-based and action-oriented. Recalling the principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality, he said ICRC had supported existing coordination mechanisms. It would refrain from any coordination that would hamper its ability to be a credible, neutral and independent organization that carried out strictly humanitarian activities.

He said that ICRC must consider the risks when deciding how to coordinate its activities with organizations intending to integrate humanitarian operations with political and military objectives, which he believed should be kept separate, as they placed humanitarian personnel at risk. Recognizing the role of host States to protect their own populations in times of disaster, ICRC avoided substitution or duplication of the work undertaken by the authorities in control of the territory where it wished to operate. However, due to activities in situations of armed conflict, ICRC needed States and non-State actors to respect its independence and impartiality to help those in such situations. Coordination efforts should ensure that the humanitarian response was founded on the national capacities of private and public nature.

MICHELE KLEIN SOLOMON, Observer of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), said the great challenges of the past year had demanded collaboration and partnership by a broad and growing range of humanitarian actors. Collaboration and coordination were most relevant for IOM's operational work in situations of population displacement and sudden population movements. The multifaceted issue of internal displacement required many organizations to work at different levels, collaborating to meet the protection, assistance and recovery needs of displaced persons.

She said that several years into the implementation of the "cluster approach", including specifically its use in the wake of the earthquake in Haiti, IOM had been able to see tangible results in terms of collaboration and coordination. Yet, the sheer magnitude of the challenges in both Haiti and Pakistan had revealed that adjustments and improvements were needed in the overall humanitarian system to better respond to emergency and recovery needs. Inter-cluster coordination

and strong leadership were key areas where improvements were necessary for the cluster system to achieve its full potential.

Action on Drafts

Speaking in explanation of position before action, Israel's delegate said his Government would join consensus on resolution on assistance to Palestinian people (document A/65/L.46), which, in contrast with other texts, was constructive in its approach, encouraging Palestinians to develop their economic capacity. Israel's commitment to that objective could be seen in measures taken in the past year to improve lives in the West Bank. In that connection, he discussed a specific bridge that had extended its hours of operation to midnight. Such measures were showing results. In first six months of 2010, the West Bank had registered a 9 per cent increase in real gross domestic product (GDP) growth, while Gaza had seen a 16 per cent increase. He cited one study showing that some 50 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank believed "things were headed in the right direction in their community".

In Gaza, Israel had worked to improve the situation of Palestinians, he explained. Despite continued terrorist attacks, Israel had made the decision on 17 June to liberalize "the system" and expand the inflow of materials into the area. The number of trucks entering Gaza had increased by 92 per cent since June. Israel also had approved 78 projects, including for schools, and on 8 December, the Israeli Cabinet took measures allowing for the expedited flow of exports from Gaza. To be sure, Gaza was an area from which rockets were still fired at Israeli civilians and arms and munitions were stockpiled. On the same day Israel had taken its measures, rockets and mortars were fired on Israeli towns.

Given that, any discussion of humanitarian assistance must address the issue of security, he said, which was integral to the well-being of Palestinians and Israelis alike. Israel welcomed the text's preambular paragraph 9 as a "modest start" in addressing security on the ground and the welfare of people in the region. The draft resolution's discussion of the "policy of assistance" of Gaza did not reflect Israel's security needs; any resolution on the region should be clear on the security risk inherent to Gaza that Israel faced. Moreover, its discussion of the humanitarian situation did not represent facts on the ground. Significant measures taken by Israel to improve the Palestinian economy should not be dismissed. Despite those concerns, and others, Israel had joined consensus. With that, he called on Palestinians to return to negotiations to achieve a peace agreement, stressing that it was only through bilateral negotiations that "we can achieve the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security".

Speaking before action on the resolution on strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (document A/65/L.25), a Secretariat representative said the Assembly's adoption of that text would not carry additional programme budget implications for the 2010-2011 period.

The Assembly then adopted that resolution, L.25, by consensus.

Also acting without a vote, the Assembly adopted the resolutions on: safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection United Nations personnel (document A/65/L.31); strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document A/65/L.45); assistance to the Palestinian people (document A/65/L.46); humanitarian assistance, emergency relief, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction in response to the humanitarian emergency in Haiti, including the devastating effects of the earthquake (document A/65/L.47); and emergency and reconstruction assistance to Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries affected by Hurricane Tomas (document A/65/L.48).

After action, the representative of Belgium, speaking on behalf of the European Union welcomed the adoption of the text on assistance to Haiti, L.47, saying that the country still needed support, especially following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Thomas and the current outbreak of cholera. The Union understood that by adopting the resolution, the Assembly recognized the work of all organizations working in Haiti. It also understood that the reference to "faith-based

organizations” was specific to the context of the humanitarian response in Haiti. The Union appreciated the text’s attention to the need to address gender-based violence and the situation of persons with disabilities.

Speaking on a point of order, Japan’s representative welcomed the adoption of the resolution on strengthening international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, L.25. He applauded the efforts of the affected countries, which had led the relevant negotiations. Japan was pleased to have co-sponsored the resolution. His Government would continue to support the construction of the shelter facility and related safety projects at Chernobyl, as outlined in operative paragraph 6 of the text, and would encourage the international community, including other donors and the main actors, to strengthen their support for such projects.

Making a general statement, the Observer of Palestine thanked all Member States on the consensus adoption of the resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people. The Assembly’s action came at a time when the Palestinian people were preparing for the end of illegal occupation and the beginning of the creation of an independent State of Palestine. He called on the international community to continue its support of the Palestinian people and called on Israel to end its occupation and destruction of Palestinian livelihoods and development projects.

He said that while the Israeli delegate had tried to paint a “pretty picture” of the situation in the Occupied Territory, the reality was just the opposite. Israel’s destructive and indiscriminate actions had crippled development and sustainable growth. Israel continued to attempt to justify its actions, which were roundly criticized as war crimes. Israel continued to indiscriminately raze and disrupt Palestinian infrastructure, justifying its actions by saying its security was at risk. But how could water mains and sewer lines threaten Israel? How could roads threaten Israel? How could such infrastructure threaten Israel “which was armed to the teeth”, he asked. Finally, he appealed to the international community to support the Palestinian people, who were in their “home stretch towards independence”.

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