



General Assembly

Seventy-third session

53rd plenary meeting
Friday, 14 December 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Korneliou (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 75

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/392, A/73/392/Corr.1 and A/73/392/Corr.2)

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/73/78, A/73/170 and A/73/343)

Draft resolutions (A/73/L.18/Rev.1, A/73/L.51, A/73/L.53 and A/73/L.61)

Draft amendments (A/73/L.64 and A/73/L.65)

(b) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/84 and A/73/84/Corr.1)

(c) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

The Acting President: I will now make a statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés.

“Twenty-seven years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182, on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. Since then, we have met in this Hall every year to discuss how to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. And every year when we meet we are forced to note that more and more people are affected by conflict, violence or natural disasters and therefore require humanitarian assistance. This time is no exception. At the end of 2017, another record was reached in terms of humanitarian needs, with 135.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

“We are all responsible for ensuring that people affected by conflicts, violence and natural disasters are assisted and protected. In 2017, the funding needed to provide humanitarian assistance to the 135.7 million people affected by conflicts or natural disasters reached a record \$23.5 billion. We are all responsible for ensuring that funding is made available to the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations that deliver life-saving support.

“At the end of 2017, 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict or generalized violence. While it may appear to be common sense that people affected by conflict require humanitarian assistance — whether they are obliged to flee their homes, are trapped under siege, are wounded or simply happen to fall sick when a conflict is taking

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place — unfortunately that is not the case, as we all well know. Civilians continue to be targeted, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. Hospitals continue to be bombed and humanitarian assistance continues to be hindered. That is unacceptable. Not only is it unacceptable, but targeting medical facilities and humanitarian personnel and hindering the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance are also violations of international humanitarian law. And we as Member States are all responsible for ensuring that international humanitarian law is respected.

“If providing humanitarian assistance to populations affected by conflict, violence or natural disasters is necessary, our role does not end there. We also have to work together to prevent conflict, enhance the mediation of ongoing conflicts and prevent the catastrophic consequences of natural disasters by enhancing disaster preparedness. We also have to work on tackling the root causes of both conflicts and natural disasters. We must address the root causes of poverty and ensure respect for human rights and good governance. We must prevent the effects that climate change has both on conflicts and on natural disasters. We cannot assume that all is well when the evidence begs to differ. The international multilateral system requires that we act together.

“We are not here to reinvent the wheel. What I have said is neither original nor new. Previous Presidents of the General Assembly have made similar remarks, and I fear that future ones will have to do the same. Looking for long-term solutions is clearly key, and I strongly believe that the General Assembly, the parliament of humankind, can indeed change the pattern. We can provide disaster relief faster and more efficiently; we can strengthen conflict mediation skills in regions that are at risk; and we can do more to ensure that people affected by armed conflict and violence are assisted and protected and that those providing humanitarian assistance can do their job without obstacles. We must assist and protect people when they are at their most vulnerable.

“We have had this same conversation far too many times. Let us change it.”

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.18/Rev.1.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly the draft resolution entitled “International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development”, as contained in document A/73/L.18/Rev.1.

As we present this draft resolution this year, the Group of 77 and China continues to reaffirm the importance of international cooperation in providing assistance to countries and peoples affected by natural disasters, in accordance with resolution 46/182, as well of the guiding principles for strengthening the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, while also recognizing that the States that are affected have the primary responsibility for the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within their territories.

The draft resolution continues to recognize the clear relationship between emergency response, rehabilitation and development, and reaffirms that in order to ensure a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development, emergency assistance must be provided in ways that will be supportive of short- and medium-term recovery, leading to long-term development. It further responds to the growing scale and scope of natural disasters, stressing our need to redouble our efforts in order to build the capacities and capabilities of our communities and enhance their resilience and engagement in order to respond to natural disasters.

Throughout, the draft resolution underlines the importance of taking early action with a view to minimizing and mitigating the consequences that might result from natural disasters. It encourages the increased efforts and engagement of the private sector in disaster risk-management activities and humanitarian assistance. It also encourages us to step up our efforts to mobilize predictable and multi-year support to work collectively towards common results in order to reduce needs, risk and vulnerability, as well as to mobilize additional resources through anticipatory approaches to financing. It attaches great importance to addressing the full spectrum of natural disasters, from early action to reconstruction efforts, with the goal of better rebuilding our communities and leading to the achievement of sustainable development.

Finally, the Group would like to thank the delegation of Morocco for coordinating the negotiations of this draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We also appreciate the constructive spirit and invaluable support shown by all Member States in arriving at a final text. It is our hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus once again at this seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.51.

Mr. Kickert (Austria): On behalf of the European Union and its member States, I have the honour to present a draft resolution entitled “Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel”, contained in document A/73/L.51.

The number and magnitude of humanitarian crises have grown exponentially in recent years. The *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019* estimates that nearly 132 million people worldwide need humanitarian assistance and protection. At the same time, aid workers have increasingly come under attack. The high purpose of their actions no longer protects them. Last year, at least 139 aid workers were killed in the line of duty. But humanitarian work depends on those who do it. Without humanitarian workers, no aid is possible. The equation is simple, yet that simplicity conceals the most complex and difficult task facing humanitarian organizations today, that of reaching people in need while guaranteeing the safety of humanitarian personnel. The international community has an obligation to those who put their lives at risk to make a difference on the ground. Our speeches would be hollow were it not for the courageous and valiant people in the field who put strategies into action. We have a collective responsibility to protect United Nations and humanitarian personnel and to hold accountable those who put their security at risk.

In this year’s draft resolution, we continue to recognize the diverse and multifaceted threats and different exposure that female and male humanitarian personnel, including workers in non-governmental organizations, medical personnel and United Nations and associated personnel, face in a generally deteriorating global security environment. We further encourage and support all efforts to build and strengthen partnerships, information-sharing and risk assessment among the United Nations, its humanitarian

agencies and other humanitarian organizations. Strong cooperation between actors working under the same principles has the potential to spur strong collective action towards the prevention and mitigation of security issues in crisis situations.

This year’s text further articulates the vulnerability of locally recruited personnel with regard to their working environment and welcomes the approval of a system-wide policy on the security of locally recruited personnel. It also expresses concern about the increase in the number of sexual assaults against both men and women and recalls the crucial role of investigations in the prevention of acts against the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

Last but not least, through this draft resolution we encourage and express appreciation for the continued improvements of the United Nations security management system, such as the adoption of a registry for victims of violence. The protection of 180,000 United Nations personnel across the planet is an extremely daunting task. We must all commend the work of the Department of Safety and Security (DSS), under the guidance of Under-Secretary-General Peter Drennan, on the protection of United Nations personnel and associated personnel. We have to remember that no effective action is possible unless humanitarian personnel are allowed to go about their work and their safety is actively ensured. The draft resolution reiterates the strong mandate and additional guidance from the General Assembly for the essential work performed by DSS and the United Nations security management system more broadly.

The European Union and its member States firmly believe that it is our duty to acknowledge the commitment of humanitarians and of United Nations and associated personnel, as well as to support their work and do everything in our power to further enhance their safety and security. I want to warmly thank the many delegations that took part in these consultations, particularly those sponsoring the draft resolution, for their constructive engagement in agreeing on a text that demonstrates our shared concern for the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. I would also like to thank the Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their valuable support, which informed our discussions.

This draft resolution has been and should remain genuinely consensual, as a testimony to our shared humanity. We owe it to the people who risk their own lives on a daily basis in order to save the lives of others. They need the collective, unequivocal and unqualified support of the entire General Assembly.

Additionally, I want to inform the Assembly that we have also submitted the annual draft resolution entitled “Assistance to the Palestinian people”, under sub-item (b) of agenda item 75. It has been uploaded to the e-deleGATE portal and is open for sponsorship, and we expect action to be taken on it next week.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.53.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.53, entitled “White Helmets Commission: participation of volunteers in the activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development”.

Since the creation of the White Helmets Commission in 1994, approximately 300 humanitarian assistance missions have been carried out in 71 countries across every continent in response to requests from States in need or to international humanitarian appeals, and they are always guided by the principles of independence, neutrality, humanitarianism and impartiality.

The White Helmets Commission is made up entirely of civilians and relies on a body of national and international volunteers who develop their activities on the basis of cooperation, solidarity and community participation. It is based on a bilateral and multilateral cooperative network, through which it coordinates immediate responses to disaster situations and complex emergencies and contributes to disaster risk reduction and response and recovery efforts. The White Helmets Commission maintains perspectives on gender and on the needs of girls, young people, the elderly and people with disabilities, promoting the provision of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations and cooperation in building communities that are more resilient in the face of disasters, including those generated or aggravated by climate change.

This draft resolution includes a number of innovations by comparison to the previous version, adopted by the Assembly at its seventieth session

(resolution 70/105), including with regard to multilateral international agreements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. It also recognizes the importance of ensuring that the public and private sectors and civil-society organizations, as well as the academic world and scientific and research institutions, collaborate more closely in disaster risk management.

In 2019 it will be 25 years since the General Assembly recognized and endorsed the White Helmets through its adoption of resolution 49/139 B. Argentina’s continued commitment to humanitarian assistance is highlighted by its convening of the regional meeting on humanitarian assistance mechanisms, to be held in Buenos Aires next June. For Argentina, it is important to emphasize the special significance of the General Assembly’s approval for the renewal of support to the White Helmets Commission, given that along with the protection and promotion of human rights, humanitarian management is a priority element of our political commitments at the international level.

Finally, I would like to thank the more than 80 countries that have sponsored the draft resolution in a sign of international support for the White Helmets Commission initiative.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.61.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): On behalf of its more than 100 sponsors, it is my great privilege to introduce to the General Assembly this year’s draft resolution on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/73/L.61), the so-called humanitarian omnibus resolution.

This year marks the twenty-seventh anniversary of the landmark resolution 46/182, introduced and adopted in December 1991, which created the very foundations of today’s United Nations humanitarian system. Sweden has facilitated the negotiations on the resolution ever since. Humanitarian needs have grown exponentially in recent years because of war, protracted conflicts, natural disasters and the effects of climate change. But the goal of our collective efforts remains the same as it was set out on that day in December 1991, to effectively come to the aid of our fellow women and men affected by crises. That is why we are here today. Thanks to the constructive engagement of all delegations, this

year's negotiations have resulted in several important improvements, reinforcements and adaptations. Today I will give just three examples.

First, we have strengthened the language on international humanitarian law, and not least on the safety and security of medical personnel and medical care in armed conflict, which are key priority issues for Sweden and many other countries.

Secondly, we have reinforced the provisions on sexual and gender-based violence and on sexual exploitation and abuse. The draft resolution now firmly puts victims and survivors of such violence at the core of response efforts and makes clear that the perpetrators must be held accountable.

Finally, we have taken a major step forward with regard to the fight against food insecurity and the risk of famine. Echoing Security Council resolution 2417 (2018), of 24 May 2018, for which Sweden was one of the penholders, the draft resolution now explicitly and strongly condemns the use of the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, a practice prohibited by international humanitarian law. This year's draft also stresses the interdependency and importance of partnerships between different forms of humanitarian assistance and the importance of the nexus between shorter-term humanitarian efforts, longer-term investments in sustainable development and our common responsibility to build, keep and sustain peace.

The draft resolution that I am proud to present here today is the result of the dedicated work of many Member States, large and small, including countries providing humanitarian assistance and those receiving it; countries prone to natural disasters and those with lessons on how to avoid them or mitigate their impact; and countries that have suffered violence and armed conflict, forcing people to flee, and countries generously hosting those in need of protection. I am extremely pleased to once again report a very large number of sponsors for the omnibus resolution — I believe that there are about 101 now — with strong cross-regional support. This broad and diverse ownership demonstrates the truly global nature of humanitarian solidarity. It is through our collective action and support that we will succeed in improving the global humanitarian system and ultimately provide relief to those who need it the most.

Finally, I would like to underline that the General Assembly's adoption by consensus of the humanitarian

omnibus draft resolution, as well as the draft resolutions on natural disasters, safety and security and the White Helmets Commission, sends an important message to the United Nations system and the wider world about our collective commitment to an effective humanitarian response system. It is important that we send this message and that we do so together, as the United Nations, and I call on all Member States to continue to support this draft resolution and our 27-year tradition of consensus.

Ms. Tang (Singapore): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on current efforts and the progress made towards strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance, as well as the trends and challenges in the global humanitarian landscape. We note in particular the continued challenges that the United Nations humanitarian system faces in ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance with overstretched capacities and resources.

ASEAN would like to take this opportunity to join others in commending the work of the United Nations system, in particular the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in coordinating and providing humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, often in the most difficult situations. In that connection, we encourage the United Nations system to strengthen partnerships with regional organizations in order to effectively provide humanitarian assistance while adhering to the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence.

The ASEAN region is experiencing a rise in complex emergencies and human-induced disasters and is also highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The effects of those disasters risk reversing the gains made towards the realization of ASEAN's Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Building an ASEAN community that is safer and more resilient in the face of disaster is therefore a key priority for our region. Our strategy and vision for that goal are anchored in the ASEAN Vision 2025 on disaster management and the ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response, whereby ASEAN works to respond to disasters as one in the region and outside.

At the core of those efforts is the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, the AHA Centre, which serves as the primary coordinating body on disaster management and emergency response. Over the past seven years, the AHA Centre has played a critical role in facilitating ASEAN's collective response to 30 emergencies. Most recently, it has responded to multiple natural disasters in the region and provided assistance to communities affected by Tropical Storm Son-Tinh and flooding in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, Typhoon Mangkhut in the northern Philippines, the Lombok earthquake in Indonesia and the earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia's Central Sulawesi province. ASEAN member States have also coordinated and contributed humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre to other emergencies in the region. The AHA Centre mobilizes the regional stockpile under ASEAN's disaster emergency logistics system and coordinates with various partners and stakeholders to provide additional support to communities affected by disasters, such as through the rapid deployment of the ASEAN's emergency response and assessment team to support rapid assessments on the ground and facilitate ASEAN's response and international assistance to affected areas.

Beyond ASEAN, we are also working very closely with our dialogue partners in the Asia-Pacific region through several processes, including the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Military Medicine Exercise and the ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief Exercise, which bring together the largest number of civilian-military personnel and assets in the region.

Disaster risk reduction and management also feature prominently in ASEAN's comprehensive partnership with the United Nations. We look forward to enhancing our collaboration in responding to complex disaster situations through the implementation of the ASEAN-United Nations Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management and increased interoperability between the ASEAN Secretary-General, as the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator, and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

ASEAN is seeking to position itself as a global leader in disaster management by 2025, as encapsulated in the ASEAN 2025 Vision on disaster management.

It is also the fervent hope of ASEAN and its member States that national and regional efforts will continue to complement and contribute positively to the work of the United Nations system. We stand ready to share the lessons learned and experiences gained with other Member States and regional and global partners with a view to effectively and swiftly responding to future humanitarian and disaster relief needs.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Eling (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The candidate countries Turkey, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Twenty-seven years ago, on 19 December 1991, the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182. That pivotal resolution marked the collective commitment of the international community to helping alleviate human suffering and help the world's most vulnerable people in their greatest moments of need. Since then, hundreds of millions of people who have experienced the horrors of violent conflict and natural disasters have received life-saving assistance.

Nevertheless, needs are on the rise while resources are overstretched and the humanitarian space increasingly challenged. Those are the operational realities that emerge every year as we negotiate and adopt the annual package of humanitarian resolutions. It is therefore essential that we engage in a collective reflection on how we can best step up our joint efforts and address the humanitarian challenges on the ground. It is in our common interest to ensure that humanitarian workers have the necessary support and tools to operate in today's humanitarian landscape. The tasks facing the humanitarian community have never been more daunting. It is not only the sheer volume of humanitarian needs but, most importantly, the very nature of current humanitarian challenges. The number and magnitude of humanitarian crises have grown exponentially. The *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019* paints a sobering picture. Nearly 132 million

people around the world will need humanitarian assistance in 2019. Almost \$22 billion will be required to meet the needs of 93.6 million people.

At the same time, many humanitarian crises have become so protracted that they now seem permanent. The average humanitarian crisis now lasts more than nine years. Such crises also take up the bulk of the resources and funding available. In 2018, four crises alone accounted for 55 per cent of all funding requested and received. More importantly, the increase in needs continues to outpace the increase in funding, even when funding is on the rise. As of the end of November, donors had provided more than \$14 billion, a record level of funding, to humanitarian response plans, which enabled humanitarian agencies to reach more people in need than ever before, saving millions of lives. Nonetheless, even such generosity and increased engagement remain insufficient, and the funding gap for humanitarian action is currently estimated at about \$10.5 billion. Statistics do not do justice to the task at hand. The underlying factors that fuel humanitarian needs are neither disappearing nor abating. Whole countries and even regions across the globe remain susceptible to fragility, stretching the humanitarian system to address the wider ramifications of refugee crises, protracted displacement and the vulnerabilities of internally displaced persons (IDPs), further amplified by conflicts, food insecurity and climate change.

If the international community is genuinely interested in preventing and addressing humanitarian emergencies, we have no choice but to acknowledge that the majority of today's crises are man-made. In 2019, conflicts are projected to remain the main drivers of humanitarian needs. Protracted violence will continue to negatively affect human development indicators, including levels of poverty, malnutrition, access to essential services and social rights. In addition to the tragic human costs of violence, conflicts lead to people fleeing their homes. The number of persons displaced by conflict has continually increased in recent years, with more than 68.5 million people forcibly displaced by 2018. While many flee violence or persecution across borders, in the majority of cases forcible displacements occur internally. With forced displacements lasting on average several years, IDPs are often particularly vulnerable where meeting their most basic needs is concerned. Furthermore, conflicts are increasingly a leading cause of hunger. Conflict situations undermine food security in multiple ways and create severe access

problems for humanitarian actors, who often struggle to reach those most in need. If starvation is used as a method of warfare, it constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law, which the EU condemns in the strongest terms.

Finally, we continue to witness how international humanitarian law is disregarded by parties to conflicts on an almost daily basis, with disastrous consequences. Hospitals are attacked and patients, doctors, nurses and humanitarian workers are targeted and often killed. Civilians are trapped in deadly sieges. Parties to conflicts routinely fail in their legal obligation to protect civilian populations. The consequences of conflicts are therefore beyond devastating. The already vulnerable are hit first and hit the hardest, and they remain at the mercy of warring parties for a longer time.

This is the reality that we need to address today. The European Union and its member States are committed to assuming our part of the shared responsibility to save lives, alleviate suffering and preserve human dignity. Protecting civilians, ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and providing principled, needs-based assistance will remain the cornerstones of our continued commitment to remaining at the forefront of the international humanitarian response.

We will stay the course in 2019 and continue to devote substantial resources and attention to engaging inside Europe and in Europe's neighbourhood, as well as to responding to emergencies across the globe. But rather than merely reacting to the humanitarian consequences of disaster and crises, we will also address looming humanitarian needs in an anticipatory manner. Whenever possible, we want to provide humanitarian assistance before a disaster strikes or violence escalates. We must therefore further advance our financing to support anticipatory humanitarian assistance that enables early humanitarian action before crisis strikes.

Principled humanitarian action will remain at the core of our response, whether in the case of natural disasters or man-made crises. We remain fundamentally convinced of the indispensable nature of the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We will persevere in our efforts to ensure that respect for international humanitarian law, refugee law and international human rights law — including safeguarding safe, rapid, unhindered and sustained humanitarian

access — remains at the top of the international agenda. Where violations of international humanitarian law occur, we will insist on the importance of accountability. Full, prompt, impartial and effective investigations are indispensable, including through the use of the International Criminal Court as a court of last resort.

In the light of the global security environment, the protection of aid workers is one of the EU's main priorities. Regardless of whether they are internationally or locally recruited, or whether they are from the United Nations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement or non-governmental organizations, humanitarian workers deserve our utmost respect and concern, and that includes protection from sexual harassment in the workplace.

The EU and its member States reiterate their continued commitment to putting people at the centre of their humanitarian action. Women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of disasters and conflicts. Humanitarian operations must take into account their specific needs and capacities and involve them throughout the response cycle. The EU therefore also wholeheartedly supports ongoing efforts related to the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation.

We must learn the lessons of past crises and pave the way for more sustainable responses. The humanitarian landscape, increasingly shaped by protracted crises and forced displacement, is shifting. We therefore need to adapt our response. Operationalizing the humanitarian-development nexus, while taking into account the peace dimension, with full regard for the different mandates of different actors, can help alleviate vulnerabilities and reduce needs in the longer term. Humanitarian aid can never ultimately be the solution to a conflict. We urge the international community to work on political solutions to put an end to ongoing conflicts, which is the only way to put an end to the human suffering that follows in their wake.

The challenges facing the humanitarian community today are therefore enormous. As the General Assembly, we must contribute to its work through the draft resolutions that we are adopting today. We do so by further strengthening the agreed framework for humanitarian action in draft resolution A/73/L.61, the successor to resolution 46/182, which has been introduced and very skilfully facilitated by an EU member State, Sweden. We do so by recalling strongly

the importance of ensuring the safety and security of humanitarians and United Nations personnel through draft resolution A/73/L.51, introduced on behalf of all of the 28 States members of the European Union. And we do so by better addressing the consequences of natural disasters through draft resolution A/73/L.18/Rev.1, introduced by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and very ably facilitated by Morocco. We thank the facilitators for their remarkable work.

The European Union and its member States remain collectively the world's largest humanitarian donor. The objective of our humanitarian aid is to save lives and alleviate suffering, wherever it is found. We shall continue doing our part in a principled manner. We count on the rest of the international community to join us.

Mr. Lal (India): It is my privilege to deliver this statement on behalf of India and Sweden on this important issue.

India and Sweden share a strong commitment to strengthening the United Nations system to respond to the complex and diverse humanitarian emergencies of our time. We are deeply concerned about the fact that humanitarian emergencies, primarily driven by natural disasters and armed conflicts, reached a new high last year, with more than 131 million people needing humanitarian assistance. According to the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019*, the humanitarian funding requirement for 2019 is nearly \$22 billion.

The increasing number of people who have been forcibly displaced as a result of humanitarian emergencies remains an area of concern. The global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, both soon to be formally adopted, as well as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, provide the frameworks for enhanced international cooperation in mitigating displacement and reducing the human suffering it causes.

While the United Nations agencies and other partners have made a commendable response to several complex emergencies, attempting to address different kinds of humanitarian emergencies with a coherent and comprehensive approach remains a significant challenge. Greater coordination and complementarity in the efforts of the various humanitarian actors are needed if they are to undertake effective responses

that are context-based and help to increase local actors' participation. We must adopt a victim-centred approach to humanitarian responses, with respect for human dignity, and we must provide the flexibility that people need to make choices about the goods and services they need the most. We should also continue our efforts to develop multisectoral needs assessments and build strong databases to enhance the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of humanitarian action. While the need for enhanced complementarity between humanitarian action and development cooperation is well understood, especially in the context of today's multidimensional crisis situations, development action by national Governments and the international community must focus on reducing risk and vulnerability, which will help to build resilience and capacity and prevent conflict. Humanitarian action must focus on addressing more immediate and acute challenges while contributing to collective outcomes.

The persistent gaps in humanitarian funding for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), to which both India and Sweden are long-standing donors, remain an area of concern. We call on Member States to consider increasing their contributions to the United Nations humanitarian assistance system, including CERF and the country-based pooled funds. More non-earmarked flexible funding is required so that humanitarian agencies can use it as effectively as possible, thereby catering to people's specific needs.

We are also concerned about issues relating to access for humanitarian workers and to their protection, especially in situations of armed conflict. This requires special and serious attention. We welcome draft resolution A/73/L.51, on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel, which we will adopt here today. Repeated violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law remain one of the most persistent challenges in this area. The parties to armed conflicts, including non-State actors, continue to flout international humanitarian law and perpetrate egregious abuses of human rights with impunity. Women and children remain the most vulnerable and need special measures for their protection. We must strengthen the framework for international cooperation in this area in order to bring perpetrators to justice. All humanitarian actors must adhere strictly to the policy of zero tolerance on sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure that the victims are afforded adequate

protection. We appreciate the Secretary-General's deep commitment in that regard.

As we work to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, we remain committed to preserving the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in responding to all humanitarian situations. The primary responsibility for providing protection and assistance in humanitarian crises lies with the countries concerned. In addressing the specific needs of the affected people, international humanitarian assistance must be provided impartially, in accordance with the guiding principles of resolution 46/182.

Sweden is one of the single largest donors of core funding to the United Nations humanitarian agencies and provides significant support in tackling the world's major humanitarian crises. Its overall humanitarian budget has increased over the past five years in line with growing global humanitarian needs. In 2018, Sweden made a decision to provide the World Food Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and CERF with multi-year core funding for the period from 2018 to 2021.

Sweden's humanitarian assistance is adapted to the world's growing needs and to the financial resources available, and it is committed to the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing. The Grand Bargain's concrete targets provide a vehicle for effective and efficient reform of the humanitarian system. Flexible humanitarian funding has continued to be a top priority for Sweden, as it enables more principled support and increased effectiveness. Flexible funding such as core and pooled funding enables timely, independent, effective and efficient humanitarian action.

India continues to assist its friends and partners in relief efforts, particularly in dealing with natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes and cyclones. Our efforts have ranged from the immediate supply of relief materials to the emergency evacuation of large numbers of people of various nationalities from danger zones. In the past four years, India has rescued 90,000 people, including nationals of 50 other countries, who have been caught up in natural disasters or strife.

Last year India provided \$200,000 in emergency aid and \$2 million for rehabilitation projects to Caribbean Community countries affected by Hurricanes Irma

and Maria, as well as \$1 million to cyclone-affected Tonga, through the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund. We have increased our annual financial contribution to the core budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East from \$1 million in 2016 to \$5 million in 2018. India also plays an active part in regional disaster management through forums such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.

The United Nations should continue to play a central role in providing leadership and coordination for the efforts of the international community in order to support the strengthening of humanitarian response capacity in a timely and cost-effective manner. In conclusion, let us not overlook the core of what we are talking about, which is human beings. The essence of humanitarian response is to save people's lives, alleviate their suffering and maintain their dignity in the face of situations of natural disasters and violence. We call on all States to respect and honour international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. India and Sweden remain committed to working with all parties to address the world's humanitarian challenges in an effective and comprehensive manner.

Ms. Chuchottaworn (Thailand): At the outset, the Kingdom of Thailand aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Singapore on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Thailand would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports under this agenda item, as well as their important recommendations. We also want to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all humanitarian personnel, within and outside the United Nations system, who have been working tirelessly to provide the humanitarian and disaster relief assistance the world needs. Thailand is of the view that one of our important priorities must be ensuring the safety and security of our medical personnel, humanitarian personnel and peacekeeping missions around the world. We also thank the relevant agencies, particularly the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for playing a commendable role in coordinating humanitarian disaster relief assistance operations.

Humanitarian crises remain one of the biggest and most pressing challenges of our time. As the

Secretary-General's reports make clear, the year 2017 was punctuated by humanitarian emergencies fuelled by conflicts and natural disasters, which drove humanitarian needs to a new high. It was also the second-most economically costly year on record in terms of losses caused by devastating disasters, particularly hurricanes, monsoon floods and severe droughts. In many of the affected areas, the unprecedented devastation required a more rapid and effective response than ever before. Thailand therefore attaches great importance to extending humanitarian assistance to all, particularly the most vulnerable, including women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, children and young people. We are also committed to providing humanitarian services and disaster relief under the guiding principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

The gap between global humanitarian needs and available funding continued in 2017, and in that regard, Thailand reaffirms its efforts to help address that challenge. We have been a consistent contributor to the Central Emergency Response Fund, providing an annual donation of \$20,000 since 2012. We have also allocated a humanitarian assistance budget of approximately \$1 million each year, to be disbursed as needed, and we have set up a coordinating committee to provide assistance to countries facing emergency situations due to natural disasters, through the donation of supplies and funds, the dispatch of search-and-rescue teams and the provision of medical personnel.

Thailand also recognizes the importance of disaster risk reduction in reducing human and economic losses, and in that regard we have worked to strengthen national and local preparedness and response capacities. At the regional level, we work closely with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, in accordance with our commitments under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework. We aim to ensure a more comprehensive approach to addressing humanitarian situations.

The importance of international cooperation in aiding peoples and countries affected by humanitarian disasters cannot be stressed enough. Thailand would like to reaffirm its commitment to strengthening cooperation with all stakeholders and partners, including the United Nations, in order to provide

humanitarian assistance around the world, especially to the most vulnerable.

Mr. Alfassam (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour and pride today to deliver the statement of the State of Kuwait under agenda item 75, “Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance”.

The State of Kuwait, under the direction of the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the leader of our humanitarian work, accords special importance to humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, as demonstrated by our commitment to helping those affected and in need around the world, in keeping with our country’s foreign policy and what may be characterized as its humanitarian diplomacy. Kuwait is aware of the worsening humanitarian crises, conflicts and major flows of refugees and migrants that have led to immense human suffering, which increases the burden on the United Nations and its partners in their efforts to address humanitarian and development challenges and coordinate humanitarian work.

In support of the relevant resolutions and reports of the General Assembly on the provision of humanitarian assistance, the State of Kuwait reiterates the importance of strengthening and coordinating the humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations as soon as possible in conflict situations and crisis-affected areas in order to save the lives of the people they threaten. In that regard, I would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for her continued support in the areas of humanitarian assistance, sustainable development, human rights and peace and security.

Kuwait discharges its regional and international responsibilities as a centre for humanitarian work by providing continued support in tackling various global humanitarian issues and monitoring crisis and conflict situations. The level of my country’s official development assistance is twice the internationally agreed percentage, strengthening our humanitarian and development approach at both the public and governmental levels. We work to fulfil a noble humanitarian mission that reflects the genuine principles and values of the Kuwaiti people. Furthermore, since 2008 we have directed 10 per cent of our total humanitarian assistance to crisis-affected

States through United Nations organizations and agencies. My delegation notes with concern the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/78) on this issue, which documents unprecedented levels of food insecurity and record levels of forced displacement, with millions of people displaced as a result of conflict, violence and persecution around the world. Syria, Yemen and Myanmar are current examples of the impact of such conflicts, crises and violence.

To demonstrate our full cooperation with efforts to develop humanitarian links between all States in providing relief assistance following natural disasters, a few days ago the State of Kuwait announced a voluntary financial contribution of \$1 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund for 2019. We have also pledged a voluntary contribution for next year of \$1 million to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and \$2 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). I would like to note in that regard that Kuwait has responded to UNRWA’s recent pleas by providing nearly \$50 million to mitigate the funding crisis that the Agency is facing, which is another factor in the worsening conditions being suffered by Palestinians.

In conclusion, we express our appreciation for the pioneering role being played by the various United Nations bodies and organizations and their partners in supporting and coordinating humanitarian and disaster relief assistance around the world. Kuwait wholeheartedly believes that the capacity for humanitarian action and good deeds is inherent in every person on our planet. The staff of the United Nations and all humanitarian personnel are the foot soldiers who give their all in performing their humanitarian activities, and we extend to them our thanks and deep appreciation.

Ms. Fisher-Tsin (Israel): Today more than 134 million people around the world are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The scale of the problem and the depth of human suffering are staggering. Israel commends the efforts and actions of the United Nations humanitarian response system, working under difficult and often unpredictable circumstances. The massive need for humanitarian aid has many causes, including natural disasters, epidemics and conflicts, with natural disasters alone claiming nearly 70,000 lives a year. It is crucial that Member States, civil society, the private sector, the relevant agencies and other humanitarian

actors strengthen the coordination of their humanitarian response in order to better deliver for people around the globe.

In 1958, not long after its founding, Israel adopted an official humanitarian aid agenda that has guided the country's international cooperation efforts for the past 60 years. Israel is committed to extending humanitarian aid at any time and anywhere it is needed. Over the years, Israel has sent humanitarian relief and assistance to more than 140 countries, saving many thousands of lives. Israel is often among the first on the scene in the wake of earthquakes, floods, famines and other natural disasters. MASHAV, Israel's agency for international development cooperation, leads our efforts in assistance and development aid. It has the capacity to rapidly organize and dispatch urgently needed supplies and medical assistance, wherever and whenever disaster strikes. Immediately after the devastating eruptions of Volcán de Fuego in Guatemala in June, MASHAV organized and delivered immediate humanitarian assistance. Following this year's earthquake in Papua New Guinea, Israel delivered and installed 40 generators to communities with damaged infrastructure. After a recent cholera outbreak in Cameroon, MASHAV delivered 10 water-purification units to help contain the epidemic. Each of those units, which operate without electricity, supplies the daily needs of 500 people. MASHAV has delivered the same units to many other countries.

Israel also built state-of-the-art trauma units in Guinea and Togo earlier this year and, just as importantly, sent medical personnel to train local health-care providers in emergency medical techniques. Building local capacity has been MASHAV's aim since its inception and "train the trainer" its byword for decades. Israel has sent search-and-rescue teams around the world following natural disasters. Just last month, Israel's urban search-and-rescue-team passed a demanding international certification assessment qualifying it to join the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, an elite global network under the United Nations umbrella that can be called on when disaster strikes. Those are only a few recent examples of Israel's humanitarian assistance, and there are many others. Reaching out across borders and giving assistance to people without regard for the country they live in are what Member States should aspire to, because seeing one another as individuals and seeing

their needs as individual needs is the first step towards healing the world on a global scale.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the United Arab Emirates aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would like to add the following points in our national capacity.

First, we are pleased to note this year's call for strengthening proactive and predictable funding mechanisms at the United Nations. Those mechanisms have gone beyond the testing phase and have demonstrated science's ability to accurately and reliably predict disasters, enabling us to take proactive measures, intervene at an early stage, save lives and cut costs. We hope that by this time next year, those mechanisms will be applied to existing humanitarian funds in order to support early interventions and humanitarian responses.

Secondly, we continue to note the need to develop stronger indicators to serve as effective tools for ensuring that everyone in an affected area receives the necessary humanitarian assistance. We consider the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Gender with Age Marker a step in the right direction. We also hope that the Committee will pursue and expand its work on age indicators and, more importantly, work to develop a disability indicator.

Thirdly, we believe it is important to focus on early childhood development within the context of humanitarian response as a part of an integrated human development approach. In that regard, we commend the progress that the United Nations has made with regard to the education of older children in emergency situations, of which the United Arab Emirates is a strong supporter in several initiatives, notably the Education Cannot Wait initiative. We must also make a huge effort to support children in their early years by providing them with a full range of services, including in the areas of health, nutrition, learning and parental support. Without them, those children's long-term potential will be significantly reduced, damaging their communities' ability to transition to post-conflict or post-disaster phases.

In conclusion, my country looks forward to continuing to work on these issues with other Member States, organizations and stakeholders next year in

order to develop and strengthen coordination in the area of the provision of humanitarian and relief assistance.

Mr. Santos Maraver (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Each year, this agenda item on the General Assembly's programme of work gives us an opportunity to reflect on the main issues on the global humanitarian agenda — humanitarian crises, conflicts and natural disasters. Our collective contribution through the Assembly is outlined in the four draft resolutions to be adopted today, for all of which Spain is a sponsor.

The *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019* notes that 132 million people will require assistance next year, of whom more than 65 million will be forcibly displaced due to conflicts, violence and natural disasters. Many of them are living in situations of prolonged crisis, with little visibility. We must pay more attention to those forgotten crises, in terms of both their funding and the political and media attention that they receive.

Conflicts and other forms of violence are the main causes of humanitarian emergencies throughout the world. That is why, in addition to providing humanitarian assistance, we have an obligation to seek solutions to the root causes of conflicts and violence. We must defend the right of women to participate effectively and on an equal footing in all such efforts. Their full participation underpins sustainability and peacebuilding efforts. In order for no one to be left behind, it is essential to ensure that all are treated inclusively, especially the most vulnerable — women, children, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons and the elderly.

We therefore want to reiterate in this forum the importance of the international legal ban on attacking civilians and using starvation against them as a method of war. We also want to highlight the obligation to protect health and humanitarian personnel working in conflict-affected areas and the need to grant unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance. As the Assembly is well aware, we are particularly concerned about attacks on hospitals and doctors in conflict zones. Together with other countries, Spain therefore wants to enhance the implementation of Security Council resolution 2286 (2016).

The degradation of the environment and the consequences of climate change aggravate the impact

of conflicts. For that reason, we support the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and believe that, based on the worrying scientific conclusions in the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it is essential that we take advantage of the synergies inherent in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. We are proud to be among the States promoting the global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which we hope the General Assembly will adopt next week. Spain's political commitment to the United Nations and to active and effective multilateralism is manifest in its response to humanitarian needs. We will continue to make a sustained effort to increase the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation's funding for humanitarian action.

Beyond funding, we will contribute to tackling these humanitarian challenges by using all existing tools, including our participation on the Executive Boards of the World Food Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and through the Donor Support Group of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — which Spain will chair from July 2019 to June 2020 — and the International Committee of the Red Cross. In that context, and as part of our commitment in joining the Safe Schools Declaration of 2015, Spain will host the third International Conference on Safe Schools on 28 and 29 May 2019, which we encourage all delegations to attend.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Spain's commitment to international humanitarian law and the resolution of forgotten crises and to the provision of equal and inclusive humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Spain and to say that I wholeheartedly agree with everything he said.

(*spoke in French*)

The scale and complexity of today's humanitarian crises are unprecedented. They must be met with a robust humanitarian response that genuinely meets the needs of the people affected. I will focus on three specific areas.

The first is gender-sensitive humanitarian action. Humanitarian responses should continue to empower women and girls as drivers of change, ensure that

they have an equal voice and representation in decision-making on issues that affect them, and meet their basic needs, including access to education and health care — which includes sexual and reproductive health and the rights of girls and women — as well as preventing and combating gender-based violence. That is what Canada strives for.

Besides that, we were pleased to see the inclusion of new language on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in this year's draft humanitarian resolutions. The international community must make greater efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, including in the areas of development and humanitarian assistance. In that regard, we commend the Secretary-General's efforts to implement a zero-tolerance approach in order to protect the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. In January 2019, Canada will assume the leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. We are determined to work together with our partners in order to improve the way in which gender-based violence in emergency situations is addressed.

Secondly, we welcome the steps taken by the international community to combat the issue of forced displacement. Canada supports a comprehensive approach in responding to the needs of refugees and their host communities, and we look forward eagerly to the upcoming endorsement of the global compact on refugees through the General Assembly's adoption of the omnibus resolution of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We believe firmly that the global compact will considerably improve our ability to respond to the situation of refugees and that the inaugural Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 will be crucial to the meaningful implementation of the global compact.

(spoke in English)

Finally, we need to increase our efforts to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those most in need when and where they need it. That must include those in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. International humanitarian law and humanitarian principles provide the framework that enables us to do that. We must consistently speak out against impediments to access and against attacks on civilians, health-care facilities and medical and humanitarian personnel, because such

actions deny the provision of assistance and violate international humanitarian law.

I would like to thank the facilitators of each of the draft resolutions being adopted today for their able leadership of the negotiation process, and to recognize the collegiality, flexibility and spirit of compromise demonstrated by delegations throughout the negotiation process. Their efforts have ensured that this year's draft resolutions remain strong and relevant texts focused on the prevailing humanitarian situations of today. Canada emphasizes its support for the consensus-based adoption of humanitarian resolutions as a symbol of the international community's unwavering commitment to addressing the needs of those affected by humanitarian crises and to honour the dedication of the humanitarian workers who strive to alleviate suffering on a daily basis.

Humanitarian resolutions address some of the most pressing and challenging global issues of today, and it is our duty as a global community to ensure that we continue to make progress and build on previous work. We are also pleased to see a new paragraph in this year's omnibus draft resolution on non-communicable diseases. So far the challenges related to such diseases in humanitarian crises have been insufficiently recognized and addressed. We note with concern attempts to revisit and remove language that promotes and protects the safety, well-being and dignity of crisis-affected populations. In particular, sexual and reproductive health and rights are inseparably linked to gender equality, women and girls' economic empowerment, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

In closing, Canada commends the remarkable dedication of United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and medical personnel, including international, national and locally recruited staff, in delivering life-saving assistance in increasingly complex and volatile environments, often at great personal risk. Their work is as inspiring as it is invaluable, and we remain committed to working to strengthen the respect for protection norms that will allow them to continue to perform their life-saving work.

Ms. Luo Jin (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: The world today is facing persistently high levels of humanitarian needs, owing to natural disasters, armed conflicts and protracted crises. At the same time, climate change, food insecurity and the global threat of epidemics have further exacerbated the humanitarian challenges

in developing countries. The international community must uphold the concept of a community with a shared future for humankind and should seek to strengthen unity and cooperation, step up its contributions and take active measures to address both consequences and root causes in our common effort to respond to humanitarian needs and challenges. In that regard, China would like to underscore the following points.

First, we must respond in a timely manner to the priority needs of countries receiving humanitarian assistance, while respecting their ownership of the process. International humanitarian assistance must comply with the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 46/182, adhere to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries receiving assistance, comply with international law and the internal laws of host countries, refrain from interference in host countries' internal affairs and from politicizing their humanitarian issues, and ensure that recipient countries play a leading role in the organization and coordination of their humanitarian activities. The parties to armed conflicts must observe international humanitarian law, abide by their obligation to protect civilians, humanitarian personnel and medical personnel and facilities and ensure unhindered humanitarian access and the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Secondly, we must invest in long-term development and enhance the capacity of developing countries to achieve sustainable development independently, which will in turn help reduce humanitarian needs. The factors leading to humanitarian crises are complex, and their fundamental solutions lie in the promotion of development and peace, as well as addressing both the symptoms and root causes of conflicts. While working to address short-term humanitarian needs effectively, the international community should also scale up its development efforts in order to help developing countries alleviate poverty, improve livelihoods, boost education and support efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thirdly, we must enhance the capacity-building of developing countries to enable them to respond effectively to natural disasters, which are causing increasing human losses and relapses into poverty, in some cases wiping out in an instant what countries or regions may have achieved over many years. Developing countries tend to suffer from inadequate disaster-relief capabilities and resources, owing particularly to a

shortage of available funding and a lack of technology and human resources. While taking into account the specific conditions and individual needs of affected countries, the international community should scale up its financial and technical assistance and strengthen capacity-building at all levels in order to create synergies and improve the disaster risk management capabilities and resilience of the countries affected.

China attaches great importance to international humanitarian relief efforts and actively participates in them. Through bilateral channels as well as organizations and agencies such as the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and the World Health Organization, we have provided timely assistance to affected countries in responding to food crises, post-disaster reconstruction, improvements to maternal and child nutrition and health care and outbreaks of Ebola. In 2018, in the wake of hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, China provided emergency humanitarian assistance to Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Somalia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Indonesia, supporting their Governments with disaster relief and reconstruction assistance. China has also announced the allocation of ¥600 million of relief assistance to Syria, Jordan and Lebanon for humanitarian and reconstruction purposes, as well as ¥1 billion of emergency humanitarian food assistance to various crisis-stricken countries in Africa.

China will honour its commitments to working together with the international community to meet the needs of recipient countries and will continue to help other developing countries to the best of its ability in responding to humanitarian crises.

Mr. Favre (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): The world's humanitarian needs continue to grow year after year, as the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019* illustrates once again. The number of people who have been forcibly displaced, whether fleeing violence or disaster, continues to increase and is approaching 70 million this year. The norms of international humanitarian law are routinely violated, and civilian populations and humanitarian workers are regularly attacked. Food insecurity indicators are increasing and the threat of famine is again on the rise. It is increasingly difficult to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches populations in need and that they have access to assistance and protection. In the face of such numerous challenges, the international community must provide a strong and united response and the draft resolutions

that we are discussing today should fully express that. I would like to highlight three fundamental points.

First, pursuant to resolution 46/182, we want to reiterate that in all circumstances and all contexts humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, in order to protect and assist the people who really need it.

Secondly, international humanitarian law represents the universally accepted legal framework for the protection of all victims of armed conflict and the provision of humanitarian assistance. It is essential to ensure that this framework is respected by all parties and in all circumstances, including in contexts where groups designated as terrorists are active, as well as in the preparation and implementation of counter-terrorism measures. The challenges that we have to respond to together are enormous. Access to people in need must be ensured. The protection of civilians, including those who risk their lives to care for the sick and injured, must be strengthened. The perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law must be prosecuted.

Thirdly, the problem of forced displacement resulting from natural disasters, climate change or armed conflict requires close coordination between humanitarian and development actors, as well as the promotion of peace and human rights. We should develop approaches that encompass prevention, protection and resilience. Internally displaced persons in particular are too often left behind, and effective strategies are needed to provide protection and assistance and prevent this kind of displacement.

Given the immense humanitarian challenges we are currently facing, the progress made this year with regard to these resolutions is encouraging. We note, however, that the draft resolutions we are adopting today still fall short of what the global humanitarian situation requires, particularly in terms of humanitarian access and protection. Lastly, my delegation would like to express its deep gratitude to the members who facilitated the various draft resolutions. The facilitators have worked extremely hard to arrive at consensus decisions that reflect the unity among States with regard to addressing humanitarian needs.

Ms. Raviłova-Borovik (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is an active participant in the area of international cooperation

for emergency humanitarian assistance. We regularly provide support to the main United Nations humanitarian agencies and deploy rescue teams of qualified specialists to bring humanitarian assistance to areas affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts.

In 2018, Russian funding for United Nations humanitarian agencies and direct contributions to humanitarian appeals exceeded \$80 million. We are a donor to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and support its role in coordinating the work of agencies and non-governmental organizations. In addition, we provide \$1.5 million annually to the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, which we consider a key universal instrument in financing humanitarian assistance in the early stages of emergency situations. Given the growing need for assistance around the world, we support the Secretary-General's appeal to increase the Fund's capitalization to \$1 billion.

With regard to fund-raising for humanitarian assistance, we should not fail to mention highly innovative methods such as forecast-based financing for positioning resources. In the course of the negotiations on the related draft resolution (A/73/L.61), we had the opportunity to exchange views with our colleagues on this subject and listen to expert opinions. We have decided to promote this method of financing humanitarian assistance and hope that humanitarian organizations will take it on board in the near future. We agree with the calls by a number of delegations to continue working on expanding and diversifying the club of donors. We welcome the fact that a number of Arab States have joined and hope their partnership with the humanitarian community will be a long one. We are also closely following the development of United Nations cooperation with the World Bank. It could contribute to the flow of additional funds in the long term, but while that is certainly a positive trend, in our view such appropriations should serve the aims and principles of the humanitarian community and should not be tied to the promotion in the United Nations of concepts that do not enjoy wide support.

We have yet to assess the impact on humanitarian assistance of the reforms currently under way in the development system. In our opinion, the formula for the transition from humanitarian aid to rehabilitation and development has not outgrown its usefulness, as some delegations believe, and is still the best option for planning the work of United Nations bodies at the

country level. Most importantly, it guarantees a clear and understandable distribution of mandates and provides a so-called humanitarian space that, as we understand it, enables humanitarian agencies to adhere consistently to humanitarian principles. That is why we are not ready to support the concept promoted by a number of partners of a nexus between humanitarian assistance, development, peacebuilding and human rights. While interaction between these areas should unquestionably be developed, we believe that mixing them together, thereby creating confusion among mandates, guidelines and resources, is counterproductive. We would like to remind the departments of the Secretariat and humanitarian agencies that there is no agreement among Member States on the concept of a nexus, and we ask them to bear that in mind in their work.

We also want to remind members once again that the humanitarian principles defined in resolution 46/182 should continue to be the guidelines for the humanitarian community. We insist on their inviolability and call on all involved in international humanitarian assistance to conduct their work neutrally and impartially and to respect State sovereignty, as the resolution mandates. We consider the practice of using the humanitarian agenda as leverage in achieving political gains completely unacceptable, as we do any attempt to tie humanitarian assistance to internal political processes. Such efforts are inhumane and unfair to those in need.

Despite all the complications and differences in States' approaches to the problems related to humanitarian responses, we must work to find common ground. The 136 million people affected need our help just as much as they need us to be able to reach an agreement. We can solve this multifaceted problem only in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, without disunity.

Mr. Escalante Hasbún (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a member of the Group of 77 and China, we would of course like to begin by welcoming the Assembly's forthcoming adoption of draft resolution A/73/L.18/Rev.1, entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". We are also grateful to Argentina for presenting and facilitating the draft of the biannual resolution on the White Helmets Commission (A/73/L.53), of which we are a proud sponsor. We thank Sweden for facilitating the draft omnibus resolution (A/73/L.61), which we are also proud to sponsor. Lastly, we are grateful to Austria for

presenting, on behalf of the European Union, the draft resolution on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (A/73/L.51).

El Salvador welcomes these four draft resolutions, which we hope will enable us to continue building an efficient humanitarian response in cases of disaster, taking into account every aspect of disaster risks, including exposure and vulnerability to threats and their characteristics, accountability in risk management, the importance of preparing to rebuild better, and mobilizing investments that take risks into account. In that regard, we would like to highlight the role of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), as well as the application of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as key tools in the prevention of humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters.

We also believe that aspects such as resilience in health infrastructure, cultural heritage and the workplace, the strengthening of international cooperation and the development of donor policies and programmes that take risks into consideration — including loans and financial support provided by international financial institutions — should be applied under the principles outlined in the Sendai Framework and in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We also want to highlight the reference included in the draft omnibus resolution to the call to action on and commitment to combating the adverse effects of climate change, natural hazards and environmental degradation, among other things, which exacerbate poverty, inequality and vulnerability while reducing people's capacity to cope with humanitarian crises. We acknowledge the mention of the significant achievements of the Central Emergency Response Fund, which facilitates rapid responses for saving the lives of crisis victims, and we emphasize the importance of expanding and diversifying the Fund's income base. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's call to increase the Fund's level to \$1 billion.

El Salvador and the entire Central American region have been affected by floods and droughts resulting from climate change and the El Niño phenomenon, which according to official projections has an 80 per cent probability of entering a new cycle in 2019. That has the potential to create humanitarian emergencies,

displacement and even food insecurity and migratory movements. In that regard, we want to highlight paragraph 69 of draft resolution A/73/L.18/Rev.1, introduced by the Group 77 and China, and the draft resolution recently adopted by the Second Committee (A/73/538/Add.3) on an effective global response to address the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon. We note, however, that the draft Organizationmnibus resolution contains no mention of this phenomenon and its consequences. We encourage the General Assembly to keep a close eye on this issue in its discussions on both disaster prevention and humanitarian assistance, and to further recognize the impact of small-scale or slow-moving disasters that, while they do not receive extensive international media attention, can indeed do extensive and irreversible damage to our countries' economic, social and environmental structures.

We wish also to highlight paragraph 60 of the draft omnibus resolution, which calls for recognizing and addressing the consequences of humanitarian emergencies for migrants. We once again emphasize and defend the adoption of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, as well as the global compact on refugees, and we call on the international community to respond in a timely manner to the humanitarian aspects of migratory flows. We also want to take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and express our satisfaction with the publication of the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019* and *World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2018*, which are comprehensive, authoritative and evidence-based sources of information on global humanitarian needs. We also note the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' recent publication of the *World Disasters Report 2018*. We would like to thank all Member States actively involved in negotiating the four draft resolutions, as well as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, OCHA and various other entities and offices of the Secretariat and the United Nations system.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate El Salvador's commitment to continuing its participation in the always essential building and improvement of the global humanitarian system, as well as our hope that international support for the United Nations system in both El Salvador and the region will be there if it is needed.

Mr. Haughey (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union on behalf of its member States.

Ireland warmly welcomes the Assembly's forthcoming adoption of the draft resolutions on humanitarian issues. The process leading to our agreement on them represented an important opportunity for us all to recommit to our predecessors' vision in resolution 46/182 of ensuring more effective collective efforts for the provision of humanitarian assistance. There have been few moments when such efficiency in humanitarian action has been needed more than it is now. The scale of the humanitarian challenge facing our international community cannot be overstated. The majority of the crises we are facing are driven by conflict, which has resulted in more than 65 million people being forced to flee their homes and millions more left in need of humanitarian assistance. We are particularly concerned about the situation in Yemen. We call on all parties to cooperate in order to achieve a political resolution to that conflict, respect international humanitarian law and ensure unrestricted humanitarian access and the free flow of commercial goods.

When adherence to international humanitarian law and respect for humanitarian principles are disregarded or discarded, the space for humanitarian action contracts and people die. We are deeply concerned about the increasingly challenging context in which humanitarian workers operate. We have seen increasing threats to the ability of humanitarian actors to function, a sense of impunity in the application of international humanitarian law, a shrinking civil space and the targeting of humanitarian workers. It is the responsibility of every Member State to ensure that those who violate international humanitarian law are held to account. We pay tribute today to those aid workers who have lost their lives in the line of duty over this past year, and salute all those who work in some of the most challenging conditions imaginable, delivering humanitarian aid to those in need around the world. Faced with these challenges, which are often deeply complex and protracted in nature, the international community has a duty to come together to assist countries experiencing conflict and to try to build a path to reconciliation, to prevent conflict by addressing its root causes, including climate change, nutrition, poverty and inequality and to uphold and promote international humanitarian law.

Ireland is committed to addressing those challenges in partnership with others. We have committed to increasing our development spending to 0.7 per cent of our gross domestic product by 2030. We are committed to ensuring that as much of our humanitarian spending as possible is unearmarked and multi-annual, allowing our partners to plan effectively and channel resources where there is greatest need. We also believe strongly in a multilateral response and are strong supporters of the work of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Central Emergency Response Fund. The challenges we face are enormous in both scale and complexity. It is only by working together that we can hope to address them.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, and we would like to add a few points in our national capacity.

No country is immune to the risk of humanitarian emergencies, which often involve death, displacement or destruction on a large scale. In 2019, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), nearly 132 million people in 42 countries around the world will need humanitarian assistance, including protection. That is why strengthening international cooperation in solving humanitarian problems should be one of the most important core priorities of the United Nations. By responding to humanitarian disasters quickly and effectively, United Nations agencies help to restore affected countries by forging a path towards recovery, growth and stability. Unfortunately, however, conflicts will continue to be the main drivers of humanitarian needs in 2019. Many humanitarian crises become protracted because limited progress is made in addressing their root causes. Indeed, most humanitarian needs occur in the context of such crises. We therefore believe that political and peacekeeping solutions for protracted conflicts must be at the top of the United Nations agenda. Many modern conflicts, including the ongoing foreign aggression against my country, are often fuelled other States' pursuit of their own political interests. They are not concerned about the humanitarian situation in the regions affected by conflict, and their incentive to reach a peace deal continues to diminish.

Ukraine is a sponsor of all the draft humanitarian resolutions to be adopted today, and my country places special emphasis on this topic. The almost five years of armed conflict caused by the ongoing Russian

aggression in eastern Ukraine have resulted in a protracted and complex humanitarian crisis. The United Nations estimates that about 3.5 million vulnerable Ukrainians affected by the Russian incursion will be in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection over the next year. More than 1.5 million Ukrainians are registered as internally displaced persons (IDPs). This area, according to the United Nations, is already one of the most mine-contaminated in the world. There is also a whole range of threats that could lead to further deterioration of the protracted humanitarian crisis in the region, particularly those related to critical infrastructure. If the Russian aggression continues, it could also result in an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe, which is why the cessation of hostilities remains essential to enabling an effective humanitarian response and the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel.

The Government of Ukraine continues to pursue its efforts to alleviate the suffering of Ukrainian citizens affected by the Russian aggression, particularly IDPs. We are currently focused on fixing the major systemic issues relating to the social integration and adaptation of IDPs, as well as on studying best practices for integrating them into their host communities. In that context, the Ukrainian Cabinet has approved a State programme for recovery and peacebuilding in Ukraine's eastern regions whose main goal is to promote the social and economic development of the communities concerned and to strengthen their capacities and social stability. We have developed a modern, innovative online platform for economic and social recovery to facilitate the operational monitoring of projects aimed at the restoration of infrastructure and the development and support of communities in Government-controlled areas. It will enable the authorities to respond promptly to the challenges and problems of the population in eastern Ukraine and facilitate assistance from international humanitarian organizations. The Government of Ukraine is also coordinating demining programmes and implementing projects on humanitarian demining that inform citizens who live in areas near the line of contact about demining activities and the rules of conduct in situations involving explosive objects, as well as providing other assistance.

Ukraine is grateful for the aid provided by the United Nations system to millions of people in need. We thank the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, UNICEF, OCHA

and other agencies and bilateral partners, especially the European Union, the United States, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Japan, Estonia and many other countries, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations, for their continued vital support to Ukraine. In particular, we are grateful to OCHA for advancing its humanitarian response plans, which will offer a two-year planning horizon for the first time. We hope that this approach will meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable and make it possible to reduce them by focusing on building resilience.

To complement those efforts, President Poroshenko of Ukraine has launched an initiative to mobilize international humanitarian assistance by setting up sponsorships by European countries of specific cities and villages affected by the conflict. The aim is to strengthen and boost their reconstruction and rehabilitation, and we call on our partners to enhance and embrace this initiative. In addition, as a result of Russia's recent act of aggression in the Sea of Azov, Ukraine has had to intensify its efforts to mitigate the negative effects of the situation on the social and economic development of the Ukrainian region around the Sea of Azov. We would greatly appreciate international assistance in this area as well, including through active engagement in concrete projects that we have already shared with our partners.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again that no humanitarian aid can replace long-term political and development solutions, which are crucial for people in crisis.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): The world is dealing with a trend in which humanitarian needs are increasing, in terms of both the funding required to remedy them and the people affected. The recently published *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019* details, for instance, the increasing numbers of people being displaced by conflict, the high human cost of natural disasters and climate change, the rise in food insecurity and the fact that humanitarian crises are affecting more people for longer periods of time. As I said in June during the Economic and Social Council humanitarian affairs segment, timely assistance is needed more than ever if we are to respond to such complex humanitarian needs. At the United Nations summit on refugees and migrants, held in 2016 (see A/71/PV.3 *et seq.*), Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan would provide an assistance package of approximately \$2.8 billion between 2016

and 2018 in humanitarian and self-reliance assistance to refugees and migrants and assistance to host countries and communities. I am pleased to be able to inform the Assembly that our contribution has already exceeded that target.

As we face growing and increasingly complex humanitarian crises, we firmly believe that in order to address humanitarian needs effectively on the ground it is important to utilize assistance efficiently. Japan is very much of the view that the joint approach represented by establishing a humanitarian, development and peace nexus is relevant in that regard, and we hope to see more examples of good practices in the field, which we believe are essential for broadening support for this approach and promoting its implementation. I call on the relevant United Nations agencies to increase efforts to activate this nexus on the ground.

With regard to the issue of natural disasters, which can cause humanitarian crises and exacerbate conflict situations, Japan places particular importance on disaster risk reduction. I welcome the references in some of the draft resolutions introduced today to the importance of implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for the period from 2015 to 2030, and I want to emphasize the importance of integrating a disaster risk reduction perspective into humanitarian assistance efforts in order to prevent new disaster risks and reduce existing ones.

Finally, I would like to inform all States Members of the United Nations that in August 2019 Japan will host the seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development, in Yokohama. We ask for the international community's cooperation in strengthening support for Africa with a view to reducing its vulnerabilities and further enhancing its resilience so as to promote its development.

In conclusion, I would like to stress once again that Japan would like to continue strengthening its work on humanitarian assistance, with a particular focus on humanitarian needs on the ground and effective approaches to get results and have an impact on people in need, and on placing human security action at the centre of our response in doing so.

Ms. Melfald (Norway): The scale and complexity of today's humanitarian crises are unprecedented, and we must therefore step up our collective efforts on several fronts. We support the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the United Nations, strengthen

international cooperation and promote partnerships that will deliver more sustainable solutions for the millions of people affected by humanitarian crises. Stronger partnerships between host communities, the United Nations system, the multilateral development banks and civil society are critical to a more effective and accountable response. The draft resolutions we are discussing today must be an expression of those partnerships and a united response. Let me emphasize four points of particular importance.

First, humanitarian crises are increasingly defined by crises of protection and access. Parties to conflicts often disregard international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. Attacks on health facilities and schools have become appallingly commonplace. The international community must condemn such attacks decisively and take effective measures against them. We must fulfil our responsibility to protect children from armed conflict, including by protecting schools, universities, students and teachers from attacks.

Secondly, we must ensure that the safety and human rights of women and children are respected. This should be an essential dimension of humanitarian responses and a priority. We should promote the participation of women and women's organizations and step up efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence.

Thirdly, we must redouble our efforts to address and reduce forced displacement. With the global compact on refugees, the international refugee response is undergoing a major reinvigoration. Internally displaced persons (IDPs), however, have so far not received the same level of attention, even though there can be no question that the need for humanitarian assistance and protection is increasing. Strategies for solutions for IDPs, including in cooperation with development actors, should be a main concern for the United Nations as a whole in 2019 and beyond.

Finally, we must continue to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and place people at the centre of our response. Earlier this year, Norway presented its new humanitarian strategy, which will form the basis of our humanitarian policy and financial support in the years to come. It includes more flexible funding and multi-year commitments to enable a predictable, adaptive and cost-effective humanitarian response. We are a strong supporter of the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund and the country-based humanitarian pooled funds. The

humanitarian system faces enormous challenges in the years ahead in a context of worsening and protracted crises and constrained funds. We are determined to work together to meet those challenges.

Let me end by expressing our strong appreciation and deep gratitude to the facilitators of the various draft resolutions, who have invested time and energy and brought Member States together to present a strengthened and united response.

Mr. Hawke (New Zealand): Two years ago, when New Zealand last made a statement during the General Assembly's discussion of humanitarian affairs (see A/71/PV.56), we lamented the rise in global humanitarian needs, the toll that the conflict in Syria was having on civilians and the flagrant violations that we were seeing of international humanitarian law. Regrettably, in 2018 little has changed. The world's humanitarian needs are greater than ever and continue to be driven by a lack of the political will needed to prevent and end armed conflicts and respect the rules of war that are expressly designed to limit human suffering.

The human cost exacted by armed conflict in 2018 is deeply worrying. The fact that 14 million people are on the brink of famine in one country alone should strongly motivate all of us here to strive harder to uphold human dignity, find political solutions to conflict and commit to lasting, inclusive peace. In various recent and ongoing armed conflicts we are seeing the devastating effects of the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas. Measures must always be taken to avoid incidental harm to civilians, or at the very least minimize it. If the risks to civilians cannot be sufficiently mitigated, the use of such weapons in towns and cities must be avoided.

New Zealand remains deeply concerned about the continuing disregard for the protections that humanitarian personnel, including medical workers, are legally entitled to. We strongly condemn all acts of violence, attacks and threats against humanitarian personnel, as well as attacks on hospitals and health facilities.

While armed conflict and violence continue to drive global humanitarian needs, climate change is also rapidly becoming a humanitarian issue. As an island nation in the Pacific, New Zealand is acutely aware of the threat of climate change. The Pacific is feeling the effects of a changing climate right now, from rising seas to a greater intensity and frequency of extreme

weather events such as cyclones, floods and droughts. Our humanity should be measured not just by how we respond to the effects of climate change but by how earnestly we tackle its root causes. That is why New Zealand continues to champion the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change designed to enable the world to become carbon neutral in the second half of this century.

It is increasingly important to ensure that the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings are upheld based on this year's humanitarian omnibus draft resolution (A/73/L.61). All people, including those in humanitarian settings, have the right to sexual and reproductive health. Sexual and reproductive health care must be available from the onset of a crisis. New Zealand will always strongly advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls, because without it gender equality and women's empowerment simply cannot be achieved. We are pleased that the humanitarian omnibus refers to the importance of involving people with disabilities in humanitarian decision-making processes. In particular, we would like to highlight the role of women and young people with disabilities and the importance of strengthening their opportunities to exercise leadership and decision-making capabilities.

As we head into 2019, the global humanitarian outlook is worrisome, with ever-higher numbers of people in need of life-saving assistance. The humanitarian system must continue to adapt to maintain its effectiveness and strengthen its efficiency. People affected by conflict and disaster look to us to collectively deliver on our shared commitment to humankind and sustainable peace.

Mr. Awad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Every year we meet again to reaffirm our moral, humanitarian and legal commitment to providing purely humanitarian assistance to all those in need without discrimination, politicization or blackmail, and in accordance with the humanitarian principles that we all believe in. In that context, I want to once again stress the commitment of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to its firm principled position, which is to provide humanitarian assistance to all those in need without discrimination while respecting the guiding principles of the United Nations with regard to humanitarian assistance in emergencies, as provided for in resolution 46/182. I refer in particular to respect for national sovereignty and the role of the State concerned

in supervising the distribution of humanitarian assistance on its territories, as well as for the principles of neutrality, integrity and non-politicization.

The behaviour of some Governments of States that are sponsors of the Assembly's humanitarian draft resolutions, as well as of certain officials responsible for coordinating humanitarian assistance, foremost among them the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, suggests that they are mostly interested in politicizing humanitarian action and in the shameful efforts to conceal the fundamental reasons for most humanitarian crises. They also exploit humanitarian resolutions in order to interfere in the internal affairs of States, ignoring some of the difficulties that the humanitarian field is dealing with, including the fact that funding for humanitarian activities at the United Nations has been reduced. All of that results in eliminating the human actions from their content, which forces us to conclude that the only solution to any humanitarian crisis must first and foremost be to tackle its genuine underlying causes, as well as its repercussions, without politicization or selectivity. With that in mind, I would like to make the following comments.

Turning first to the issue of foreign occupation, the insistence of certain delegations on excluding any references to foreign occupation as a situation requiring humanitarian assistance in the draft resolution on the coordination of humanitarian assistance (A/73/L.61) speaks to the malevolent reasons for such manoeuvres. It ensures that the draft resolution is neither comprehensive nor balanced and does not respond to the concerns of most States Members of the United Nations. That is why it is important to recall that Palestine, the occupied Syrian Golan and the other Arab territories occupied since 1967 are still under Israeli occupation, which from time to time results in new humanitarian crises.

My second point is on the fight against terrorism. The fact that draft resolution A/73/61 refers to terrorist activities as one of the main factors in humanitarian crises — as well as the fact that after years of neglect, such acts were condemned in resolution 71/129, adopted two years ago, on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel — is an important step in the right direction. States have finally recognized that violence, poverty and conflict are not the only causes of migration, displacement and humanitarian crises, and that terrorism is another fundamental factor in them.

However, despite the importance of this step, it is still inadequate, because certain States continue to deny that terrorism is the fundamental reason for various humanitarian crises, whether the subject is my country, Syria, or other countries of our region and beyond. The greatest proof of that is the terrorist hysteria that the world is witnessing, which has led to the killing of innocent civilians all over the world. We firmly condemned that and warned against its consequences long ago.

My delegation wants to stress once again that terrorism is the fundamental reason for the suffering of the Syrian people, particularly women and children. Combating it requires cooperating and coordinating fully with the Syrian Government, which has been fighting terrorism on behalf of the world and in cooperation with its allies. We call on the United Nations to put pressure on Member States that are known to be supporting armed terrorist groups in my country to end their sponsorship and support of such groups, particularly Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front, alongside any other terrorist organizations listed as terrorists by the Security Council. They continue to be the largest beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance through the so-called International, Impartial and Independent Monitoring Mechanism of the United Nations in the Syrian Arab Republic, which is politicized and illegitimate and has been shown to be an ineffective failure, as well as a serious violation of my country's sovereignty and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

My third point is on the grave consequences of unilateral coercive economic measures. The United Nations has always rejected and condemned the imposition of such measures, which are illegitimate and have catastrophic consequences for the economy of States and their peoples' welfare. Everyone knows that the Secretary-General issues an annual report on the economic and social consequences of such measures. The General Assembly adopts consensus resolutions every year that clearly condemn the imposition of such measures. We also have a Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of such measures who closely follows their effects and keeps Member States consistently informed on the illegitimacy and illegality of their imposition outside the purview of the Security Council. Regrettably, however, some Governments continue to ignore these facts, rejecting any reference in humanitarian resolutions to the

negative effects of such measures on humanitarian assistance. To this day such measures continue to be imposed, outside the purview of the United Nations, on Syria and many other States, by the United States, the European Union and others, despite continued calls and demands from the international community that they be ended forthwith. They have catastrophic effects on Syria's economy and Syrians' livelihoods, they have led to hundreds of thousands of Syrians' migration from their homeland and have hampered both health and humanitarian response plans in Syria. That unquestionably runs counter to the Charter of the United Nations and international legitimacy and to the lofty goals of sustainable development that we all seek to achieve. It constitutes an act of aggression against the welfare of the Syrian people and their right to live a normal life.

Ms. Nemroff (United States of America): Last week the United Nations released the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019*. The facts on the humanitarian needs around the world are sobering. More than 135 million people across the world will need humanitarian assistance next year. The United Nations estimates that at least \$22 billion is needed to meet the most basic needs of vulnerable people around the world.

Conflict remains the main driver of humanitarian needs. Protracted violence will force people to flee from their homes, deny them access to sufficient food and rob them of their means of making a living. That includes situations where Governments utterly fail to uphold and systematically violate their primary responsibility to protect the rights and well-being of their citizens. Food insecurity is also rising, with the number of people experiencing crisis-level food insecurity increasing from 80 million to 124 million people in only two years.

In the face of that dire need, the United States is proud to be a global leader in humanitarian assistance. In fiscal year 2018, the United States remained the world's single largest humanitarian donor and provided more than \$8 billion in humanitarian assistance globally. While there remain critical gaps in humanitarian funding, we are reassured to see other donor countries increasing their contributions. The year 2018 is on track as one of record-high humanitarian funding, and we commend the spirit and reality of burden-sharing.

In addition to critical financial resources, we must continue to coordinate our efforts across the pillars of

our humanitarian, development, political and security work. By drawing on our reach, our influence and our subject-matter expertise, we work in partnership to forge effective strategies to resolve problems and advocate at the highest level to support response operations on the ground, as well as to elevate the needs and voices of the displaced. That effort includes our responsibility to press Governments and parties to conflict to uphold other obligations under international law. That also includes our long-standing work to keep the humanitarian consequences of crises, such as in Yemen, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, firmly on the agenda of the Security Council and to ensure that we are still a voice for those often forgotten.

In that context, through these draft resolutions, the General Assembly can, and should, send an important message of concern and solidarity to the many courageous people who risk their lives to deliver humanitarian assistance to the millions of people around the world suffering as a result of natural disasters, armed conflicts and other crises. In recent years, there have been far too many casualties and deaths among humanitarian personnel who were working to reach people in need. We are grateful for their service, compassion and, in some cases, ultimate sacrifice. We also call on Member States and parties to conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the right of civilians to assistance, and to take every action to respect the operational independence and neutrality of humanitarian organizations.

The draft resolutions that we will be adopting today (A/73/L.18/Rev.1, A/73/L.51, A/73/L.53 and A/73/L.61) reaffirm the vital function of the United Nations in responding to humanitarian need around the globe. They highlight the steps that the United Nations and other relief organizations can take to better assist those in need and to ensure that scarce resources stretch as far as possible. The draft resolutions also articulate how Member States can better support the humanitarian community's life-saving work more effectively and reaffirm the importance of international law and the standards meant to protect those affected by conflict and disasters.

The United States remains committed to standing by people in their time of greatest need, be they suffering due to conflict, such as in Syria, or surviving and recovering from the impact of natural disasters.

The United States believes that women should have equal access to health care, including in humanitarian emergencies. The United States is not only the world's single largest humanitarian donor but also the world's largest donor of bilateral assistance for reproductive health and voluntary family planning. We believe that in humanitarian emergencies, women's access to health care is life-saving and should be available from the onset of an emergency, whenever possible. We also believe that it should not include abortion or the promotion of abortion as a method of family planning. Therefore, in order to address that concern, we have proposed an amendment to operative paragraph 59 of draft resolution A/73/L.18/Rev.1, entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". Similarly, in draft resolution A/73/L.61, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations", my delegation has proposed amendments to operative paragraphs 58 and 59. The amendments are contained in documents A/73/L.64 and A/73/L.65, respectively.

The United States remains firmly committed to its multifaceted role as a leader in humanitarian diplomacy and action around the world. We will continue to pursue the improved coordination and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid for the millions across the globe in need of relief from conflict and other tragedies.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): Bangladesh attaches great importance to United Nations humanitarian and emergency relief assistance and remains supportive of international efforts to help build resilient societies and nations in order to respond to humanitarian challenges. Indeed, resolution 46/182 remains the cornerstone of all such efforts. Constructive engagement and the coordinating role of national Governments are instrumental in facilitating international humanitarian assistance.

International humanitarian assistance should adhere to the overarching and fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We underscore the need for better coherence and coordination among Member States, United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders in promoting the spirit of working together towards one humanity. The unwarranted politicization of humanitarian issues, and thereby the creation of hindrances to delivering life-saving assistance when it is needed the most,

must be avoided. Humanitarian responses should be predictable, faster, timely and more effective.

In recent years, we have witnessed continued high demand for humanitarian relief and assistance across the globe. There are 135 million people in need and an amount of \$23.5 billion is required. Because of our political commitment to the global good, Bangladesh is substantially increasing its modest contribution to the Central Emergency Response Fund.

We believe that attaining sustainable development through the inclusive engagement of relevant actors could be an effective solution to many humanitarian crises, including those related to forced displacement. The international community needs to consider and undertake development activities with a focus on building resilience and ultimately reducing dependency on humanitarian aid. It is imperative to ensure better cooperation between humanitarian and development actors to enable a smooth transition from relief to development. The underlying root causes that adversely impact the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance need to be addressed in a holistic manner. There is a need for discretion in apportioning financing support for humanitarian and development work without compromising their respective priorities.

Bangladesh recognizes the importance of transition from emergency response to preparedness and resilience-building. In full respect for national conditions and actual needs on the ground, the international community should develop mechanisms to provide enhanced, sustainable, flexible and multi-year financing support and related expertise, technologies and products. We also acknowledge the centrality of the role of women as first responders and the need to further strengthen gender-responsive policy development concerning disaster-risk reduction and mitigation.

The Assembly is perhaps aware of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, one of the fastest growing crises of its kind. It has been thrust upon Bangladesh and means that we are now sheltering approximately 1.1 million forcibly displaced Rohingyas who fled into our territory from Myanmar's Rakhine state. Within our limited capacity, we are doing our utmost to provide them with humanitarian support, but that is not enough. We acknowledge the support of international humanitarian mechanisms, including the relevant United Nations agencies, in addressing the critical

needs of the Rohingyas. We also urge them to come forward to share the burden and the responsibility. Unimpeded humanitarian access to Rakhine state would also be critical.

Bangladesh remains concerned about the denial of humanitarian access in many conflict situations. We condemn the indiscriminate armed attacks against humanitarian personnel and convoys, medical and peacekeeping personnel and civilian infrastructure essential to humanitarian operations. We urge all parties to conflicts to refrain from such attacks, blockades and impediments. We also emphasize the importance of evidence-based information to ensure probity and accountability in the event of any reported violence. We noted with appreciation the improvements that have been made by the United Nations humanitarian system to address sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies.

As a climate-vulnerable and disaster-prone country, Bangladesh continues to make substantive investments in disaster-risk reduction, prevention, mitigation and relief, building on lessons learned as well as international best practices. In line with our commitment to share our home-grown expertise and innovations with others in a comparable situation, we have made efforts to stand by the disaster-affected peoples of neighbouring countries in recent times.

The Government of Bangladesh has established a national committee on international humanitarian law to ensure further dissemination and awareness-building among our people, with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross. At the international level, we remain committed to promoting advocacy for addressing the humanitarian needs of those displaced as a result of climate change, especially in cross-border contexts. Currently, Bangladesh is Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, formerly known as the Nansen Initiative. We look forward to enhancing coordination and coherence among the relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders in further promoting dialogues on that emerging issue.

In conclusion, we thank all the facilitators for their diligent work on draft resolutions A/73/L.18/Rev.1, A/73/L.51, A/73/L.53 and A/73/L.61, which my delegation is pleased to support.

The Acting President: I now call on the observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Mr. De Rojas (Sovereign Order of Malta): The Sovereign Order of Malta would like to express its gratitude for the opportunity to take the floor today. As a 900-year-old humanitarian organization with projects in 120 countries that is committed to upholding human dignity and caring for the most vulnerable, we appreciate the occasion to join in thanking and advocating for all those who, on a daily basis and all over the globe, help those who are wounded, sick, needy, marginalized and forgotten. Let me also congratulate the Assembly on concluding the discussions on this year's humanitarian draft resolutions (A/73/L.18/Rev.1, A/73/L.51, A/73/L.53 and A/73/L.61). It is a great achievement that, year after year, differences are increasingly being put aside in view of the suffering of so many people all over the world.

This year particularly has again shown us how badly humanitarian assistance is needed. The *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019* and the *World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2018*, recently compiled by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, clearly show that humanitarian crises have been increasing in number and duration. Between 2005 and 2017, their number almost doubled, and they now last an average of seven years or longer. Despite global development gains, one in every 70 people around the world is caught up in crisis and urgently needs humanitarian assistance. Next year, humanitarian needs will remain extremely high, with up to 132 million people in 42 countries around the world in need of assistance and protection, as has indeed been said by many speakers before me. In view of those alarming rising numbers, we should not relent in our efforts to foster dependable cooperation, long-term commitment and credible accountability in the provision of international humanitarian assistance.

It cannot be repeated enough: violations of international humanitarian law must cease. This year alone, 700 health-care workers were attacked and 230 health facilities destroyed or damaged. The ability of entities such as the Order of Malta to effectively provide neutral, impartial and non-political humanitarian assistance fundamentally depends on the safety and security of our personnel and of those who seek their help. Deliberate attacks on hospitals, schools and humanitarian supply chains and similar crimes are deeply worrying and simply not acceptable. Equally crucial is the need for rapid and unimpeded access to populations in need. We were heartened to see that, in

this year's negotiations, a significant number of States continued to urge for improvements on that matter.

Likewise, we are pleased to see that the international community has begun a dialogue on how counter-terrorism measures can sometimes adversely affect the provision of humanitarian aid. We urge all to ensure that those policies do not bring about undesired negative effects, for example by unduly restricting access to certain areas and groups or even by criminalizing medical and humanitarian activities and staff.

All of us here at the United Nations have the immense privilege to lead our daily lives in relative peace and security, even though we should be united in the humbling recognition that not much separates us from the more than 130 million people already in need of humanitarian assistance. At any given moment, armed conflict, natural disasters or climate change could make us one of them. Let us therefore not tire in our efforts to improve the legal frameworks, political climate and implementation of international humanitarian law in a spirit of true international cooperation and solidarity.

The Acting President: I now call on the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Mardini (International Committee of the Red Cross): States have a strong track record of working together in the spirit of humanitarian multilateralism. This month, States gathered in Russia to mark the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of St. Petersburg to the effect of prohibiting the use of certain projectiles in wartime. Next year, we mark the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

The humanitarian rules of the four Conventions of 1949 were negotiated on the basis of people's experience of armed conflict as combatants, civilians and persons hors de combat. Millions of people enduring armed conflict today need that tradition of humanitarian multilateralism to continue. Today we draw attention to three priority humanitarian needs that States must fulfil.

First, all States must ensure the physical security and safety of civilians. That is especially important for any State supporting other States or non-State armed groups in coalition warfare. States that supply belligerents with weapons have a special responsibility to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. The position of such States must be strong: they must

not transfer arms when serious violations are manifestly occurring or where there is a substantial risk that they will be committed.

Secondly, States must prevent people from going missing, clarify their fate and provide answers to families. Today we are seeing a global crisis of missing people. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is dealing with an enormous caseload of missing persons, some 100,000 people, and that is only the tip of the iceberg. We call on States to fulfil their obligations with regard to preventing people from going missing in armed conflict, including in places of detention. We call on States to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the ICRC missing persons project to tackle that challenge collectively and decisively.

Thirdly, States must recognize that armed conflict damages mental as well as physical health. In that regard, we seek a multilateral surge. Several States are already championing a greater humanitarian response. We ask all States to contribute their expertise and resources to tackle the global challenge.

Each of those three priority issues has a multi-generational dimension. The conduct of hostilities that ignores international humanitarian law destroys societies and deprives people of homes, livelihoods, health and education for generations. Failing to seek out missing persons or to address mental ill-health resulting from conflict can exacerbate social and political tensions.

Finally, in order for impartial humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC to work with States to address those and other pressing humanitarian needs, we need the trust and cooperation of States in order to work freely and effectively. Political and security responses to new global threats are having a serious effect on the ability of impartial humanitarian organizations to consistently provide principled humanitarian action.

The ICRC urges all States to address the pressing challenge to neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action posed by counter-terrorism measures and sanctions regimes. Impartial humanitarian organizations cannot reach out to people in a timely and effective way if humanitarian action is at risk of criminalization or is hindered by complex sanctions procedures and counter-terrorism

measures. The ICRC understands and respects the sovereign right of States to safeguard their legitimate security concerns, including through counter-terrorism measures. However, such measures, must be, and remain, consistent with international law, including international humanitarian law.

Increasingly, strict funding conditions and rigid counter-terrorism legislation run counter to the commitments that States have made to respecting long-established humanitarian principles. That, in turn, can risk undermining the trust of affected people and of parties to conflict and can render the provision of principled humanitarian action more precarious. We call on States to ensure that national legislation and international regimes on counter-terrorism and sanctions include exemption clauses for the humanitarian activities of impartial humanitarian organizations. The ICRC stands ready to offer its humanitarian and legal expertise in the development of new rules and regulations pertaining to counter-terrorism issues.

The challenge of preventing, responding to and recovering from conflict is immense, but we already have many of the laws, organizations and operational tools at our disposal to achieve a sustainable humanitarian impact for millions of people. States have an impressive record of humanitarian cooperation in law, policy and practice. The choice to respect the law, reduce suffering and preserve human dignity is a political one that rests with Member States. We call on all States to recommit to humanitarian multilateralism at this critical juncture.

The ICRC and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement stand ready to play its part. We look forward to meeting with States on these and other important humanitarian priorities at the thirty-third International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Geneva next year.

The Acting President: I now call on the observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ms. Ghukasyan (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its 191 national societies, allow me to express our gratitude for the opportunity to speak during this important debate.

In 2015, the world pledged to leave no one behind as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but humanitarian needs are growing at an extraordinary speed and are outpacing the resources that we have available to respond to them. That makes it increasingly difficult for humanitarian organizations to meet the commitments of the 2030 Agenda. Despite all our efforts, millions of people are still left behind in humanitarian response.

This year we issued our flagship report, the *World Disasters Report 2018*, under the theme “Leaving no one behind in humanitarian response”. The report describes how, out of the 134 million people who required humanitarian assistance in 2018, the international community reached approximately 90 million people, leaving a gap of 29 per cent. The report explores how various people are left behind in humanitarian response and highlights particular groups that are not receiving the assistance that they need. It calls for better attention in order to ensure that the people in greatest need receive assistance, including improved assistance to persons with disabilities, the elderly, people who live in remote areas and are difficult to reach due to the limited humanitarian presence and access, those who do not have identity documents, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, irregular migrants and victims of urban violence.

The report also identifies five fatal flaws that allow so many people to be overlooked. Too many affected people are out of sight, out of reach, left out of the loop, find themselves in crises where there is no more money or are deemed to be out of scope because they are suffering in ways that are not seen as the responsibility of the humanitarian sector. That calls for a change in traditional approaches to humanitarian assistance in order to minimize the risk of vulnerable people being left behind by giving a number of recommendations. Allow me to focus on three such recommendations that are relevant to today’s debate.

First, the international humanitarian community should do more to recognize and support local humanitarian action. The importance of more localized aid through empowered local action has been considerably boosted on the international policy agenda since the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. However, our intention of and commitment to supporting local actors that have been previously expressed have not yet become a reality. That clearly

demonstrates the need to reconsider our working model, which fails to recognize and embrace locally led response and action. For the localization agenda to become a reality, international humanitarian actors need to support and complement existing national coordination mechanisms and increase efforts to engage local actors in international coordination mechanisms. The importance of promoting a flexible humanitarian ecosystem that is inclusive of a broad range of actors and strengths must be acknowledged.

Secondly, increased investment and action are needed in climate-smart laws and policies, targeting the most vulnerable and marginalized. Climate change is not a new concern. Humanitarian actors, including the IFRC, have been dealing with the increasing risks for years, addressing them largely through their work to support people before, during and after crises. However, the rising risk of climate change, which has been reinforced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s newly released special report on *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, requires a scale-up of adaptation actions and greater cooperation among humanitarian and development actors, as well as with climate scientists, donors and other relevant actors. There is a need for ongoing reflection on the implications of climate science for those that are most affected and vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.

There is also a need to address the financing of humanitarian action, in particular for scaling up early warning and early action and anticipatory, forecast-based financing. In that regard, as an active implementer and promoter of anticipatory programming since 2014, the IFRC particularly welcomes the recognition in this year’s draft resolution (A/73/L.61) of the need to further explore and scale up forecast-based financing mechanisms in humanitarian response with the overall objective of anticipating, preventing, if possible, and reducing the suffering and destruction caused by severe weather conditions.

Thirdly, all humanitarian actors should adopt a community-centred, participatory approach. It is hard to leave people behind if one is there in the community with them in the first place. That is why the report makes the case for local action to be carried out by local humanitarian workers who live and work among the people whom they serve, are from the communities and are there to make the last mile their first mile.

The key for the coming years will be to link the global to the local, as global problems such as climate change add significantly to the risks that we face. Those problems continue to materialize at the local level, and we need to understand the local realities to find the right solutions to reduce vulnerability. The IFRC and its 191 national societies, through their power to penetrate communities, will continue to focus

on leaving the communities we work for stronger and better able to withstand the shocks that they face.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this morning. Action on the draft resolution and amendments submitted under this agenda item will be taken this afternoon in this Hall at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.