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PARTICIPATION OF VOLUNTEERS, "WHITE HELMETS", IN ACTIVITIES OF THE
UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF HUMANITARIAN RELIEF, REHABILITATION
AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Note by the Secretariat

1. The report of the Secretary-General on the question of the participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development (A/50/203/Add.1-E/1995/79/Add.1) was considered by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/139 B of 20 December 1995.

2. At that session, the Council, by its resolution 1995/44 of 27 July 1995, inter alia, took note with interest of the report of the Secretary-General and requested him, in view of the information related to the "White Helmet" (WH) initiative that had recently become available, to prepare an updated report on recent developments regarding the implementation of the initiative for submission to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

3. The present note is prepared pursuant to the aforementioned request of the Economic and Social Council.

4. The attention of the General Assembly is drawn to the following development since the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General on 27 June 1995:

(a) The deliberations of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995 demonstrated strong support for the early implementation of the WH initiative, which was considered to be technically viable;

(b) The WH initiative was also referred to and endorsed in the Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995;

(c) Three additional Governments (the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Panama and Ukraine) responded to the Secretary-General's letter seeking their views on resolution 49/139 B, and endorsed the initiative. They also expressed willingness to take part in its realization;

(d) A response was also received from the League of Arab States, which regretted to inform the United Nations that it had no mechanism for disaster relief operations or the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance and acted in such matters only in coordination with Member States of the League;

(e) In a letter dated 12 July 1995 addressed to the Secretary-General, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reiterated its concern about potential difficulties associated with the establishment of another corps of volunteers, "White Helmets", and the need to consider carefully the coordination of their roles and activities, with both other sectors of the United Nations system and other international organizations;

(f) The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) have identified the following specific project activities involving WH volunteers to be carried out on the basis of the existing framework of the United Nations system:

- (i) Armenia: Participation of 10 WH volunteers in monitoring the recent elections;
- (ii) Haiti: The project to assist the World Food Programme restructure emergency and long-term food aid throughout began on 11 September with the arrival of three WH volunteers;
- (iii) Gaza: The project document for WH support to the Municipality of Gaza is pending before WH initiative/Argentina, being cleared by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Gaza and the Municipality;
- (iv) Angola: The project document for WH support to Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit (UCAH) providing humanitarian assistance in connection with the demobilization process is pending before WH initiative/Argentina, being developed with UCAH;
- (v) Jamaica: The project document for WH support to the Ministry of Health in connection with inventory, repair and maintenance of hospital equipment being prepared by UNV;

(g) In implementation of resolution 49/139 B, the Government of Argentina has made an initial contribution to the Special Voluntary Fund established by UNV, in accordance with the mandate of the General Assembly. The National Commission for the White Helmets of Argentina has also established mechanisms to promote private sector financing of pilot activities already carried out in Argentina at the national level;

(h) At the operational level, the Argentine authorities have completed several exploratory missions to identify possible projects for the deployment of WH. It is expected that after having finished this preparatory process, the

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first WH team, composed of Argentine, Bolivian and Dominican volunteers, will be deployed in the very near future in Haiti, to cooperate with local authorities, in coordination with the World Food Programme, in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of food distribution in that country.
