



# General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

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New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Muhammad-Bande ..... (Nigeria)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

## Agenda item 71

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

#### Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/464)

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

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/74/81, A/74/138 and A/74/319)

Draft resolutions (A/74/L.31, A/74/L.32 and A/74/L.34)

Draft amendments (A/74/L.35 and A/74/L.36)

#### (b) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/89)

Draft resolution (A/74/L.33)

#### (c) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

#### (d) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate

**and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/461)**

**Draft resolution (A/74/L.30)**

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus to introduce draft resolution A/74/L.30.

**Mr. Rybakov (Belarus)** (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great honour for me to introduce draft resolution A/74/L.30, environmentitled “Persistent legacy of the Chernobyl disaster”, for the General Assembly’s consideration. I would like to thank the delegations that participated in the consultations on the text of the draft resolution and to note the amicable and substantive nature of the discussions that took place. I would particularly like to thank the countries sponsoring the draft resolution for their valuable support.

In submitting this draft resolution, we are reaffirming the importance of international cooperation, under the auspices of the United Nations, aimed at addressing the long-term consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. More than 30 years have passed since the event that caused one of the greatest technological disasters of the twentieth century, the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, but millions of people are still feeling its consequences. In a tragic twist of fate, Belarus, the smallest of the three countries most affected by Chernobyl, suffered an extremely heavy blow from this nuclear disaster. The zone of radioactive contamination covered almost a quarter of the territory of Belarus,

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where about one fifth of its population lives. Dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster became a major priority for the Government of Belarus.

The subject of Chernobyl's legacy will continue to be an urgent one for the areas it affected for many years to come. The main message of the draft resolution before us is the importance of continuing to cooperate on the issue under the auspices of the United Nations in order to ensure sustainable development in the areas affected through partnerships, innovation and investment. The draft resolution is consistent with its predecessor, resolution 71/125, adopted during the Assembly's seventy-first session, and is based on the Secretary-General's report on the issue (A/74/461). We note with appreciation the international community's contribution to the restoration and development of the affected areas. The United Nations Development Programme plays a special role in this arena as coordinator for all the United Nations agencies and organizations involved in this work. The report notes with satisfaction the completion of the installation of a new safe-confinement sarcophagus over the old shelter structure, one of the largest-ever international-cooperation projects for nuclear safety and security, with 45 donor countries providing funds managed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The draft resolution outlines future directions for programmes for restoring the areas affected, including the development of local entrepreneurship and tourism, job creation, the transition of local economies to environmentally sound technologies, the promotion of sustainable forest management and agricultural innovation, the integration of people in vulnerable situations into local development processes and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

In 2021 the international community will mark 35 years since the Chernobyl disaster. In that connection, the document requests that the President of the General Assembly convene a special commemorative meeting on this anniversary, 26 April 2021. We believe that the problem of Chernobyl continues to be relevant, not only because of the accident's long-term consequences but also because of its connection to other important United Nations issues, such as disaster risk reduction and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, health care, the climate and environmental security. We see the Assembly's adoption of the resolution on Chernobyl as an affirmation of the ongoing solidarity of the international community in supporting the

efforts of the countries it affected and of its willingness to continue to give the issue of Chernobyl the attention it deserves.

In conclusion, I want to once again thank all the delegations that have joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution, and to encourage others to do the same. I am certain that as in previous years, we will adopt this important text by consensus.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Finland to introduce draft resolutions A/74/L.32 and A/74/L.33.

**Mr. Salovaara (Finland):** On behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States, I have the honour to present the draft resolution entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel", contained in document A/74/L.32.

We are all well aware of the complexity of the current humanitarian landscape. The sheer numbers and the magnitude of humanitarian needs far outpace available resources, and crises are increasingly protracted. While risks are on the rise, their nature is more unpredictable.

Humanitarian work depends on those who have the courage and determination to do it. Without humanitarian workers, no aid would be possible. The equation is simple. But that simplicity conceals the most complex and difficult task facing humanitarian organizations today: to reach the people in need while guaranteeing the safety of their personnel. This grave new reality does not spare United Nations workers, humanitarian personnel, medical personnel, and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties. The lofty purpose of their mission no longer protects them.

Last year, we witnessed some worrying trends, an increase in the absolute number of United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents, including an increase in the number of humanitarian personnel that lost their lives in the line of duty as a result of violence. Attacks against United Nations and health-care premises have also increased.

Accountability remains alarmingly low, contributing to the sense of impunity and to the repetition of heinous actions. International and national laws provide solid frameworks for the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel,

but accountability is lagging behind. 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 again recognize the diverse and multifaceted threats and different exposures being faced by female and male humanitarian personnel, including those from non-governmental organizations, medical personnel and United Nations and associated personnel, amid an overall deteriorating global security environment, and commend their courage for continuing to operate in such challenging environments.

In the draft resolution, we also encourage and support all efforts to build and strengthen partnerships and information-sharing as well as risk assessment among the United Nations, its humanitarian agencies and other humanitarian organizations. Strong cooperation among actors working under the same principles has the potential to evoke strong collective action for the prevention and mitigation of security issues in crisis situations. The draft resolution recognizes the vulnerability of locally recruited personnel in their working environment as well as the relevance of respecting international humanitarian law in undertaking counter-terrorism activities, in particular with regard to the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilian populations.

We commend the work of the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) under the guidance of Under Secretary-General Gilles Michaud and welcome his efforts aimed at integrating all security personnel of the Secretariat. This draft resolution reiterates the strong mandate and additional guidance from the General Assembly for the essential work performed by the UNDSS 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, to support their work and to do everything in our power to further enhance their safety and security. I wish to warmly thank the many delegations that took part in these consultations, especially the sponsors of the draft resolution, for their constructive engagement with a view to 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 United Nations Department of Safety and Security, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Committee of the Red Cross 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 that to the people risking their 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.

On behalf of the European Union and its member States, I now have the honour to present the annual draft resolution entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", contained in document A/74/L.33. The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this portion of my statement.

The EU remains gravely concerned about the difficult living conditions and the humanitarian situation affecting the Palestinian people, in particular women and children, throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including in Area C, and in particular in the Gaza Strip.

The political and security situation in Gaza remains volatile, and the humanitarian situation continues to be a matter of grave concern. The European Union expresses strong support for the work undertaken by United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov. We commend his efforts aimed at alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The immediate priority must be to reduce the tensions and avoid further conflict in Gaza. The return of the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip is indispensable to durably improving the conditions and the humanitarian situation. But to ensure lasting results, a fundamental change of the situation in Gaza is crucial. We call once again upon all parties to take urgent steps, in line with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), leading to a fundamental change in the humanitarian, political, security and economic situation in Gaza, including through ending the closure policy, fully opening crossing points and ensuring

humanitarian access, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

The EU will continue to support efforts by the United Nations and Egypt for the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single legitimate Palestinian authority. The EU will continue to work with our partners, the Israelis and the Palestinians, and with regional actors and our other international partners to that end. In this context, the EU is determined to sustain its assistance in support of the Palestinian people, including Palestine refugees.

The European Union and its member States are collectively the largest contributors to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We were among the first to answer the Agency's call for additional funds during the extraordinary financial crisis of the past two years. We are, and will continue to be, strong, reliable and predictable supporters of the Agency, whose role also remains crucial for the stability of the region.

We would like to thank all parties and the rest of the membership for joining consensus again this year and for rallying behind the principles and objectives outlined in this draft resolution.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/74/L.34.

**Ms. Eneström** (Sweden): At the outset, I would like to note that we fully align ourselves with the statement to be delivered later this morning on behalf of the European Union.

It is my great privilege today to introduce, on behalf of a record number of 116 sponsors, this year's draft resolution on the "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (A/74/L.34), the so-called humanitarian omnibus resolution.

This year marks the twenty-eighth anniversary of the landmark resolution 46/182, presented and adopted in December 1991, which created the very foundations of today's humanitarian system. Sweden has facilitated the negotiations of its follow-up resolution ever since.

Humanitarian needs have grown exponentially in recent years because of war, protracted conflicts, natural disasters and the impact of climate change. But the goal of our collective efforts remains the same

as the one set out on that day in December 1991: to effectively come to the aid of our fellow women and men affected by crisis.

This year, as the General Assembly likely knows, we have not reviewed the text of the draft resolution. Except for some minor technical adjustments, the text before us today is therefore the same as that adopted by the General Assembly last December (resolution 73/139). Instead, this autumn we engaged in strategic discussions on the humanitarian challenges, not of yesterday, but of today and tomorrow, and how we together can best support the United Nations humanitarian system. I thank all participants who contributed to these consultations, thus paving the way for a solid review process in 2020.

What I take with me from these consultations is a renewed sense of the deep commitment to humanitarian action here at the United Nations. While we do not always agree on everything in this Hall, we do agree on the humanitarian principles and on our shared responsibility to help those in need. This is important, reassuring and, indeed, inspiring.

The draft resolution that I am proud to present in this Hall today is the result of dedicated work by many Member States, large and small — of countries providing humanitarian assistance, and of those receiving it; of countries prone to natural disasters, and of those with lessons on how to mitigate their impact; of countries that have suffered violence and armed conflict, forcing people to flee, and of countries generously hosting those in need of protection. I am therefore extremely pleased once again to report the draft resolution's very high number of sponsors — a record high of 116. This broad and diverse ownership demonstrates the truly global nature of humanitarian solidarity.

Finally, I would like to underline that its adoption by consensus 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 today to support this draft resolution and our 29-year-long tradition of humanitarian consensus. I thank the Assembly once again for its support and commitment.

It now also my great honour to deliver a joint statement on behalf of India and my own country, Sweden, on the strengthening the United Nations system



to respond to the complex and diverse humanitarian emergencies of our time.

Humanitarian needs in the world today are greater than ever. We are deeply concerned that humanitarian emergencies, primarily driven by natural disasters and armed conflicts, reached a new high this year, with 148.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian-funding requirements for 2020 are set at \$26.5 billion — the highest in history. The number of persons displaced due to humanitarian emergencies is increasing and remains an area of shared concern. Today's humanitarian crises are more complex and protracted and place higher demands on the international community. Greater coordination and complementarity in action among various humanitarian actors is crucial.

We, India and Sweden, reaffirm that humanitarian principles and international law provide the basis for humanitarian assistance. We are committed to preserving and strengthening respect for and adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Repeated violations of international humanitarian law remain one of the most serious challenges. Parties to armed conflicts, including non-State actors, continue to flout international humanitarian law and perpetrate abuses of human rights with impunity. In today's armed conflicts, we continue to witness lack of humanitarian access to persons in need, and increasing attacks and threats directed at civilians in armed conflict, as well as at medical care.

The primary responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance in a crisis always lies with the affected State. In addressing the specific needs of affected people, international humanitarian assistance must be provided impartially, in accordance with the guiding principles set forth in resolution 46/182.

United Nations agencies and other partners continue to respond to complex emergencies in a commendable manner. The need for enhanced complementarity between humanitarian action and development cooperation is well recognized, especially in the context of today's multidimensional crisis situations.

The underfinancing of humanitarian appeals remains a challenge. We call on Member States to consider increasing their contribution to the United Nations humanitarian assistance system, including the

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the country-based pooled funds. We would like to stress the value added in non-earmarked flexible funding and predictable support to our humanitarian partners.

Access for and the protection of humanitarian workers, especially in situations of armed conflict, remain a concern. Attacks on humanitarian personnel are not only attacks on the United Nations, but also on humankind itself. We welcome draft resolution A/74/L.32, on "Safety and Security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel", to be adopted in this Hall later today.

There must be no doubt that there is zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse within the United Nations system and elsewhere. Persons responsible for sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation must be held accountable. Victims of these abuses as well as those who report such abuses must be afforded adequate protection. We appreciate the Secretary-General's deep commitment to this important issue and look forward to taking concrete steps to tackle it.

Sweden has long been one of the largest donors of core funding to United Nations humanitarian actors. Sweden's overall humanitarian budget has also consistently increased over the past five years, in line with growing humanitarian needs.

Sweden remains committed to the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing. In line with our Grand Bargain commitments, Sweden will 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 of 2018-2021. The Grand Bargain's concrete targets provide a vehicle for effectiveness-and-efficiency reform of the humanitarian system as well as enhanced inclusiveness. Flexible humanitarian funding remains a top priority for Sweden as we strongly believe that flexible funding, such as core and pooled funding, allows for timely, independent, effective and efficient humanitarian action.

India supports fellow developing countries through assistance and relief efforts in humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters. These efforts have ranged from immediate supply of relief materials to emergency evacuation of very large numbers of persons of various nationalities from affected areas. The Indian Navy was the first responder in the evolving

humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai, which hit Mozambique on 15 March. India has also provided emergency relief material, including food supplies and medicines, to three countries affected by Cyclone Idai in southern Africa and to the people of the Bahamas who were affected by Hurricane Dorian.

Going forward we need to look beyond immediate relief and rehabilitation. A disaster-resilient world demands disaster-resilient infrastructure. India remains committed to addressing the challenges of complex humanitarian emergencies through building disaster-resilient infrastructure. In this context, India took the initiative to launch the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure, in partnership with several other countries, during the 2019 Climate Action Summit.

We, India and Sweden, today call on all Member States to engage and do their part to ensure that today's unprecedented needs and challenges are met with unparalleled solidarity and a robust humanitarian response.

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine, who will introduce draft resolution A/74/L.31 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I will be delivering two statements: one on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, in relation to the draft resolution on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, and another in my national capacity in relation to the draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people.

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I have the honour to introduce before the plenary of the General Assembly the draft resolution entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development" (A/74/L.31). As we present this draft resolution again this year, the Group of 77 and China continue to reaffirm the importance of international cooperation in providing assistance to countries and peoples affected by natural disasters, in accordance with resolution 46/182 and the guiding principles for the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system. The draft resolution includes these important elements while also recognizing that it is those States affected that bear primary responsibility for the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian

assistance within their territories. The text continues to recognize the clear relationship between emergency response, rehabilitation and development, and reaffirms that, in order to ensure a smooth transition between these three stages, emergency assistance must be provided in such a way as to be supportive of short- and medium-term recovery ultimately leading to long-term development.

This year's draft resolution before the General Assembly puts particular emphasis on climate change and its impact on natural disasters. In this regard, the draft welcomes the convening of the 2019 Climate Action Summit by the Secretary-General on 23 September and takes note of the multi-partner initiatives and commitments presented during the Summit. The draft resolution further addresses the growing magnitude and scope of natural disasters. Accordingly, the text stresses the need to redouble our efforts in building community capacities and capabilities by helping communities prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters.

The draft resolution clearly underlines the importance of taking early action with a view to minimizing and mitigating the potential consequences of natural disasters. Furthermore, the draft encourages Member States to develop coherent approaches to addressing the challenges of displacement in the context of natural disasters, including sudden-onset and slow-onset disasters, and takes note of relevant initiatives in this regard.

While recognizing the important contribution of healthy ecosystems to reducing disaster risk and building community resilience, the draft resolution encourages all states, United Nations entities and other relevant actors to promote ecosystems-based approaches and nature-based solutions for disaster-risk reduction at all levels and across all phases of disaster-risk reduction and management. Moreover, it encourages increased efforts and engagement by the private sector in disaster-risk management activities and in humanitarian assistance.

The text also encourages stepping up our efforts to mobilize predictable and multi-year support to work collectively towards common results in order to reduce need, risk and vulnerability, and to mobilize additional resources through anticipatory financing approaches. The draft resolution attaches great importance to addressing the full spectrum of natural

disasters, from early action to reconstruction efforts aiming at rebuilding strong communities and achieving sustainable development.

Finally, this year's draft resolution encourages Member States, humanitarian organizations and other relevant stakeholders, in the context of natural disasters, to ensure access to safe drinking water and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, including women and girls.

The Group off 77 and China would like to thank the delegation of Morocco for having coordinated the negotiations on this draft resolution on behalf of the Group. We would also like to thank colleagues in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs who assisted us throughout the process. We also appreciate the constructive spirit and the invaluable support shown by all Member States in the process of reaching the final text. It is our hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly as its precursor resolutions were at past sessions.

Finally, I would like to conclude by urging all delegations to support the integrity of this draft resolution and vote against the amendment proposed by the United States of America (A/74/L.35). I would also urge all delegations to vote to retain every paragraph of the draft resolution.

I shall now turn to the second part of my statement and speak in my national capacity.

*(spoke in Arabic)*

Having reviewed the report of Secretary-General António Guterres on "Assistance to the Palestinian people", which covers the period 26 July 2018 to 24 July 2019 (A/74/89), I would like to express my thanks to the Secretary-General and his team for their efforts in preparing the report, which addresses all aspects of the economic and social life of the Palestinian people. I would like also to express my thanks to all United Nations agencies and programmes that have been extending assistance to the Palestinian people, as well as all donor States, individually and collectively.

The report addresses in a thorough and practical manner the many aspects of assistance implemented by the various United Nations programmes and funds operating in the occupied Palestinian territory, and clearly illustrates the urgent need of Palestinians for such assistance and the positive impact thereof on

their day-to-day life. The United Nations, through its various agencies and programmes, has continued for more than 70 years to address the consequences of the Nakba and the displacement of Palestinians from their land and villages, as well as their loss of livelihoods and economic assets.

Throughout the occupation's duration of more than half a century, the United Nations has worked continuously to address those many negative consequences on all aspects of Palestinian's life. However, the root causes of the problem have not been addressed. As long as Israel, the occupying Power, acts as if it is a State above international law and the international system fails to compel it to enforce international resolutions, the international system will continue to have to address the consequences and not the root causes of the problem for a long time.

Only 10 years remain to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Development challenges are persistent, global and universal. No one is spared the effects of climate change, pollution, desertification, ocean acidification, the future of work, water shortages, cross-border epidemics and others. However, the only difference with respect to these effects is in the degree of their impact on different countries, which largely depends on a country's readiness to adapt to and mitigate these effects. The process of adaptation and mitigation is based on three pillars: sound planning; mobilization of the necessary resources; and implementation and follow-up capacity.

The Government of the State of Palestine has established a five-year development plan — National Policy Agenda 2017-2022: Putting Citizens First — to ensure that no one is left behind. The plan takes into consideration the processes of adaptation with the results and implications of universal development challenges. We are currently working on allocating national and international financial resources to implement the plan. However, the third pillar, implementation and follow-up, is being jeopardized by the Israeli occupation. Except for the assistance provided to the Palestinian people by the United Nations and friendly donor countries in the field of education, which lays the groundwork for genuine sustainable development, the remaining assistance extended to the Palestinian people is relief aid, which, although vital and crucially important, does not help build genuine infrastructure for the sustainable development to which the Palestinian people aspire,

or help them remain on the rest of their territory and establish lasting peace.

In 2017, the State of Palestine submitted to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development its first voluntary national review on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. We demonstrated, in a very practical and evidence-based manner, that, despite having in place a national plan developed in collaboration with all national and international partners, the greatest obstacle hindering the implementation of this ambitious national plan remains the Israeli occupation and its many consequences, which create obstacles for the Palestinian people on a daily basis. Palestinians are prevented from exercising their natural rights in Area C of the West Bank, which accounts for 60 per cent of the occupied West Bank, and from engaging in natural communication with each other. The continuous blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, the construction of the annexation and expansion wall within the occupied West Bank and the ongoing policy of demolishing Palestinian property, not to mention illegal settlement expansion, confiscation of Palestinian property and land, as well as dozens of other practices detailed in reports of the United Nations and other reliable international organizations, all combine to produce a situation that will eventually see Palestinians left behind.

In 2019, we made a quantum leap in the political and diplomatic work achieved by the State of Palestine as Chair of the Group of 77 and China. The State of Palestine proved to be an influential actor in global development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We responsibly and constructively dealt with all partners outside the Group and led negotiation processes, earning commendation and respect from all. This is yet further evidence that we are an important and active part of the international community and capable of effecting positive change. As such, all previous investments of the United Nations system and friendly States in building the capacities of the Palestinian people have had far-reaching impact, not only bearing fruit for Palestinians but also benefiting efforts to achieve ambitious global developmental goals.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my thanks to all those countries that have provided and continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, as well as to all the United Nations agencies and programmes

operating in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America to introduce draft amendments contained in documents A/74/L.35 and A/74/L.36.

**Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America): Two weeks ago, the United Nations released the *Global Humanitarian Overview: 2020*, which paints a sobering picture of the challenges and human suffering we need to address in the year ahead. Humanitarian needs are increasing amid disturbing trends, such as prolonged and intensifying conflicts, exemplified by Syria, now in its ninth year of civil war; large-scale population displacement as a result of violent extremism, which we continue to see in Iraq; and increased attacks directed against humanitarian workers in emergencies like the one taking place in South Sudan. Needs are also being exacerbated by severe climate shocks in such countries as Chad and Niger, as well as large infectious disease outbreaks in such places as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, bad governance, violence and restrictions on civil society in such countries as Zimbabwe and Venezuela continue to drive food insecurity and exacerbate humanitarian crises.

According to the *Global Humanitarian Overview* just released, in 2020, a record 168 million people will need humanitarian aid and protection, which is 36 million more than the number forecast in the *Global Humanitarian Overview: 2019*, released in December 2018. The United Nations and partners will require \$28.8 billion to reach nearly 110 million of the most vulnerable people.

The United States is the world's largest humanitarian donor, having provided over \$9.3 billion in 2019. That figure represents nearly one third of the \$28.1 billion requested by the United Nations last year and over 43 per cent of the total money put forward for humanitarian needs as of November 2019.

Yemen is still the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Needs also remain high in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan and Venezuela. In 2019, there were several underfunded humanitarian-response plans, including those for Venezuela, only 25 per cent funded; Syria, only 36 per cent funded; and Haiti, only 29 per cent funded. These statistics underscore the need for greater burden-sharing among donors. We are reassured to see



other donors increasing their contributions. However, in the face of growing needs and suffering, we urge others to step up and do more.

The United States will continue to help people in their time of need. On average, the United States responds to over 65 disasters each year — that is more than one each week — in more than 50 countries, providing assistance to people affected by such rapid-onset disasters as earthquakes, volcanoes and floods, as well as slow-onset crises, including droughts and conflict.

The United States Agency for International Development is also the largest provider of food assistance in the world. The United States has capabilities that no one else in the world has, and we are proud to use them in humanitarian emergencies for those who need it. In addition to increasing financial resources and the number of partners sharing the financial burden, we must continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our humanitarian efforts, in part by supporting reforms in the international humanitarian system, which includes ensuring coherence between our humanitarian, peacebuilding and development efforts, empowering local actors, increasing transparency and improving joint and impartial needs assessments.

We must also press Governments and parties to conflict to uphold their obligations under international law. This approach includes our long-standing work to keep the humanitarian consequences of crises, such as those in Yemen and Syria, on the agenda of the Security Council. In this respect, the United States and partners will never allow the voices of those suffering to be silenced or forgotten.

The United States is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/74/L.32, entitled “Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel”. This draft resolution sends an important and timely message of concern and solidarity to the many courageous people who risk their lives to deliver humanitarian assistance to the millions of people in urgent need. In just the first nine months of 2019, there were 825 attacks against health workers and health-care facilities, resulting in 171 deaths. Attacks directed against civilians, including humanitarian workers, in armed conflicts reflect a callous disregard for human life and for international humanitarian law. We proudly stand behind this draft resolution and convey our sincerest thanks and support

to all humanitarian personnel working in many of the world’s most dangerous places. We are grateful for their extraordinary service and compassion. We call on Member States to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to promote the protection of humanitarian workers.

The United States supports victims of gender-based violence and condemns exploitation of women and girls during emergencies. However, we would like to emphasize that sexual and reproductive health care should focus on health promotion and prevention, consistent with national legislation and policies and not on abortion. We have therefore proposed amendments to operative paragraphs 58 and 59 of the humanitarian omnibus draft resolution contained in document A/74/L.34. We have also proposed an amendment to operative paragraph 62 of the natural disasters draft resolution contained in document A/74/L.31, which would address these concerns.

The United States remains firmly committed to our multifaceted role as a leader in humanitarian action and diplomacy around the world. We will continue to pursue improved coordination and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid for the millions across the globe in need of relief from conflict and other tragedies. We request that this statement be made part of the official record of the meeting.

**Ms. Sulaiman** (Brunei Darussalam): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports under this agenda item (A/74/81, A/74/138, A/74/319 and A/74/464), which highlight the many challenges facing humanitarian workers, especially in delivering humanitarian aid.

It is important that we take this moment to commend all humanitarian workers on the ground in grave situations doing their best to help those in the most vulnerable of conditions. We would also like to express our deep gratitude to the United Nations system, especially to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for playing its invaluable role in coordinating and providing humanitarian support.

South-East Asia is home to some of the worst natural disasters on the planet. In 2018 alone, ASEAN member States experienced 424 natural disasters, ranging from the devastating earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Palu, volcanic eruptions in Bali, super-typhoon Mangkhut in the Philippines and extreme flooding in Laos, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Cambodia. These natural disasters have resulted in \$1.2 billion in damage to infrastructure, property and agriculture, as well as loss of life.

We in ASEAN are fully aware that disasters are often transboundary in nature and therefore require coordinated, transboundary responses. In this regard, ASEAN has put in place frameworks to ensure that we respond in an integrated and collaborative manner. The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was envisaged to facilitate regional cooperation to better prepare ourselves for and respond to disasters, which in turn led to the creation of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance. Since its establishment in November 2011, the Centre has become an international beacon for disaster response. It has responded to 31 major disasters in seven ASEAN member States, providing assistance ranging from the deployment of ASEAN relief items, information management and coordination of support to rapid assessment through the deployment of the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team.

ASEAN has also made significant headway in its efforts to enhance its capacities in disaster management. In March this year, the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre launched the first edition of the ASEAN Risk Monitor and Disaster Management Review, which provides new analyses and insights on the science behind disaster management and its applicability to policymaking.

We are also pleased to share with the Assembly some milestones that the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA) has attained. In June and July 2019, DELSA satellite warehouses were launched in Thailand and Philippines, respectively. These satellite warehouses will supplement the DELSA warehouse in Subang, Malaysia, and enable the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre to enhance the mobilization of relief items to disaster-affected areas within the ASEAN region, further strengthening ASEAN's collective response to natural disasters under the "One ASEAN One Response" approach.

This year, ASEAN held its fifth Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management with the theme "Building ASEAN's resiliency to disasters". The outcome of those discussions provided strategic references on how to move forward in developing the next AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025.

On its own, ASEAN can only do so much to prepare our countries and our peoples. ASEAN also looks to its partners, the United Nations and its agencies, as well as the private sector to work together to overcome these growing challenges inherent in addressing the adverse effects of climate change, development gaps, environmental degradation and expanding disaster hotspots.

In conclusion, ASEAN remains committed to its efforts to respond to natural disasters in an effective and timely manner to ensure optimum delivery of humanitarian aid and assistance. To that end, we look forward to continuing our engagement with our partners in the international community.

**Mr. Gonzato** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Agreement country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The tasks the humanitarian community is facing have never been more daunting. This is not only because of the sheer volume of the humanitarian needs but, more importantly, because of the very nature of current humanitarian challenges. Amid the constrained resourcing environment, humanitarian needs are on the rise, while the humanitarian space is increasingly challenged. Most importantly, the humanitarian landscape is increasingly defined by unprecedented violations of international humanitarian law, which is a poignant thing to keep in mind, especially at this crucial moment marked by the seventieth anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the thirty-third International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

As recently reaffirmed by the, Council of the European Union, the EU will work towards a renewed commitment to safeguarding compliance with

international humanitarian law, as well as ensuring that counter-terrorism measures and sanctions do not impede principled humanitarian assistance and comply with international law, in particular, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law.

We will continue our efforts to ensure that respect for international law, including safeguarding safe, rapid, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access, remains at the top of the international agenda. Unlawful denial of humanitarian access to civilian populations and the use of starvation as a method of warfare are grave violations of international humanitarian law that must be condemned in the strongest terms. 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.

The principle of humanitarian assistance and, more tragically, aid workers themselves have increasingly come under attack. The noble purpose of their actions no longer protects them. Last year, at least 131 aid workers were killed in the line of duty. The international community has an obligation towards those who put their lives at risk in order to make a difference on the ground.

The protection of humanitarian workers is one of the EU's main priorities. Whether internationally or locally recruited, and whether from the United Nations, the Red Cross Movement or non-governmental organizations, humanitarian workers deserve our utmost respect, concern and protection. This also includes protection from sexual harassment in the workplace.

Forced displacement is of particular concern. In addition to the tragic human cost of conflicts and natural disasters, they lead to people fleeing their homes. The number of persons displaced has continually increased in recent years, with over 70 million people forcibly displaced this year, the worst situation since the Second World War. While many flee across borders, mostly into neighbouring countries, the majority — 41 million people — are displaced within national borders. Internally displaced persons are often particularly vulnerable in having their most basic needs met. We therefore welcome the establishment of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, aiming to provide concrete, long-term solutions for internal displacement.

It is therefore essential to step up our actions and ensure that key enablers such as protection and access are put in place. The magnitude, complexity and mostly protracted nature of today's crises call for upfront coordination with all relevant actors that goes beyond immediate emergency-relief action. Against the backdrop of increasing needs, ensuring a tangible commitment among different constituencies towards collective outcomes is paramount. Equally important, it is essential to jointly address needs and vulnerabilities, with all stakeholders contributing in accordance with their comparative advantage and mandate.

The EU and its member States are committed to remaining at the forefront of addressing today's humanitarian challenges, alleviating human suffering and helping people affected by conflict and crises around the world. Protecting civilians and providing needs-based assistance, in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, as enshrined in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, will remain the cornerstone of our engagement.

Delivering on our responsibility as a global donor, the EU will remain engaged in the most acute emergencies across the globe, including in Europe's neighbourhoods as well as the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Asia and Latin America. Rather than merely reacting to the humanitarian consequences of disasters and crises, we need to devote more energy and increased resources to preparedness and early action. The EU is determined to step up efforts to better integrate climate change and environmental preservation in the way we organize our response to and prepare for emergencies resulting from both human-made and natural disasters. This also correlates with efforts to explore ways to better address looming humanitarian needs in an anticipatory manner. Further investment in early warning and forecast-based financing will enable early humanitarian action, before disaster strikes or violence escalates. Accordingly, we will continue to devote key attention to aid effectiveness and efficiency. Joint needs assessments, the use of data and digitalization are essential enablers to translating early warning into early action and, more importantly, to helping us deliver on our main mission to better assist people in need.

The EU and its member States reaffirm their continued commitment to put people at the centre of their humanitarian action. Women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are disproportionately

affected by disasters and conflicts. Humanitarian operations need to take into account their needs and capacities as well as the gender and diversity perspective and involve them throughout the response cycle. This includes assistance to women and girls on sexual and reproductive health. The EU also continues to support ongoing efforts related to the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as to ensure that mental health and psychological support become an integral part of the humanitarian response.

Humanitarian aid cannot be the solution to a conflict. We therefore urge the international community to work on political solutions to put an end to conflicts. In the same vein, operationalizing the humanitarian-development nexus, also taking into account the peace dimension, with full respect for the various actors' different mandates, can help alleviate vulnerabilities and reduce needs in the longer term.

The challenges facing the humanitarian community today are enormous. We in the General Assembly need to contribute to their work through the draft resolutions before us for adoption today and by maintaining the international consensus on the United Nations normative frameworks for humanitarian action. We do so by reaffirming the need to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, through the draft resolution introduced on behalf of the 28 member States of the European Union (A/74/L.32), and by better addressing the consequences of natural disasters, through the draft resolution introduced by the Group of 77 and China and ably facilitated by Morocco (A/74/L.31), and by reaffirming the agreed framework for humanitarian action in the successor resolution to 46/182, introduced by one of our member States, Sweden (A/74/L.34).

The European Union and its member States collectively remain the world's largest humanitarian donor. We will remain committed for 2020, and we are counting on the rest of the international community to join us.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to Ms. Oksana Koliada, Minister for Veterans Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine.

**Ms. Koliada** (Ukraine) (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text provided by the delegation*): The delegation of Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by

the delegation of the European Union and would like to make a statement in its national capacity.

Ukraine is a powerful European country with a developed economy and relatively high social standards. For almost 70 years, our country had not experienced the terror of war.

Pisky is a respectable settlement near Donetsk, with developed transport, educational and health-care infrastructure. Six families currently living there have no power or financial resources to move from under the daily fire. This is what Pisky looks like today. This is a photograph of children from the occupied territory. On a daily basis, 10 children from the village of Staromaryivka take a four-kilometre-long mined path and cross a half-destroyed bridge to go to school in the village of Granitne, controlled by the Ukrainian Government. This trajectory is so common that Google maps promotes it as the relevant route.

For 2,075 days, my country has been suffering due to the armed aggression by the Russian Federation. Over 13,000 people have died, of whom 3,345 are civilians, including 172 children. Among those killed, there were also 298 foreign citizens, passengers on Malaysian Airline flight MH-17, shot down by a Russian Buk anti-aircraft artillery missile. Over 100,000 Ukrainian children live near the conflict line, where training in mine clearance is important. Seven children have been killed and 29 injured by mines since 2014. Some 1.4 million people have had to leave their homes, and over 5 million people — 13 per cent of Ukraine's population — live in the temporarily occupied territories, where human rights and freedoms are being violated.

Owing to the occupation of the Crimea and separate areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Ukraine has lost over 7 per cent of its territory, which is more than the surface area of such countries as Switzerland, the Netherlands or Estonia. The civilian population in the territory of the occupied Crimea is suffering from arrest and prosecution for their political beliefs, ethnic origin or religion. Ukrainian schools are closed. The Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identity is being destroyed. The scientific institutions of the occupying Power, the Russian Federation, are destroying the cultural heritage of Ukraine. Exactly one month ago, on 14 November, the Arbitration Court of Kaluga made the final decision to expel the Crimean eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from the Cathedral of the



Equal Apostles Volodymyr and Olga in Simferopol. At the same time, it was also decided to demolish the chapel of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Yevpatoria.

More 100 Ukrainian citizens have been imprisoned for clearly political reasons. During the year 2014 alone, over 500,000 Russian citizens were moved to the Crimea. Strict militarization of the Crimea is in progress.

We are trying to unite our country. The main objective is the reintegration of Ukrainian minds; only when that occurs will the recovery of the territories follow. The Ukrainian people, together with their problems and needs, are the focus of our attention.

We are thankful to everyone who is helping us at such a difficult time for our country. Fifty international humanitarian agencies are working on both sides of the conflict line. Over the course of five years, our partners have provided assistance totalling \$540 million. This assistance has benefited over 3.5 million Ukrainian citizens who have suffered as the result of the war. Thanks to our cooperation with international partners, we are currently managing to meet the most significant needs of these people. Today, the time has come for a gradual but decisive transition from the principles of an urgent humanitarian response towards effective development programming. Our tasks are as follows.

First of all, we must simplify as far as possible access for residents of the temporarily occupied territories to basic public administrative, educational and health-care services. We have recently considerably simplified the procedure of crossing the conflict line, thus resolving a series of important problems for our citizens forced to live in the occupied territories.

Secondly, we are pursuing a new efficient programme for investment in the region's development, focusing on infrastructure projects, which may over time lead to a change in the economic situation of the region.

Thirdly, we are stepping up efforts to put in place an effective information policy because it was in the information sphere that Russia began its aggression against us. Hybrid war is today's reality. I would advise our foreign partners to learn lessons from the situation in Ukraine.

Fourthly, we are carrying out monitoring work in the temporarily occupied territories as extensively as possible, focusing special attention on the Crimea.

Our objective is to record all human rights violations and cases in which our country's interests are attacked so as to enable swift responses and develop efficient response mechanisms.

Fifthly, we have developed and begun implementing comprehensive compensation programmes for destroyed housing.

Finally, the Government of Ukraine, together with its Parliament, has adopted a series of regulations aimed at protecting the rights of prisoners of war, illegally detained civilians and victims of political persecution in the temporarily occupied territories.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those helping Ukraine, from powerful Government agencies to the smallest humanitarian missions. We value international support for Ukraine, both in combating the aggressor and in dealing with the aftermath of war. Our common task is to ensure that the children of Ukraine and the whole world never have to experience the realities of war or to have to study different types of mines, but instead are allowed to be happy and enjoy life. I thank members for their assistance, understanding and attention.

**Mr. Alfassam** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Kuwaiti delegation is pleased to participate in this discussion on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance. The State of Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who leads the humanitarian work, firmly believes in the need to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and needy around the world. This steadfast belief dates back to the founding of my country, which undertakes charitable work that has made it famous for the humanitarian diplomacy that has become a pivotal component of our foreign policy.

Given the rise in humanitarian crises and conflicts, leading to significant flows of refugees and internally displaced persons with disastrous humanitarian consequences, the State of Kuwait is collaborating with all United Nations members and international partners in efforts to address humanitarian and development challenges and to coordinate humanitarian work. Reaffirming the calls of the General Assembly in relevant resolutions on humanitarian assistance, the State of Kuwait once again underscores the important need to strengthen and coordinate humanitarian and

life-saving assistance and emergency relief in the disastrous areas.

The State of Kuwait continues to honour its regional and international responsibilities as a humanitarian assistance hub by supporting various international humanitarian issues, providing assistance and responding to crises and disasters.

The official development assistance that the State of Kuwait provides is double the internationally agreed percentage, in line with our well-known humanitarian and development approach at the official and popular levels. We continue on the path of achieving our noble humanitarian mission, which reflects the genuine values and principles of the Kuwaiti people. Moreover, since 2008, we have dedicated 10 per cent of our aid to disaster-affected countries through United Nations agencies and organizations.

My delegation has taken note of the Secretary-General's reports under agenda item 71. We concur with his concern regarding the millions of persons forced to leave their homes, lose their livelihoods and suffer from hunger and disease. Indeed, there are millions of people who are displaced as a result of conflicts, violence and oppression across the world. The cases of Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are remarkable examples of the effects of crises, conflicts and violence.

Consistent with our full cooperation in establishing humanitarian ties among all States for providing assistance in the context of natural disasters, the State of Kuwait has announced its voluntary contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund of \$1 million for 2019, as well as an additional \$1 million for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and another \$2 million for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

In closing, we pay tribute to the vital role played by various United Nations organizations and organs, as well as their partners, in providing support for and coordination of humanitarian and relief assistance across the world. We highly appreciate the important role of United Nations officials and all those working in humanitarian assistance. They are the soldiers who make tireless efforts in carrying out humanitarian activities, and they deserve our full thanks and appreciation.

**Mrs. Harqoos** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure to take part in this very important debate on strengthening the coordination

of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his relevant reports.

The United Arab Emirates aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the Observer State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and would like to deliver the following statement in our national capacity, which can be summarized in the following points.

First, my country underscores the importance of achieving more progress in mainstreaming gender, age and people with disabilities in United Nations humanitarian programmes. The introduction of age and gender-equality indicators in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is a noteworthy step forward. We believe that it is high time to hold more talks on introducing an indicator for persons with disabilities.

Secondly, my country welcomes the addition by the United Nations of proactive and predictable funding to its funding tools. That must be mainstreamed in all existing funds, given the need to take pre-emptive procedures, along with early intervention, saving lives and cost-saving measures.

Thirdly, we need better coordination in the humanitarian, development and security areas within the United Nations. In many instances, issues that are traditionally deemed to be related to development are, in fact, humanitarian issues. That is why we hope to see more progress with respect to spending money from development funds on analyses of humanitarian and security areas, which would help the resident coordinators to coordinate their work in addressing those challenges.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for funds involved in crowd-funding, and in particular the Central Emergency Response Fund, as they are key tools in supporting humanitarian principles. We encourage the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations agencies to collaborate in steering donors towards those funding mechanisms.

**Ms. Melfald** (Norway): The humanitarian landscape is constantly changing. Armed conflict, climate change and persistent poverty are creating complex crises that last longer and affect a growing number of people. Norway is stepping up its efforts aimed at meeting the

greatest humanitarian challenges of our time. Let me emphasize three points of particular importance.

First, Norway is giving priority to responding to the protection crisis that is worsening the humanitarian situation in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan and many other conflict-affected countries. Secondly, Norway is taking part in the work undertaken to stop the downward spiral that is turning protracted complex crises into the new norm in several regions. Special effort is needed to prevent people in these situations from being left behind as we seek to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Education is key. Thirdly, we must strengthen our efforts to address and reduce forced displacement.

The scale of sexual and gender-based violence in crises and conflict is unacceptable. In many conflicts, sexual violence is a method of warfare, and it is a widespread problem in humanitarian crises. Together with Iraq, Somalia and the United Arab Emirates, alongside the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund, Norway hosted the international conference entitled “Ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises” in May. States committed to providing more than \$363 million to sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response in 2019 and beyond. For its part, Norway will deliver on our \$115 million pledge over a three-year period.

Women and girls must be acknowledged as powerful agents of change and included in all phases of crisis response. We therefore regret that agreed language on sexual and reproductive health care is being challenged. Universal access to education and health, including sexual and reproductive health education and care, is life-saving. That is an indisputable fact.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is one of the most successful disarmament treaties of recent times. At the Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, the Oslo Action Plan was adopted and will be a reference point for the implementation of all aspects of the Mine Ban Convention for the next five years. A mine-free world by 2025 remains our vision, and we believe that the Oslo Action Plan will give strong impetus to making progress towards that goal. The Sudan has now assumed the presidency of the Mine

Ban Convention. Norway assures the Sudan of our full support as it fulfils that role.

The number of people who have been forced to flee their homes due to armed conflict has increased dramatically in recent years. Norway welcomes the High Level-Panel on Internal Displacement launched by the Secretary-General on 3 December. There is an urgent need to increase global attention and galvanize action on internally displaced persons (IDPs), and we believe that linking the issue of IDPs more closely to the sustainable development agenda, and specifically to the ambition to leave no one behind, offers an important way forward.

In order to reach the Sustainable Development Goal on education, we need to focus on those left furthest behind. Norway is pleased to see that education has a prominent place in the global compact on refugees. We are also pleased to see that more and more countries are including refugees in their national education systems. Norway promotes enhanced protection of education through the Safe Schools Declaration, which has been endorsed by 101 countries. We encourage all countries to endorse and implement the Declaration in order to address the urgent issue of armed attacks on schools.

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

**Ms. Mohamed Didi (Maldives):** My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his very insightful report under this agenda item. As indicated in the report, humanitarian crises are affecting more people than ever before, forcing millions to live in poverty and inequality and suffer from malnutrition and disease. In 2018, humanitarian response reached a record high of 98 million people. Each year we are witnessing the worrisome trend of more and more people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, which requires strengthened coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

Factors causing humanitarian tragedies, conflicts and natural disasters are multidimensional. Food insecurity remains a major humanitarian requirement, and intensified climate change and extreme weather events have resulted in loss of life and livelihood and displacement across the board. Failure to protect civilians caught up in conflict and gross violations

of international human rights and humanitarian law have resulted in immense torment. The premeditated denial of humanitarian access and rigid obstructions to the delivery of aid are leaving millions experiencing hunger and distress. These realities call for extensive assistance to millions of people to alleviate their suffering and return them to a dignified existence.

The Maldives stands in full solidarity with our fellow small island developing States, some of which have experienced devastating losses following recent hurricanes, especially Hurricane Dorian, now referred to as a generational tragedy for the Bahamas. Despite the progress we have made in predicting, preparing for and responding to disasters, we are still unable to adapt to and recover from disasters or shocks without compromising our long-term prospects for development, which is especially true for small island developing States such as the Maldives. Small island developing States are exposed to multidimensional threats and several of our characteristics make us particularly vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters.

As one of the lowest-lying island nations in the world, the Maldives continues to combat the challenges of climate change and natural disasters. It took more than five years to rebuild after the tsunami that devastated us in 2004. It has aided in the relocation of people from two islands that were completely destroyed. We still confront daily challenges from the irregular pattern of monsoon flooding, environmental degradation and coral bleaching due to climate change. Rebuilding for us means that we must divert our funds allocated to development towards saving our environment and the ocean.

In 2004, the National Disaster Management Centre was established and was charged with taking proactive and timely measures to prevent or reduce the impact of disasters and to coordinate relief measures. The mandate of the Centre was widened, and it was renamed the National Disaster Management Authority on 30 December 2018. President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih established the Authority as prescribed by the Disaster Management Act of the Maldives as the lead coordination authority for disaster risk reduction and management.

The Government of Maldives also attaches utmost importance to strengthening adaptation measures and building climate-resilient infrastructure to address current and future vulnerabilities. Reversing our

dependence on imported fuel, investing in renewable energy, safe water and sanitation, providing young people with the skills and support to contribute to economic growth, and improving our governance mechanisms so that they are innovative and aligned with our technological advancement all are key priorities of the Maldives in improving energy security.

The Maldives is a founding member of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, a platform for finding common solutions and building resilient infrastructure as part of disaster risk reduction. The Government of Maldives is fully committed to constructively contributing and actively participating in the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and building climate-resilient infrastructure.

It is through collaboration that we can achieve meaningful outcomes at the international, regional, national and local levels and reach our goals. In that spirit, the Maldives reiterates its call for its partners and the international community to deliver on the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and other related agendas and frameworks.

The international community should also promote and fund community engagement approaches so that communities can receive timely information and have access to a feedback mechanism. Financing should also be ensured towards achieving collective outcomes and supporting humanitarian and development collaborations through joint analysis, joint planning and increased multiyear humanitarian financing.

The Maldives calls on the international community and the United Nations to work together towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Let us take the necessary actions now and train our community members in disaster risk reduction and preparedness, mobilize volunteers to share preparedness messages and serve communities with the relevant risk-reduction activities.

Let us commit to strengthening and enhancing disaster relief and the coordination of humanitarian assistance in order to enhance the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and to leave no one behind.



**Mrs. Kocyigit Grba** (Turkey): Armed conflicts, violence, persecution, natural disasters and famine continue to drive a record number of people from their homes. We have more displaced people worldwide than ever before, and humanitarian needs are growing at a much faster pace. The suffering that engulfs the people who are trapped in various complex emergencies is also experienced by humanitarian staff, who do their best to provide relief for those in need. The Global Humanitarian Overview 2020 paints yet another grim picture of the humanitarian landscape. Every day, an average of 37,000 people are displaced by conflict, violence or human rights violations. In 2018 these drivers resulted in the displacement of 13.6 million people, and natural disasters triggered a further 17.2 million new displacements.

On the other hand, the number of refugees has continued to grow, reaching 25.9 million at the beginning of 2019. The refugee population in Turkey has grown by 5.8 per cent. As such, Turkey alone now hosts 18 per cent of refugees around the globe.

In Yemen, we continue to witness the world's worst humanitarian crisis. We condemn those responsible for the greatest human-made humanitarian disaster in history. Despite enormous challenges, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has been conducting one of the largest humanitarian operations in the country in order to reduce suffering. Turkish agencies have also been channelling humanitarian aid in Yemen to complement OCHA's efforts.

The humanitarian tragedy in Syria will soon enter its ninth year, with more than 13 million people in need of humanitarian aid, 6.6 million internally displaced and 5.6 million refugees in the region. We provide shelter to and address the needs of more than 3.6 million Syrians who have taken refuge in Turkey. Hosting the world's largest refugee population, we are exerting every effort to make their lives better, and every month we ensure the safe passage of lifeline humanitarian assistance to millions of Syrians through the United Nations cross-border mechanism.

Turkish humanitarian and development agencies also continue their work and participate in the aid operations conducted in Somalia, the Sudan, Cox's Bazar and other regions devastated by conflicts or natural disasters. Turkey is committed to maintaining its role, as the leading donor, with \$8.4 billion worth of humanitarian assistance contributed in 2018.

We would like to commend the efforts of United Nations humanitarian agencies in their life-saving work, as well as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, whose role in ensuring effective coordination in the delivery of humanitarian assistance remains essential.

As Member States, we need to increase the availability of financial resources through creative ideas so as to help the United Nations in its humanitarian work. The swift mobilization of resources by the Central Emergency Response Fund and the country-based pooled funds and their impact on the ground is of great interest. Innovative and flexible humanitarian financing could be an important topic for discussion in the months to come.

Effective partnerships are also crucial to helping ease the effects of unprecedented strains on the international humanitarian system. The commitments assumed by the international community through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Humanitarian Summit, the global compact on refugees and the Global Compact for Migration provide major opportunities for the United Nations, its Member States and other stakeholders to strengthen their response capacities.

In conclusion, I would underline that we should never forget that no humanitarian problem is local. All crises have global repercussions. Turkey stands ready to debate and find practical solutions to the challenges affecting us all.

**Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Partnerships and international cooperation in addressing shared challenges are an important element of our policy. Accordingly, in application of the principle of humanitarian partnership and in fulfilment of our related commitments and responsibilities, we pledged a \$500 million multi-year non-earmarked contribution last year to fund core United Nations humanitarian activities.

We would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened today's debate on strengthening the coordination of United Nations humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance. We welcome the efforts made by the United Nations and all humanitarian-assistance and development actors aimed at addressing the increasingly dire humanitarian crises, conflicts and natural disasters in the world. We also welcome the effectiveness of United

Nations humanitarian responses and relief assistance, particularly in the context of recurrent humanitarian crises, conflicts and climate change.

Qatar is among the leading countries in providing development and relief assistance. In 2018, the Qatar Development Fund financed projects in the fields of education, health care, economic recovery and jobs in more than 70 States, totalling \$585 million. We are pleased to have been our region's top contributor and world's eleventh greatest contribution to country-based pooled funds in 2017. As part of our contributions in 2017, we pledged a \$40 million multi-annual non-earmarked contribution to core resources for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the final payment of which will be made in 2020. Furthermore, given our commitment to supporting humanitarian assistance and in the light of the central role of the Central Emergency Response Fund, we pledged more than \$15 million to the Fund for the period 2006-2009 and an additional multi-year \$5 million pledge for the period 2017-2021.<sup>[P.P.]</sup> Climate change and its impacts constitute an additional factor undermining sustainable development efforts. Given the importance of joint multilateral action and our role as an effective partner within international community, during the Climate Action Summit in September, His Highness the Crown Prince of Qatar pledged \$100 million to help small island developing States and least developed countries to cope with climate change, especially because these States are the ones that are bearing the brunt of its impacts.

As part of our efforts aimed at mitigating the consequences of humanitarian crises, we have long provided humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinian people. Our donations have had tangible effects in addressing urgent and long-term needs alike. This year we pledged \$180 million to support urgent United Nations humanitarian relief projects to assist in the provision of electricity services. In addition, over the past eight years, through the Qatar Development Fund, the Qatari Committee for Reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, and contributions from Qatari civil society, we have donated more than \$1 billion in assistance to the Palestinian people. Indeed, in his most recent report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/74/89), the Secretary-General made reference to the crucial financial support provided by Qatar and other donors to meet most urgent needs of the population.

In conclusion, I renew our commitment to the principles of cooperation, partnership, integrity and neutrality in addressing shared challenges. We will therefore spare no effort in continuing to play an effective role in the delivery of relief and humanitarian assistance, as well as to provide support to and cooperate with United Nations agencies in implementing their humanitarian efforts.

**Mr. Favre** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Humanitarian needs continue to grow every year. The number of people in situations of forced displacement, whether to flee conflicts or natural disasters, is on the rise. Both the civilian population and humanitarian aid workers are regularly the target of attacks. Humanitarian access and assistance to populations is increasingly complicated. As a result, the international community must provide an effective, united response based on the principles and values of humanity, of which the draft resolutions we are discussing today are the expression.

In that context and true to its tradition, Switzerland strives to promote a culture of negotiation that favours the most ambitious compromise and consensus possible so as to best respond to populations in need. Switzerland supports the approach of Sweden, the facilitator of this year's omnibus humanitarian draft resolution (A/74/L.34), consisting of holding interactive exchanges on various themes instead of traditional negotiations. After the recent intense negotiations on humanitarian issues, we believe that this is an innovative approach that will enable us to take the time for joint and holistic reflection. That will allow us, in particular, to address and explore certain humanitarian themes within the framework of broader discussions.

*Mrs. Kocyigit Grba* (Turkey), *Vice-President*, took the Chair.

In that respect, Switzerland is especially interested in the cross-cutting themes of protection of civilians, respect for international humanitarian law, issues related to counter-terrorism, the impact of conflicts in urban contexts, water and sanitation, the link between humanitarian aid and development, humanitarian operations in the context of the reform of the United Nations development system and the role of data in the humanitarian sphere. On this last point, I underline that Switzerland will host the third United Nations World Data Forum in October next year in Bern.

In conclusion, I would like to stress three fundamental points.

First, and on the basis of resolution 46/182, we reiterate that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Secondly, international humanitarian law is the universally accepted legal framework for the protection of victims of armed conflict and the provision of humanitarian assistance. It is of paramount importance that this legal framework be respected by all parties to armed conflicts. Those who violate international humanitarian law must therefore be prosecuted. Access to those in need must be ensured, and we must strengthen our protection of those who risk their lives to care for the wounded and sick. It is therefore our duty to bolster the protection of all victims of armed conflicts and medical missions, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

Thirdly, the phenomenon of forced displacement as a result of armed conflict, natural disasters or climate change requires close coordination of the various instruments governing humanitarian aid and development, but also those that promote peace and human rights. At the global level, the number of internally displaced persons has steadily increased in recent years. As such, it is crucial that we pay full attention to this issue. We therefore welcome the establishment of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, whose secretariat will be based in Geneva, and we are ready to support its work as best we can.

**Mr. Collins** (New Zealand): The global humanitarian context is increasingly challenging. The adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters and a lack of political will to prevent and end conflicts are driving humanitarian need.

Respect for international humanitarian law remains paramount for New Zealand. We are appalled by continued violations of international humanitarian law in some of the world's most devastating conflicts, particularly the targeting of civilians and humanitarians.

We are proud to have joined in co-drafting Security Council resolution 2286 (2016), but we are deeply troubled by the ongoing targeting of medical facilities and personnel in armed conflict. Last week, New Zealand announced its commitment to undertaking voluntary domestic international humanitarian law reporting, leading by example on a transparent and

accountable approach to our obligations under the Geneva Conventions.

This year has seen a threefold increase in measles cases globally, devastating the youngest and most vulnerable. In our Pacific region, young lives have been lost to measles despite it being an entirely preventable disease. New Zealand calls for increased global collaboration in eradicating preventable diseases and encourages greater investment in prevention and preparedness. We need to take proactive steps to manage the spread of diseases while eradication is still within our reach.

The rights of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people continue to come under attack. Sexual and reproductive health rights are not optional extras in humanitarian action. They are core universal rights, and we all have a responsibility to protect and respect them. Effective humanitarian action requires the meaningful inclusion of the most vulnerable and excluded groups, both as representatives and as decision makers. We welcome the recent release of the United Nations guidelines for disability inclusion in humanitarian action and commend the progress made in this area to date.

We are encouraged by ongoing localization efforts. They make humanitarian policy and action more effective and aligned with community priorities. New Zealand recognizes the challenges of innovating in the context of increased needs and decreased resources. This is why adapting and improving efficiency are so important. New Zealand supports innovative funding approaches, anticipatory financing, timely collaboration between humanitarian and development partners, and local ownership of initiatives. If done well, we see the potential for these approaches to produce a more effective, sustainable and fit-for-purpose approach to humanitarian action.

Finally, New Zealand takes this opportunity to recognize the extraordinary efforts being made by humanitarian workers. These people save lives and provide comfort in hostile, complex and dangerous operating environments. They are the ones who carry the weight of our humanitarian efforts. We all have a responsibility to them and to those we are assisting so as to ensure that we do so in a principled and accountable manner.

**Mr. Flynn** (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered today on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

As others have said, it has been another extremely challenging year for the global humanitarian response. The launch of the *Global Humanitarian Overview: 2020* earlier this month highlighted that over 167 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Clearly the level of need continues to grow.

The complexity of the crises driving humanitarian need has also increased. Conflict is the single greatest driver of humanitarian need, and in recent years we have seen conflicts becoming more protracted, fragmented and urbanized. We have also seen an increased number of natural disasters, exacerbated and amplified by the effects of climate change, which is simply the single greatest threat that humankind is facing. Without sufficient collective efforts to prevent further warming, the disasters unfolding today are just a forewarning of those awaiting us as the twenty-first century unfolds.

The environment facing humanitarian operators has also become more challenging. We have seen an erosion of respect for international humanitarian law and a closure of humanitarian space. Some of this has been deliberate, driven by those intent on targeting humanitarian workers. But there has also been inadvertent pressure on humanitarian actors by ill-conceived sanctions regimes or counter-terrorism measures. When developing such sanctions regimes, it is important that we bear in mind our obligation to keep open the space for principled humanitarian action.

Faced with these immense challenges, I join others in paying tribute today to all humanitarian workers. Operating in some of the most challenging environments imaginable, they bring hope and assistance to those who need it most. I want to remember, in particular, those humanitarian workers who made the ultimate sacrifice. In 2018 alone, a shocking 131 aid workers were killed.

It is our collective responsibility to address these challenges. We must show sufficient support to the humanitarian system to allow it to meet the immense needs. Reducing humanitarian need is a cornerstone of Ireland's development policy, which was launched earlier this year. The strategy recommitments Ireland to reaching the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income spent on official development assistance by 2030.

We must also redouble efforts to address the underlying causes of humanitarian need, particularly by assisting countries in resolving and preventing conflict. Ireland is firmly committed to peacekeeping and has a proud record of continuous provision of peacekeepers since we joined the United Nations in 1958. Should Ireland be elected to the Security Council for 2021-2022, we will seek to do all we can to address the root causes of conflict so as to help prevent humanitarian need.

Finally, we must create and maintain an environment that allows humanitarian actors to operate. As we mark the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law is deeply troubling. It is our collective responsibility to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in all contexts and that humanitarian workers are given the access and support they need to provide vital assistance to those who need it most. Ireland remains deeply committed to doing all we can to achieve this end.

**Mr. Furumoto** (Japan): The world is facing a trend of growing humanitarian needs, both in terms of funding required and the number of people targeted. The *Global Humanitarian Overview: 2020* estimates that, in 2020, nearly 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection, and the funding required will reach \$28.8 billion. Humanitarian crises are becoming more complex and protracted. Conflicts, natural disasters and economic shocks have been major drivers of humanitarian crises and, in many cases, converge to intensify the situation on the ground.

Against that backdrop, Japan is of the view that timely assistance is needed. At the beginning of 2019, Japan decided to extend \$98 million of its supplementary budget to activities of the United Nations and other organizations engaged in humanitarian assistance. This support was followed by various other forms of assistance. The Japan Disaster Relief Team was dispatched to Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti and Samoa, and we have made in-kind contributions in coordination with seven countries facing humanitarian situations.

Today, I would like to highlight one humanitarian situation in particular. The scale and complexity of the situation in Syria remains concerning. It is estimated that 11 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2020. In this regard, Japan is proud to have announced, just last week, a new contribution



of \$14 million to four organizations to respond to the situation in north-eastern Syria, part of which goes to the Syria Humanitarian Fund, thereby making Japan a donor to this country-based pooled fund for the first time.

Twenty years ago, in a statement on human security, former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata said:

“I am very concerned by the gap which currently exists between humanitarian intervention during conflicts, and the beginning of long-term development programmes. We are particularly worried about this gap because very often recently returned refugees are among those who suffer most from the lack of resources available to build peace.”

Mrs. Ogata passed away in October, but her thoughts and actions are not obsolete.

As I said earlier, humanitarian crises are becoming increasingly complex. Humanitarian organizations alone cannot address the whole spectrum of issues. Japan continues to be a strong advocate for the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, a concept rooted in the works of such pioneers as Mrs. Ogata. In this regard, Japan welcomes the holding of the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva tomorrow and intends to make a meaningful contribution in the area of the nexus.

The application of innovation and technology is another key to addressing the needs on the ground. During the seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development, held in August, together with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the World Food Programme, we organized a side event on sustainable agriculture in the digital age, where participants engaged in constructive discussions on public-private partnerships and the use of innovative technologies. We are happy to have announced initiatives for introducing a virtual farmers' market in Mozambique and introducing information and communications technologies in rural communities in Tanzania.

Furthermore, in 2019, Japan led various discussions on humanitarian affairs and touched upon a range of topics, including those I just mentioned, as well as the need for, *inter alia*, further upholding international humanitarian law, promoting gender approaches and addressing the impact of climate change. In the light of the challenges the international community is facing,

Japan remains committed to working together to provide meaningful assistance.

Finally, I would like to conclude by noting a tragic incident in Afghanistan this month, which resulted in the death of Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, a Japanese medical doctor who dedicated over 30 years of his life to heading a civil society organization in Afghanistan. I would like to express my condolences for this loss and extend my deepest respect for the tireless efforts of all aid workers on the ground in humanitarian crises and precarious security situations across the world.

**Mr. Santos Maraver** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I endorse the statement made today by the observer of the European Union on the agenda item under consideration.

Just a few days ago, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs presented the *Global Humanitarian Overview: 2020*, which outlines the enormous challenges the General Assembly, the Member States and the entire international community are facing, which can be summed up as follows: first, how to ensure respect for and the effective implementation of international humanitarian law, and secondly, how to respond effectively and in a coordinated manner to the growing immediate and structural humanitarian needs in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

With regard to the first challenge, in recent years we have seen many cases where there is less respect for, if not outright violation of, international humanitarian law. This is happening 70 years after the adoption of the Geneva Conventions. It therefore seems urgent to recall their validity in international forums and bodies. In addition, they must be implemented through existing mechanisms so as to prevent or put an end to violations of the Geneva Conventions. In that regard, the International Criminal Court plays a critical role and is mandated to prosecute, *inter alia*, the most serious violations of international humanitarian law — war crimes. By supporting the International Criminal Court when appropriate, we will also be supporting international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, I think it is fitting to highlight the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission, the only permanent mechanism created specifically for the investigation of facts relating to serious violations and breaches of international humanitarian law, as established in Article 90 of the First Additional Protocol

to the Geneva Conventions. We, the Member States, can take advantage of the Commission as an additional opportunity to investigate violations of international humanitarian law. Let us together explore possible collaborative mechanisms that could be established between the General Assembly and the Commission.

The General Assembly could also strengthen mechanisms that collect and analyse data related to serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as promote impartial and independent mechanisms for systematic and thorough investigations. In this regard, it is advisable that we also continue to strengthen and protect priority areas that are insufficiently defended or easily attacked, such as health and education, during conflict situations. We must also not forget that we must work together to ensure that humanitarian action based on principles is also guaranteed in the fight against terrorism or in the context of sanctions.

As for the second challenge, responding to growing humanitarian needs will be a priority in 2020. The current humanitarian context is marked by the exponential increase in sudden and structural needs, as well as by the complexity of protracted crises, the severity of climate disasters, the displacement of many millions of people, conflict and insufficient funding to respond to all of those humanitarian needs. That is why coordination and effectiveness in identifying the most vulnerable people and those with acute needs are key to ensuring that our humanitarian response includes all crises and that no one is left behind. It will also be vital to continue working on an early-warning approach and coordinating humanitarian and development activities in that context, which will create an excellent opportunity to operationalize the humanitarian-development nexus. We have also noted that in order to respond effectively to humanitarian crises, we need to bear in mind not only the humanitarian and development approach but also the need to maintain peace and to fight climate change.

It is of priority importance to ensure the safety of international, local and non-governmental-organization workers, as well as those from United Nations agencies and bodies, who are essential to humanitarian action. It is also vital to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse; mainstream diversity and the gender perspective; protect vulnerable groups, including children and persons with disabilities; and ensure an effective response to humanitarian requirements in less visible and more protracted crises.

In conclusion, I would reaffirm Spain's commitment to the United Nations system and to the work of the General Assembly to bolster effective, principles-based humanitarian action and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At present, the global humanitarian situation remains grim. There are prolonged conflicts in certain regions of the world, the food-security situation in some countries is deteriorating, extreme weather events are frequent, infectious diseases continue unabated and global humanitarian needs remain high.

China commends the United Nations system and humanitarian organizations for their efforts in coordinating and providing humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance. The international community should foster a sense of a common, shared future for humankind and jointly address both the symptoms and the root causes in our efforts to collectively to respond to the increasingly serious humanitarian challenges.

In this connection, China wishes to stress the following.

First, we must strictly abide by international law and the norms governing international relations, and effectively protect people in vulnerable situations. In providing humanitarian assistance, it is necessary to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 46/182; adhere to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence; comply with international humanitarian law, underscoring its humanitarian nature and professionalism; respect the sovereignty of recipient countries and refrain from interfering in their internal affairs; and refrain from politicizing humanitarian issues.

The international community should persist in its efforts to resolve conflicts through dialogue, consultation and negotiations and strengthen the protection of people in vulnerable situations, including women, children, refugees and displaced persons.

Secondly, fundamentally reduce humanitarian needs by addressing both the symptoms and root causes through integrated policy implementation. There is a global trend of protracted humanitarian crises, which are attributable to such deep-rooted causes as extreme poverty, unbalanced development and resource scarcity, among which development, or the lack thereof, is the most prominent.

While effectively addressing short-term humanitarian needs, the international community should prioritize development and increase investment in the field, support developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and enhance their self-development capacity, eradicate poverty and hunger, improve people's living standards and achieve social and economic development and lasting peace and stability.

Thirdly, it is vital to build the capacities of developing countries to effectively respond to natural disasters and climate change, which are common challenges facing humankind. The international community should strengthen exchanges and cooperation in this regard, increase financial and technical assistance in the light of the national conditions and priority needs of the affected countries, bolster the sharing of disaster-related information, establish and improve a multi-hazard early-warning system, work jointly to address climate change, enhance disaster risk management capabilities and build disaster resilience.

China attaches great importance to and actively participates in international cooperation in the humanitarian field. We have, through multilateral and bilateral channels, provided substantial support and assistance to the affected countries. This year the Chinese Government contributed funds to the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization to help the many countries affected cope with famine, food shortages and malnutrition, address the effects of Cyclone Idai, carry out post-disaster reconstruction, improve medical services and sanitation for women and children, and respond to and contain the Ebola epidemic.

China will work with the international community by actively participating in bilateral and multilateral humanitarian relief operations and will continue to support other developing countries, within our capabilities, in responding to humanitarian crises.

**Ms. Pritchard** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): As this year comes to a close and we reflect on the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions and the twentieth anniversary of the Security Council's protection-of-civilians agenda, the world is at a crossroads.

The humanitarian aid system has become more effective, and millions of lives are now being saved in

crises around the world. We have leveraged innovative approaches and financing mechanisms to improve our response and strengthen our engagement with national and local humanitarian personnel, who are on the front lines of crises.

However, civilians continue to account for the majority of casualties in armed conflict. Unlawful attacks against humanitarian and medical personnel persist. The scope and frequency of natural disasters, exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change, has resulted in unprecedented humanitarian needs. In addition, the number of forcibly displaced persons continues to rise.

The international community must redouble its efforts to uphold the dignity and safety of crisis-affected populations around the world. Canada is doing its part. We continue to be a steadfast advocate for gender-responsive humanitarian action that responds to the diverse needs and priorities of vulnerable populations and includes their meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

As the lead of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, Canada is working in partnership with a broad range of stakeholders to drive progress on the prevention and mitigation of and the response to gender-based violence at the global level and in the field.

(*spoke in English*)

This past week, at the thirty-third International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Canada advocated for respect for international humanitarian law and for greater dialogue on its implementation with local communities and partners at all levels, so that the diverse and distinct needs of communities are better understood and addressed.

Canada is also proud to be participating in the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva this week in support of the objectives of the global compact on refugees to improve our collective responses to refugee situations. We hope that this inaugural Forum will build international solidarity with refugee-hosting States by translating the Compact's principles into concrete actions.

Through the Grand Bargain, Canada has become known as a leader in advocating for more predictable and flexible — that is, better-quality — humanitarian financing. We recognize and continue to encourage the provision of quality funding

to better support humanitarian actors in protecting and assisting the most vulnerable in crisis situations.

In 2018 alone, we provided over \$870 million in life-saving assistance to vulnerable populations in crisis. That includes, for example, nearly \$15 million since 2018 to support a holistic approach to meeting the urgent needs of those affected by conflict and the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 2017, Canada has provided over \$109 million in humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh and Myanmar. Canada's gender-responsive humanitarian programming is supporting life-saving interventions for vulnerable people affected by crisis, with a focus on meeting the specific needs and priorities of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

At a time when the rules-based international order is increasingly under threat, it is of pressing importance for all of us to reaffirm our respect for humanitarian principles and support a spirit of cooperation. We urge all delegations to support the consensus-based adoption of the humanitarian draft resolutions later today, and we thank the facilitators for their excellent work. We must remain united in our shared humanity and build bridges wherever possible to bring us one step closer together.

That is the constructive approach we will bring should we be elected as a member of the Security Council for 2021-22. That includes strengthening constructive dialogue on how humanitarian action and peacekeeping efforts can work together more effectively so that crisis-affected populations can better access life-saving assistance and protection. It means keeping civilians at the heart of our efforts and underscoring the importance of community-based approaches to protection as part of broader protection efforts, so that local communities have a stronger voice in their protection needs and priorities.

It also means accelerating progress on the gendered dimensions of the protection of civilians agenda, in terms of not only sexual violence in conflict, but also the differential impacts of armed conflict on vulnerable populations that face gender-based discrimination and violence. The coming year will surely test the international community's resolve, with over 167 million people projected to be in need of humanitarian aid and protection. And those are not just numbers; they are human lives. However, together, we can embrace the challenges that the new year will

bring us, stand in solidarity and deliver for those living in crises around the world.

**Mr. Mohd Nasir** (Malaysia): Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Allow me, at the outset, to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/74/464), which highlights the new challenges posed by the global security environment on humanitarian and disaster relief assistance efforts. We note with great concern the security challenges faced by aid workers, including by personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as outlined in the same report. In that regard, Malaysia calls on all relevant parties to make every effort to safeguard the safety and security of humanitarian personnel by ensuring the full and effective implementation of the relevant principles and rules of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The scale and intensity of human suffering inflicted by poverty, conflict and natural disasters continue to gravely impact vulnerable communities. Malaysia will continue to extend our assistance to communities and countries in need, within our capacities. Our participation in humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, through both monetary and in-kind contributions, is based on a three-pronged approach: first, Government-to-Government, either through bilateral assistance or multilateral cooperation; secondly, involvement through non-governmental organizations; and finally, people-to-people participation.

Malaysia will remain supportive of United Nations efforts to improve the international humanitarian assistance system and humanitarian response capacity. We believe that a timely, predictable, coordinated and accountable response to humanitarian needs is essential in saving lives and alleviating suffering. Malaysia will endeavour to enhance its cooperation with relevant stakeholders including by empowering aid workers with appropriate skills and resources to enable them to participate comprehensively in global humanitarian missions.

We would like to commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other relevant United Nations agencies for their commendable work in effectively delivering



humanitarian relief around the world. In November, Malaysia pledged additional financial contributions to OCHA for the purpose of humanitarian relief in several African countries and Iraq. Malaysia also houses one of the six United Nations humanitarian response depots, which provides storage, logistics support and services to our humanitarian partners. The Malaysian Government contributes \$1 million annually in the form of a grant to cover the operating cost of the centre. We encourage the utilization of the depot in Malaysia for swift delivery of humanitarian aid in emergency situations, particularly for crises in our region.

In closing, Malaysia would like to reiterate its call for continued coordination and collaboration between United Nations mechanisms and States in ensuring the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected areas. We believe that such collaboration should be guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and non-politicization by all parties involved.

**Mrs. Azucena** (Philippines): The Philippines is home to more than 100 million people. It is also home to major disasters. Humanitarians affiliated with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) jokingly refer to the Philippines as the 7-Eleven of natural disasters — there is one on every corner and it is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Being located in the Pacific emergency belt, my country is battered by typhoons, monsoons, flash floods, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. And thanks to climate change, these calamities are becoming fiercer and occurring more frequently.

Just the other day, an earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale rocked Davao in southern Philippines, killing three people and damaging properties. Two weeks ago, Typhoon Tisoy, internationally known as Kammuri, barrelled through the eastern Philippines and left in its wake 17 deaths, flattened villages and more than 300,000 people in 600 evacuation centres across five regions. The damage to agriculture and private property was over \$75 million. Tisoy, a category-4 typhoon, was the twentieth typhoon to hit us this year.

We cannot move the location of our country. We cannot do much to turn the tide on climate change, as we contribute so little to it, yet we are the hardest hit. We can only brace ourselves and we have become rather good at doing so. And when the skies clear and the grounds dry, we pick up the pieces. With the help of the

international community, particularly humanitarian and disaster relief personnel, we stand again. We therefore cannot overemphasize the importance we attach to the humanitarian draft resolutions before us today.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered today by the representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of ASEAN.

We commend all humanitarian workers who are on the ground as we speak — preventing deaths and serious injuries, providing life-saving support, curbing hunger, sheltering people from the elements, providing access to health care, providing safe spaces for women and children and protecting them from violence, human trafficking and other devices of evil by men and women who prey on the vulnerable. We commend the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and we commit to supporting it as best as we can. OCHA provided life-saving response and assistance to the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan, locally known as Super Typhoon Yolanda, hit my country and took more than 6,000 lives. The international community pitched in to meet gaps in national capacities and resources.

Humanitarian emergencies, both natural and human-made, have grown exponentially over the years, taxing the limited global resources for humanitarian assistance. We need to collaborate with the private sector and with non-traditional sources of support in order to address the growing humanitarian needs around the world. We also need to mainstream disaster risk mitigation and management across the development plans and policies of every Member State, because it is States that have the primary responsibility to organize and coordinate humanitarian assistance within their territory.

The Philippines sees value in the localization of humanitarian and relief efforts, because no one knows the people, the terrain and the context of any situation better than the locals. Much can be also be gained in sharing best practices on disaster risk reduction and management. Technologically advanced States have much to share, including through technology that can provide earlier warnings and mitigate the harm caused by disasters.

As a responsible and compassionate member of the international community, the Philippines remains committed to continuing its engagement with

international partners to meet humanitarian needs across the world.

**Mr. Elhomosany** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to discuss sub-item (b) of agenda item 71, entitled “Assistance to the Palestinian people”, at a time when the Palestinian people are in great need of assistance and aid.

The Palestinian people have suffered in their unresolved conflict for decades, and their suffering has intensified due to Israel’s violations of the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. That suffering has been aggravated by continued deterioration in the Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem, due to the policies and practices of the Israeli occupation, as various international human rights agencies, especially those of the United Nations, have noted. The only way to put an end to it is with a just, comprehensive and sustainable solution to the Question of Palestine through the creation of an independent State on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the terms of reference of the peace process, including the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace.

Egypt eagerly awaits the day when the Palestinian people will suffer no more. Until then, it is incumbent on us all to assist them in order to alleviate their suffering. In that regard, Egypt welcomes the support of the majority of Member States for draft resolution A/74/L.33, which seeks to renew the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, given its key role in providing necessary support to Palestinian refugees who are still waiting for the international community to take concrete action to resolve their question.

Egypt welcomes the efforts of all international organizations and institutions to support the Palestinian people. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians in particular plays a pivotal role in coordinating assistance with a view, inter alia, to helping to rebuild the occupied Palestinian territory, especially the Gaza Strip, after their destruction by the Israeli occupation over the years. We therefore support the draft resolution entitled “Assistance to the Palestinian people” and appreciate the fact that all Member States have joined the consensus.

**Mr. Chumakov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation considers international cooperation on emergency humanitarian assistance to be one of the most important areas of the work of the United Nations. Against a backdrop of growing humanitarian needs around the world resulting from natural disasters, conflicts and technological catastrophes, the coordinated, effective and efficient efforts of the humanitarian wing of our Organization are vitally necessary. We believe that only consistent compliance on the part of all participants in humanitarian activity with the guiding principles agreed on in resolution 46/182 can ensure that humanitarian assistance will produce good results, since it enables us to build trust, expand humanitarian access and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers. We urge all who participate in international humanitarian assistance to maintain political neutrality and impartiality, refrain from politicizing humanitarian assistance and always respect the sovereignty and leading role of States in the initiation, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance on their territories, as stipulated in resolution 46/182.

Speaking of humanitarian principles, we have to acknowledge that the turbulence we have been seeing in multilateral diplomacy in the past few years has begun to have a negative impact on our agreement on humanitarian resolutions. I would like to point out that for decades this area was less prone to politicization owing to the fact that it was about saving people’s lives. We used to be able to put political disagreements on the back burner and hold a constructive dialogue. The reality is that as a rule there are no winners on the humanitarian battlefield, while the losers can be in the millions. In that connection, we urge all delegations to make every effort to restore the unanimous adoption of humanitarian resolutions.

Regarding the subject of politicization, I regret to note the comments of our colleagues from Ukraine. We must admit that the substance of their accusations does not change from one year to the next, and we are once again hearing politicized speculation about some fault or other on the part of Russia. However, it is clear that responsibility for the serious humanitarian situation in south-eastern Ukraine belongs exclusively to the Kyiv authorities, who do not wish to fulfil the obligations they have assumed under the Minsk agreements, whose solidity was reaffirmed yet again by the recent meeting in the Normandy format.

With regard to Crimea, any discussion of its reunification with Russia is pointless. The people of Crimea have realized their right to self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Considering that it would be possible to spend hours refuting the accusations of violations of human rights in Crimea, since they have nothing to do with reality, I will not do that and instead simply repeat that we are willing to consider requests to visit our country so that visitors can see the reality for themselves. We call on all of our colleagues, including those from Ukraine, to respect the neutral character of humanitarian debates and not to descend into political squabbles that undermine the constructive nature of our discussions. We should focus first and foremost on caring for people.

The Russian Federation regularly provides support to United Nations humanitarian agencies and also sends rescuers, qualified experts and humanitarian assistance to areas that have suffered from natural disasters and armed conflict. We regularly participate in projects, including with our Belarusian colleagues, to do with the restoration and development of the territory that was affected by the Chernobyl disaster, and we thank the delegation of Belarus for coordinating the negotiation process on draft resolution A/74/L.30.

In 2019, Russia's overall contribution to international humanitarian assistance through the United Nations reached almost \$50 million. We particularly value our cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Rome-based agencies, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. We regularly contribute to the Central Emergency Response Fund, which we consider an innovative and effective tool for funding humanitarian efforts, particularly in the early stages of response. In the near future, we are planning on increasing Russia's contribution to assisting African countries, including through the WFP. That understanding was reached following the Russia-Africa Summit held in Sochi in October. Alongside other humanitarian agencies, we are also working on options for innovative decisions to increase the effectiveness of earmarked contributions. We support the efforts of the United Nations system to introduce anticipatory approaches to financing humanitarian appeals based on crisis-preparedness.

I would like to thank the interpreters for their good work.

**Ms. Lewis (Australia):** I am pleased to deliver this statement today on behalf of Australia. We would first like to thank the facilitators of the humanitarian resolutions to be adopted today for their tireless work to achieve consensus. They are important for ensuring the collective international commitment to collaboration between United Nations humanitarian agencies and Member States in providing life-saving assistance in crises.

In line with our commitment to consensus, however, Australia would like to put it on record that we do not support the inclusion of the reference to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in draft resolution A/74/L.31, on natural disasters, as we made clear throughout the negotiations. We consider it unnecessary. However, given the importance we attach to international cooperation in the area of natural disasters and this particular draft resolution, we were pleased to sponsor it and support its adoption. Nonetheless, we still want to register our concern about the inclusion of the reference to the Global Compact.

A collective commitment to humanitarian action is particularly important today, as humanitarian crises become more complex and protracted, and in view of the more than 148.7 million people now in need of humanitarian assistance. In that context, Australia would like to underscore how important it is that we all adhere to international humanitarian law, humanitarian principles, the protection of civilians, particularly in urban warfare, as well as the need to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers and to combat sexual and gender-based violence, preserve and respect the humanitarian space, support disability inclusivity and find political solutions to political crises.

Looking forward, Australia will be pleased to co-host the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in June 2020 with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, in order to contribute to international cooperation in reducing the risk and impact of humanitarian crises.

**Ms. Yamkasikorn (Thailand):** At the outset, Thailand aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

We also thank the Secretary-General for his reports on this agenda item (A/74/464, A/74/81, A/74/138, A/74/319, A/74/89 and A/74/461).

Thailand has always placed humanitarian and disaster relief assistance high on its agenda, which is reflected in both our national and foreign policies, as it contributes to the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is increasingly relevant to the lives and well-being of people today. We remain concerned about the fact that millions of people around the world continue to be affected by the consequences of humanitarian emergencies, ranging from conflicts to outbreaks of epidemics, devastating natural disasters and extreme poverty. These effects, which have increased in scale and intensity over the years, require a more rapid and effective response than ever. The concerted efforts of all stakeholders are key to bringing concrete and timely assistance to those in need. Thailand underscores the importance of providing needed assistance to reach those who may be left behind, particularly women, children and people in vulnerable situations. We also believe that humanitarian services and disaster relief should be provided on a basis of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to humanitarian personnel for their tireless work and their willingness to risk their lives to provide necessary assistance in dangerous areas. They are indeed our true heroes on the ground. It is imperative that we ensure their safety and security throughout their missions. We would also like to thank the relevant agencies and organizations, and especially the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for its role in coordinating humanitarian disaster relief assistance around the world.

Disaster preparedness, readiness and response are inseparable. In that regard, the Royal Thai Government has focused its humanitarian work on promoting disaster risk reduction, disaster preparedness and community resilience and emergency response. Thailand also promotes a comprehensive approach to addressing humanitarian situations in accordance with the Sendai

Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, particularly the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework. In June, Thailand also hosted the third Emergency Medical Teams Global Meeting, with participants from 90 countries and 200 humanitarian organizations, aimed at strengthening and building the capacities of national emergency teams, as we believe they play a crucial role and serve as first responders in clinical cases following outbreaks of disease and natural disasters.

Regional cooperation and coordination are instrumental in mobilizing the resources necessary to build resilience and achieve faster and more effective humanitarian responses. Thailand has been active in that regard, including through ASEAN. We were among the first supporters of the establishment in 2011 of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management. During its chairmanship of ASEAN this year, Thailand also launched ASEAN's satellite warehouse in Chainat province, in addition to existing warehouses in the region, which we believe will help further strengthen ASEAN's collective and swift response to disasters.

Thailand emphasizes the need for sufficient and continued funding for effective investment in humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. We have been a regular contributor to the Central Emergency Response Fund through our annual donation of \$20,000. The Royal Thai Government has also allocated a total of approximately \$1 million per year from its budget for humanitarian assistance at home and around the world.

In conclusion, Thailand reaffirms its commitment to continuing to support and strengthen cooperation with all stakeholders and partners, including the United Nations, in order to provide humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to people in need around the world.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We will hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this Hall.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*