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Agenda item 7

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its sixtieth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2021

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 23 Humanitarian assistance

1. During its sixtieth session, the Committee considered programme 23, Humanitarian assistance, of the proposed programme plan for 2021 and programme performance information for 2019 (A/75/6 (Sect. 27) and A/75/6 (Sect. 27)/Corr.1).
2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the programme and, together with other representatives, responded to questions raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed broad support for the work carried out by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with a delegation highlighting in particular the focus on improving humanitarian policy, emergency response, humanitarian access, the humanitarian and peace nexus, the enhanced Global Humanitarian Overview, improved disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action and preparedness that would make the humanitarian response system more effective, faster, be of better value, save more lives and would pre-empt suffering by shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach.
4. A delegation acknowledged the efforts made by the Secretariat in improving the programme narrative, taking into account the comments provided at the fifty-ninth session of the Committee; however, it also noted that there remained a lack of



consistency between the language used in the document and the agreed language of relevant General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions. In that regard, the delegation emphasized the need to ensure that the language included in the document represented agreed language approved in various resolutions. The examples provided by the delegation of “controversial connotations” included: (a) the use of the word “marginalized” in paragraph 27.3, which, it expressed the view, would be better represented by “most vulnerable”; and (b) the use of the terms “inclusivity”, “other diversity dimensions”, “specific population groups” and “enhanced approach” in paragraph 27.33, which the delegation considered to be controversial and not universally agreed terms.

5. Clarifications were sought regarding the mandates for some of the activities reflected in the programme. A delegation noted that some of the activities were not mandated and provided a number of examples, which included: (a) the use of the phrase “advocate the rights of people in need” in paragraph 27.7; (b) the reference to the work of the Office, which “supported the development of strategies to overcome access constraints in relevant operations”, in paragraph 27.22, and the example cited in the same paragraph on South Sudan; (c) the programme performance information reported in 2019 under subprogramme 2, Coordination of humanitarian action and emergency response, which referred to its work on increased availability of resources combating sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises; (d) the reference made in paragraph 27.50 to the “development of joint recommendations on how displacement can be featured in national disaster risk reduction strategies and plans and the production of guidance on how to reduce disaster displacement risk and strengthen resilience”; and (e) the use of the word “major” in the sentence ending “... and timely United Nations response to major and complex emergencies” in paragraph 27.102.

6. In reference to paragraph 27.5, delegations expressed concerns regarding the impact that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) would have on the operations of the Office, especially in the field, and on the programme plans for 2020 and 2021. It was noted that humanitarian and health-care workers faced a new risk calculus, planning requirements and challenges to access, particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Clarification was sought regarding the actions the Office was taking to address the unique access challenges amid the border, curfew and other access restrictions related to the pandemic and to overcome supply chain challenges, and the contingency plans the Office had developed, noting that the pandemic had had a negative impact on its partners and staffing.

7. A delegation sought clarification on the reference to “and facilitate sustainable solutions” in paragraph 27.7, and the term “human vulnerability” in paragraph 27.9. The view was expressed that some of the terms used were too broad and a number of examples were provided, which included the text in paragraph 27.7, where the delegation was of the view that the sentence

To fulfil its mandate, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would continue to support Member States in coordinating effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors, in order to alleviate human suffering in disasters and complex emergencies; advocate the rights of people in need; promote preparedness and prevention; and facilitate sustainable solutions.

should be revised as follows:

To fulfil its mandate, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would continue to support Member States in coordinating effective and principled humanitarian assistance in partnership with national and international humanitarian and other relevant actors, respecting the United Nations guiding

principles of humanitarian assistance, in order to alleviate human suffering in natural disasters and complex emergencies; promote preparedness and prevention.

8. Regarding paragraph 27.12, a delegation sought clarification on how the Office was working to establish functional and realistic coordination of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts. Clarification was also sought on the lessons learned and value-added areas and tools, such as cross-sectoral co-planning, needs analyses and civil-military coordination, which could be used for further and more regular integration and collaboration. Similar references to collaboration were noted in paragraphs 27.20 and 27.101.

9. In paragraph 27.20, it was mentioned that the subprogramme would identify policy and programmatic solutions and best practice and innovative concepts that should be disseminated widely to inform and guide policy, operational decisions and crisis management. A delegation cautioned that, when discussing innovative concepts, it was not always known what those innovative concepts would be, so it was important to take into account the considerations of Member States before disseminating those innovative concepts widely to guide policy.

10. Another delegation urged the Office to maintain its leadership in the field of humanitarian access, which it highlighted was a core element of the mandate. The same delegation sought clarification on how the Office would ensure that the minimum package of services on access was responsive to the needs of its partners, as mentioned in paragraph 27.22. In that same paragraph, where it was mentioned that the Office supported the development of strategies to overcome access constraints in relevant operations, another delegation questioned what the mandate of the Office was for those activities, and sought further details on the example citing South Sudan and what had been done there. In reference to paragraph 27.23, clarification was sought on what the numerous contributing factors were that facilitated access to people in need.

11. With regard to result 2: how technology may shape the humanitarian operating environment, and paragraph 27.25, clarification was sought regarding the ways in which technology could shape the humanitarian environment, why technology was a priority for 2021 and how the specific gaps in humanitarian responses could effectively benefit from new technology approaches. Regarding the performance measures set out in table 27.2, the view was expressed that the phrase “increased use of strategic technologies by humanitarian actors in 2021” was too broad and general, and clarification was sought on the plan to measure increased use of technology by humanitarian actors. Concerns were expressed regarding the references to how technology could be used to make humanitarian action more effective and efficient (see para. 27.28) and the use of mobile phones and social media tools to enhance activities (see para. 27.29), especially for the most vulnerable populations, who do not have access to those technologies.

12. Regarding subprogramme 2, Coordination of humanitarian action and emergency response, a delegation expressed its view that the reference to the Central Emergency Relief Fund in paragraph 27.35 should have read Central Emergency Response Fund. Regarding planned result 1: increased use of humanitarian funding for early action, and the activities mentioned in paragraph 27.42, a delegation expressed its view that, while innovative approaches to addressing needs early was encouraged, pooled funds should first and foremost remain available to respond to urgent needs stemming from sudden onset disasters and critical gaps in resources to address needs related to underfunded responses. Some delegations welcomed the new result 2: an enhanced Global Humanitarian Overview, and the focus on data transparency, joint needs analysis and response prioritization. Clarification was

sought on how the Office planned to improve the engagement of other United Nations entities, which have their own specific mandates, appeals and response strategies. Clarification was also sought regarding the steps taken by the Office to help improve the collection and sharing of data across clusters in a crisis zone and the analysis of data that would enable the improved prioritization and identification of groups or emergencies that would have the most urgent and unmet needs, as alluded to in paragraphs 27.44 and 27.87.

13. Under subprogramme 3, Natural disaster risk reduction, a delegation expressed the view that the strategy of the subprogramme, as set out in paragraph 27.50, contained too many broad results, which made it difficult to comprehend the work of the Office. Clarification was sought by a delegation on the work undertaken to promote the all-of-society approach referred to in paragraph 27.50. Clarification and examples were also sought on the “impactful disaster risk reduction policies and interventions to be developed” referred to in paragraph 27.52.

14. Regarding subprogramme 4, Emergency support services, a delegation expressed its doubts regarding the legality of the engagement between humanitarian and armed actors referred to in paragraph 27.66. The same delegation expressed its view that the term “sudden onset” used in relation to emergencies and crises referred to in paragraphs 27.73, 27.85 and 27.88 should be revised to “sudden and slow onset” emergencies and crises”.

15. Under subprogramme 5, Humanitarian emergency information and advocacy, a delegation sought clarification on the definition of the types of audiences referred to in paragraph 27.82. The delegation also sought clarification on the definition of “humanitarian users” in paragraph 27.88 and the phrase “use of shared facilitates when safe, practical and in line with the humanitarian principles” in paragraph 27.106. A delegation expressed its view that the term “disasters and ... emergencies” used in paragraphs 27.83, 27.85 and 27.99 should be revised to “natural disasters and complex emergencies”. Also in paragraph 27.99, the view was expressed that the word “rapid” should be replaced with “timely”.

16. It was noted that results 1 and 2 reported under subprogramme 5, Humanitarian emergency information and advocacy, were similar in nature. The view was expressed that, given the limited number of results in the format, it would be good to avoid overlap in presenting results and show different aspects of the work of the subprogrammes.

Conclusions and recommendations

17. Owing to a shortage of time, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly review, at its seventy-fifth session, the programme plan of programme 23, Humanitarian assistance, of the proposed programme budget for 2021, under the agenda item entitled “Programme planning”.