



General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

42nd plenary meeting
Friday, 11 December 2020, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 73

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/246)

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

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/75/75, A/75/238 and A/75/317)

Draft resolutions (A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44)

(b) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/84)

Draft resolution (A/75/L.43)

(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

The President: I thank members for joining today's plenary meeting on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance. This debate is a critical opportunity to stand in

solidarity with the millions of people caught in the direst of circumstances and to reinforce our collective commitment to supporting humanitarian action, which is especially important in the light of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This discussion is becoming more relevant by the day, and the recent *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* notes that in 2021 235 million people will require humanitarian assistance, of whom 160 million have been deemed the most vulnerable, requiring urgent assistance at a cost of \$35 billion. This year we must also prepare for the urgent possibility of famine, as 270 million people are at risk of acute food insecurity.

Clearly, there is work to be done, and we have a responsibility to ensure that every effort is made to strengthen coordination and reach those most in need. Particularly strong efforts must be made to support internally displaced persons and refugees, who are highly vulnerable to COVID-19 and struggle to secure essential support. The importance of including refugees and internally displaced persons in COVID-19 responses and recovery plans, including vaccine distribution, cannot be overstated. Similarly, we must ensure that our coordination efforts reflect gender considerations. Women and girls have also been acutely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with gender-based violence increasing substantially over the past 10 months, along with widespread socioeconomic impacts. A gender-responsive approach to the COVID crisis is essential to protecting that group.

Leaving no one behind is a cornerstone of the United Nations, and the onus is on us to ensure that our efforts

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

20-35292 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



to address the pandemic adhere to that principle. I want to make two recommendations to that end. First, as we heard during last week's special session of the General Assembly on COVID-19 (see A/S-31/PV.1 to A/S-31/PV.4), there are multiple promising vaccines on the horizon. That is indeed welcome news, but I must stress that the approval of vaccines and their accessibility are two very different things. Ensuring fair and equitable access to vaccines is not only the right thing to do but also the smart thing to do, and when it comes to humanitarian needs and the subsequent costs and resources, there is a clear rationale for ensuring quick vaccination programmes for those in greatest need. It is essential that the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, including the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, is adequately financed and supported in order to ensure that it can reach those goals.

Secondly, we must not forget that humanitarian crises were here well before COVID-19. The pandemic has only exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. We must continue every effort to address conflict situations and tackle climate and environmental concerns. As it is, people continue to suffer in deteriorating and protracted conflicts. Member States and parties to conflicts must take every measure necessary for promoting and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including by ensuring the protection of civilians and of humanitarian and health personnel and their facilities. Nor can we allow COVID-19 to deter us from the larger challenge of addressing climate change, which risks fuelling humanitarian crises into the future. As the international community pours trillions of dollars into COVID recovery, it is important that this is done through a lens of resilience focused on a recovery that is better and greener.

In closing, I want to reiterate that the humanitarian resolutions to be discussed today, and the foundational resolution 46/182 on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, are critical to the work of the Organization and to those we serve. We owe it to the peoples of the world to give this issue our full consideration.

I look forward to our discussion today and I now give the floor to the representative of Guyana to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.11 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Pierre (Guyana): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.11, entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". Owing to the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the difficulties in conducting substantive negotiations virtually, the Group of 77 and China has opted for a technical update of last year's resolution 74/115. This common approach has been agreed among the facilitators of the two other humanitarian draft resolutions, "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (A/75/L.44) and "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel" (A/75/L.42).

While this year's text is a technical update, the draft resolution remains fully relevant and its provisions applicable. In that regard, the Group of 77 and China continues to reaffirm the importance of international cooperation in providing assistance to countries and peoples affected by natural disasters, in accordance with resolution 46/182 and the guiding principles for the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance in the United Nations system, while also recognizing that it is the States affected that have the primary responsibility to initiate, organize, coordinate and implement humanitarian assistance within their territories.

The draft resolution reaffirms that in order to ensure a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development, emergency assistance must be provided in ways that will be supportive of short- and medium-term recovery leading to longer-term development, making clear the link between emergency response, rehabilitation and development. The draft resolution places particular emphasis on climate change and its impact on natural disasters. In that regard, it welcomes the holding of the Climate Action Summit convened by the Secretary-General in 2019 and takes note of the multi-partner initiatives and commitments presented at the Summit.

The draft resolution underlines the importance of taking early action with a view to minimizing and mitigating the impacts of natural disasters. There are provisions concerning the growing magnitude and scope of natural disasters and the need to redouble efforts to build community capacities and capabilities, as well as to enhance resilience by helping communities prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters.

Furthermore, Member States are encouraged to develop coherent approaches to addressing the challenges of displacement in the context of natural disasters. The draft resolution encourages all States, United Nations entities and other relevant actors to promote ecosystem-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 calls attention to the importance of the engagement of the private sector in disaster risk management activities and humanitarian assistance. It also encourages stepping up efforts to mobilize additional resources through anticipatory financing approaches and predictable, multi-year support, as well as working collectively on common results in order to reduce need, risk and vulnerability. Importantly, the draft resolution encourages Member States, humanitarian organizations and other relevant stakeholders to ensure access in the context of natural disasters to safe drinking water and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, including women and girls.

The Group would like to thank the delegation of Morocco for facilitating and coordinating draft resolution A/75/L.11 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We also appreciate the constructive approach of all the Member States who expressed their support for a technical update of the humanitarian resolution this year. It is our hope that the draft resolution will, as in previous years, receive a large number of sponsors. Delegations wishing to become sponsors are invited to do so. The Group of 77 and China hopes that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus and appeals to all delegations to demonstrate solidarity on this critical issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.42.

Mr. Sautter (Germany): I have the honour to present, on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States, draft resolution A/75/L.42, on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel.

We are all aware of the complexity of the current humanitarian landscape, where the sheer numbers and magnitude of humanitarian needs far outpace available resources and crises are increasingly protracted. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has only added layers of complexity and volatility and further

exposed the underlying causes of insecurity and social and economic inequality, leading to increasing humanitarian needs.

The United Nations and humanitarian personnel have responded to the pandemic with inspiring commitment. It is therefore even more troubling that the COVID-19 context has had additional adverse operational and security implications for their work, which further exacerbate existing impediments to relieving human suffering and even threaten the lives of humanitarian workers. Humanitarian work depends on the people whom we deploy in the field to actually do the job. Without humanitarian workers, no assistance is possible. The equation is simple. But that simplicity conceals the most complex and difficult task facing humanitarian organizations today, that of accessing the people most in need, often in hard-to-reach areas, while guaranteeing the safety and security of their personnel. The draft resolution before us embodies the commitment of the international community to ensuring and further strengthening the implementation of the international protection framework for all humanitarian workers.

This year the world has continued to witness violations of international humanitarian law and disrespect for the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. We have seen an increase in the absolute numbers of both United Nations and humanitarian personnel affected by safety and security incidents and in the number of humanitarian personnel who have lost their lives in the line of duty as a result of violence. The percentage of fatalities among locally recruited United Nations personnel and the staff of non-governmental organizations has also risen, which illustrates how those who work in the most dangerous areas remain particularly vulnerable. Their security must remain a priority for all of us if we want them to continue to deliver their crucial mandate. Accountability for violations of the rules that protect this crucial work remains alarmingly low, contributing to a general sense of impunity and the recurrence of heinous actions. International and national laws provide solid frameworks for the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel, but accountability lags behind. We have a collective responsibility to protect United Nations and humanitarian personnel and to hold accountable those who put their security at risk.

This year, after consulting the United Nations membership, we have made an exception by proposing to adopt a technical update of the draft resolution, given

the current COVID-19 situation and limitations. As the issue of ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian workers remains a major priority for the EU, we intend to resume substantive negotiations on this resolution next year. On behalf of the European Union and its member States, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) under the guidance of Under-Secretary-General Gilles Michaud. This draft resolution reiterates the strong mandate and additional guidance from the General Assembly for the essential work performed by DSS and the United Nations security management system more broadly.

The European Union and its member States firmly believe that it is our duty to acknowledge the commitment of humanitarians and United Nations and associated personnel, support their work and do everything in our power to further enhance their safety and security. I would like to express my warm thanks for the support we have received across the membership in the difficult decision to opt for a technical update this year given the extraordinary circumstances. In particular, I would like to express our gratitude to the delegations sponsoring this important draft resolution. I also want to thank the Department of Safety and Security, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their continued valuable support.

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

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.44.

Ms. Eneström (Sweden): First, let me note that Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union.

On behalf of the 98 sponsors, it is my great privilege to introduce to the General Assembly this year's draft resolution, contained in document A/75/L.44, on strengthening the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, the so-called humanitarian omnibus resolution. This year marks the twenty-ninth anniversary of the landmark resolution 46/182, presented and adopted in December 1991,

which created the very foundation of today's United Nations humanitarian system. Sweden has facilitated the negotiations on this resolution ever since.

Humanitarian needs have grown exponentially in recent years because of war, protracted conflicts, natural disasters and the impact of climate change. Since the last humanitarian debate (see A/74/PV.49), these factors have been compounded by the coronavirus disease pandemic and its direct and indirect consequences. As the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* shows, this has resulted in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance growing by 40 per cent. The goal of our collective efforts, as set out in December 1991, is to effectively assist our fellow women and men, girls and boys affected by crisis. If anything, the pandemic has further underscored the relevance of that goal, and we are convinced that humanitarian assistance, delivered in line with humanitarian principles, remains the best way to reach it.

The pandemic has also had a profound impact on our work here at the United Nations. As physical meetings were restricted this autumn, we have proposed a technical update of the draft resolution for this year. Apart from some minor technical adjustments, the text before the Assembly today is the same as the one that we adopted last December (resolution 74/118). That approach has been coordinated with every State Member of the United Nations, and I would like to thank everyone for taking a constructive approach throughout the consultation process. At the same time, I would like to stress that this year is exceptional and should not be seen as a precedent for the future. We believe that the text enables humanitarian actors worldwide to carry out their invaluable work in support of those most affected by humanitarian crises. For the year ahead, we look forward to close consultations and full-fledged negotiations on the text to be adopted next year, which will mark the thirtieth anniversary of this important resolution.

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

Mr. Skoog (European Union): The mask I am wearing today was made in Malaysia by Afghan refugees. I am wearing it in honour of all the refugees of the world and in order to help keep their plight as a very high priority.

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

candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The year 2020 has been like no other. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has triggered the deepest global recession since the 1930s, setting back decades of development gains. The virus and its socioeconomic effects, including a hunger pandemic, have hit the most vulnerable members of society hardest and added yet another layer of hardship on top of the adverse effects of climate change, food insecurity and conflicts. Humanitarian needs, already considerable, now surpass even the worst-case scenario projections at the beginning of the year. The *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* captures that sobering and bleak picture: 235 million people are projected to be in need of assistance. There is a risk that the number of people facing starvation will double. Extreme weather events and natural hazards are expected to be more frequent and severe due to the impact of climate change. In the absence of political solutions, conflicts continue to take a heavy toll on civilians, causing the forced displacement of millions. The challenges facing the humanitarian community are daunting, not only because of the exponential rise in humanitarian needs amid constrained resources but also the very nature of those challenges, in which the humanitarian space is increasingly compromised.

I want to highlight three points. First, COVID-19 has had a negative impact on our ability to access people in need. United Nations and humanitarian personnel have responded to the pandemic with inspiring commitment. Despite their vital role, we are particularly concerned about the fact that the COVID-19 context has had additional adverse operational and security implications for humanitarian personnel and their work, thereby exacerbating existing impediments to the ability to relieve human suffering. While some restrictions were rightly put in place to curb the spread of the virus, the limited access to populations and the bureaucratic barriers that have been raised have gravely hampered the ability to access those in need and deliver aid to the communities affected. Since the pandemic started, people in more than 50 countries have not been getting the humanitarian assistance they require

for their survival and welfare owing to constraints on humanitarian access.

Secondly, the humanitarian operating environment is immensely constrained due to a systematic and continued disregard for international humanitarian law and a lack of respect for humanitarian principles. The EU and its member States will continue to promote compliance with international humanitarian law and to insist on accountability. Full, prompt, impartial and effective investigations are crucial. In that regard, the EU and its member States remain a driving force in strengthening support for international criminal justice and the International Criminal Court in particular, as a key actor in the fight against impunity.

Humanitarian assistance and, tragically, aid workers themselves are increasingly under attack. Despite their vital role, at least 125 humanitarian workers were killed last year while carrying out their duties. The international community has both a moral duty and an obligation to those who put their lives at risk in order to make a difference on the ground. Saving lives should not cost lives. The protection of humanitarian and medical workers continues to be a priority for the EU. Whether internationally or locally recruited, whether from the United Nations, the Red Cross movement or non-governmental organizations, humanitarian workers are essential workers who must be respected and protected.

Respect for the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence remains critical to ensuring that humanitarian actors can safely conduct operations. We will therefore continue to oppose any efforts to undermine humanitarian principles in United Nations forums. We must all also continue making every effort to avoid any negative effects that sanctions and counter-terrorism measures may have on exclusively humanitarian activities, including medical work, carried out by impartial humanitarian actors in full compliance with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. To that end, the EU commits to preserving the humanitarian space, including through the development of best practices and the adoption of mitigating measures, among them the introduction of exceptions.

Thirdly, this is a moment to demonstrate strong collaboration and synergies and to jointly address the needs of the most vulnerable. It is also an opportunity to lay the foundations of a sustained post-COVID-19

recovery in the spirit of building back better and greener. The operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is critical to enabling United Nations agencies to leverage their respective comparative advantages and to achieve the object of “Delivering as One”. That is fully in line with the United Nations reform process that the EU and its member States have supported since its outset and should also be reflected in the work of the executive boards of United Nations funds and programmes.

We reiterate our commitment to putting people at the centre of the humanitarian response. Women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by disasters and conflicts. Many girls currently out of school will never go back. Sadly, the pandemic has provided clear evidence that crises exacerbate structural gender inequalities, with a worrying rise in gender-based violence. All humanitarian operations should take into account those groups’ needs and capacities. That includes assistance to women and girls on sexual and reproductive health, as well as actions to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence. We also continue to support ongoing efforts related to the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation and to ensuring that mental health and psychosocial support become an integral part of the humanitarian response.

The EU and its member States are committed to remaining at the forefront of the work of addressing current humanitarian challenges. The strategic framework for the EU’s response, which is centred on respect for international humanitarian law, safeguarding the humanitarian space, including by ensuring unimpeded access to people in need, as well as the protection of civilians in situations of conflict and disaster, remains unchanged. At the same time, it will be ever more important to expand the donor base. The world’s top 10 donors currently contribute 80 per cent of humanitarian funding. That is unsustainable in the light of budgetary constraints and, more importantly, it falls short of addressing the increase in humanitarian needs. It is quite telling that the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* aims to assist 160 million people, though it is estimated that 235 million people will actually require humanitarian assistance. Contributions from other donors, including flexible funding, are thus essential if we are to live up to the commitment of ensuring that no one is left behind.

We want to stress that humanitarian aid is never the solution to conflict. We therefore urge the international community to work on political solutions for putting an end to conflicts, which are still the main drivers of humanitarian needs worldwide. And we reiterate our call to respect the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire.

Today’s humanitarian challenges are enormous. Supporting the work of the humanitarian community through the draft resolutions we will adopt today and by maintaining an international consensus on the United Nations normative frameworks for humanitarian action is key. We do so by reaffirming the need to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, in a resolution facilitated by the EU on behalf of its member States, by better addressing the consequences of natural disasters, through a draft resolution submitted by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77, and by reaffirming the agreed framework for humanitarian action in the successor resolution to resolution 46/182, introduced by Sweden. Getting back on track is not impossible. Tackling these enormous challenges will take conscious action and collective effort in a spirit of effective multilateralism. The EU and its member States remain committed and ready to take our share of that responsibility. We count on the rest of the international community to stay the course and step up for this common endeavour.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Brunei Darussalam. At the outset, ASEAN would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports under this agenda item (A/75/75, A/75/238 and A/75/317).

We acknowledge that it is getting harder to save lives as crises and conflicts grow in complexity, gravely endangering the lives of humanitarian workers, and that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is creating unprecedented risks for them. It is therefore important that we recognize the contributions made by all humanitarian workers who sacrifice their lives to help people affected by global crises.

The ASEAN region is vulnerable to several types of natural disasters, including typhoons, floods, droughts,

earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. It is estimated that on average the region suffers damages amounting to more than \$4.4 billion every year as a consequence of disasters resulting from natural hazards. Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam were among those most exposed to natural disasters in 2019. This year alone several typhoons made landfall, and as of last month, floods and landslides have caused extensive damage and loss of life in five of our member States — Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. While battling the pandemic is a vital task, natural disasters have further complicated the attempts to control the spread of COVID-19, as they limit the work of both health and humanitarian workers.

We in ASEAN are fully aware that natural disasters are often transboundary in nature and therefore require coordinated transnational and multilateral responses. In that regard, ASEAN places great importance on the need to work closely with regional and international agencies to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian responses and disaster relief. With the assistance of United Nations agencies and other external partners such as the European Union, the Asian Development Bank and the Government of Canada, the ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster Responsive Social Protection to Increase Resilience were officially launched on 14 October. They outline a multisectoral approach aimed at building resilience as well as strengthening and expanding existing social protection systems to anticipate, respond to and mitigate the impact of potential crises. In that connection, I would like to share with the General Assembly that on 21 October, ASEAN and the United Nations adopted a five-year plan of action to implement their Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership. Among other things, the plan of action outlines our commitment to enhancing ASEAN-United Nations cooperation in disaster risk reduction, emergency response and management through ASEAN-led initiatives such as its disaster emergency logistics response system and its military ready group on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and by enhancing the capacity of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre).

As the main operational engine of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, the AHA Centre plays a crucial role in facilitating cooperation and coordination for disaster management and emergency response within the region

and with relevant international organizations such as the United Nations. Its work includes developing knowledge in the region by facilitating and promoting exchanges of expertise, best practices and lessons learned on disaster management. In 2019, the AHA Centre facilitated \$81,500 worth of assistance for approximately 18,300 individuals in ASEAN. Some 188 disaster events were registered, affecting an estimated 13 million people across the region, displacing more than 1.2 million and damaging more than 1 million homes.

Our Vision 2025 calls for ASEAN to become a global leader in disaster management. The leveraging of local knowledge and ASEAN experience related to disaster management is central to that vision. ASEAN's progress in emergency and disaster risk management has enabled us to realize a "One ASEAN One Response" approach for faster, collective responses to disasters inside and outside the region. To achieve that vision, ASEAN recognizes the need to build and strengthen capacity in disaster management. In that regard, we have engaged with external partners for relevant projects such as the ASEAN Standards and Certification for Experts in Disaster Management (ASCEND), an initiative aimed at enhancing and improving the quality of human resources in this sector by establishing a common set of standard skills and competencies for each profession in the disaster management sector. This year the Republic of Korea generously committed to supporting ASCEND's operationalization for the period from 2020 to 2023. Through that support, the AHA Centre will pilot and further institutionalize the ASCEND programme within the region.

In conclusion, ASEAN remains committed to improving its humanitarian and disaster relief efforts to better serve its people, as well as to upholding multilateralism and working with all partners to improve its regional capacity and save more lives in the future. To that end, we look forward to continuing our engagement with partners in the international community.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.43.

Mr. Sautter (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States to introduce this draft text (A/75/L.43) of the Assembly's annual resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people. The candidate countries 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 align themselves with this statement.

The EU remains gravely concerned about the difficult living conditions and the humanitarian situation affecting the Palestinian people, especially women and children, throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including in Area C and in particular in the Gaza Strip, which have been further aggravated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The political and security situation in Gaza remains volatile, and the humanitarian situation continues to be a matter of grave concern. The European Union strongly supports the work being done by Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and commends his efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The immediate priority must be to reduce tensions and avoid more conflict there. The return of the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip is essential to sustained improvement of the conditions and humanitarian situation. But to ensure lasting results, fundamental change in the situation in Gaza is crucial. We once again call on all the 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 an end to the policy of closure and the full opening of crossing points and humanitarian access, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

The EU will continue to support United Nations and Egyptian efforts to achieve the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate Palestinian Authority. The EU will continue to work with its partners, the Israelis, the Palestinians, regional actors and international partners to that end. In that 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 crises of the past three years, and this year we have also provided additional support for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to be strong, reliable and

predictable supporters of the Agency, whose role also remains crucial to the stability of the region.

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

Mrs. Manav (Turkey): The humanitarian landscape has been changing rapidly. While projections were already depicting 2020 as one of the worst humanitarian crises since the Second World War, new challenges emerged with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. People are facing its severe economic and social consequences. According to the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*, a record 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance next year, a 40 per cent increase over 2020. In addition to the pandemic's devastating impact, massacres and atrocities resulting from conflicts have continued unabated. It is more than urgent to ensure that the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire is implemented in order to help create the conditions necessary for the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Vulnerable groups continue to bear the brunt of instability, with women and children paying the heaviest price. In some parts of the world, COVID-19 is used as a pretext to neglect international obligations and discriminate against refugees and migrants. While 149 countries have fully or partially closed their borders, the Secretary-General has highlighted in his policy brief *COVID-19 and People on the Move* that the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to reimagine human mobility. As a country that is hosting 20 per cent of all the refugees around the globe, Turkey fully subscribes to his approach.

The humanitarian system must adapt to the changing nature of emergencies. This week we acknowledged the remarkable work done by the Central Emergency Response Fund through its rapid and effective response in the most fragile contexts. I also want to emphasize the positive impact of country-based pooled funds, which offer one of the easiest and most efficient ways of addressing urgent needs. The growing dichotomy between increasing needs and limited resources compels us to do further work on innovative financing. We should explore new sources of investment to create a better toolkit with a wide spectrum of public and private partnerships. As Member States, we must increase our

financial resources in order to help the United Nations in its humanitarian action.

Turkey gives priority to human-centred policies in the conduct of international diplomacy. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance programme, Turkey remained the world's leading donor country in 2019, with \$7.6 billion worth of humanitarian assistance. In addition, as part of our contribution to the global fight against COVID-19, we have responded to the medical needs of more than 156 countries and 11 international organizations. Since 2014, all the humanitarian needs in northwest Syria have been addressed through the United Nations cross-border mechanism in Turkey, with the support and facilitation of our Government. There is no alternative to that mechanism, and cross-border aid should continue without any hindrance. In Yemen, where we have been witnessing the largest human-made humanitarian crisis, our agencies reach those in need through their staff permanently stationed in the country. This year, from Africa to the Asia-Pacific and Central Asian regions, we responded to urgent needs in areas hit by conflict or disasters. We have also joined the international efforts to help those who are in need or have been displaced as a result of the catastrophic explosion in Beirut.

While extending our helping hand, we have had the privilege of working with international humanitarian and health workers. We would like to commend the tireless efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as other United Nations agencies, in their life-saving work. Turkey is committed to continuing to play its leading role in the global response to humanitarian emergencies. While doing so, we will also continue to underscore the need to strengthen multilateralism, solidarity and cooperation across borders for collective outcomes.

Mr. Norapoornpipat (Thailand): At the outset, Thailand wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on this agenda item (A/75/75, A/75/238 and A/75/317). We appreciate their recommendations, which remain relevant and essential to the international community's efforts to coordinate and respond to humanitarian needs around the world, particularly at this time of crisis. Thailand also aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its effects have created greater humanitarian needs, compounded the plight of the most vulnerable and complicated our assistance efforts, thanks to shrinking humanitarian access and financial support. The pandemic also threatens to hinder, and even reverse, our hard-earned development gains, and it disproportionately increases the vulnerability of people and societies. At the same time, the serious challenges that we faced before the pandemic began are continuing. In particular, food insecurity has gone on increasing, climate change and disasters are becoming more acute and the threat posed by communicable diseases is growing. Thailand believes that the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic presents a valuable opportunity for us all to reflect on our efforts, regarding which we would like to emphasize the following areas.

First, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and humanitarian action are interrelated. Inclusive social protection enables us to ensure that all sectors of a society, particularly the most vulnerable, are well provided for in time of emergencies. Universal health coverage puts countries in a better position to prepare for and respond to pandemics and other health challenges and emergencies. Advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and commitments under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement also helps to create an enabling environment and complements our endeavours under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the New Urban Agenda. In addition, particular attention should be paid to the disproportionate effects that COVID-19 has on women and girls. The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and increased sexual and gender-based violence, and lockdown measures have limited people's access to education. It is therefore imperative that our emergency responses are gender-sensitive and focused on strengthening women's leadership and their full, effective and meaningful participation in all areas.

Secondly, preparedness and resilience remain key. Thailand has relied on a homegrown development approach based on a sufficiency-economy philosophy that centres on people and communities and promotes the building of resilience to shocks and interruptions. Thailand also takes pride in being an important part of the global health workforce. Last year, our emergency medical team received well-deserved recognition from

the World Health Organization for the high standard of the medical teams that it can deploy internationally in emergency situations. We continue to strengthen our efforts in that regard, especially by building the capacity of our urban search and rescue team to meet international standards, which will enable us to work alongside international humanitarian professionals.

Thirdly, the success of humanitarian action depends on sufficient funding and resources. Thailand has been a modest but consistent contributor to the Central Emergency Response Fund. This year we contributed to the United Nations multi-partner trust fund for COVID-19 response and recovery. In the region, we have made contributions to the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific multi-donor trust fund for tsunami, disaster and climate preparedness in the Indian Ocean and countries of South-East Asia. We strongly encourage Member States and other partners to consider enhancing their contributions to the humanitarian pooled fund. Once developed, the vaccines and medicines for COVID-19 should be global public goods and their universal, timely, fair and equitable access and distribution should be ensured.

Over the past 75 years, the banner of the United Nations has brought courage and hope to people in vulnerable and dire humanitarian situations. Thailand welcomes and commends all active responses, including through the coordinating role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19. We join others in congratulating the World Food Programme on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its critical role not only in alleviating hunger but also in securing logistical lines for aid delivery in this time of crisis. Our applause and heartfelt gratitude also go to all front-line humanitarian and health personnel, as well as to others working on the ground and risking their lives to provide assistance to people in need.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): The disaster of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated existing humanitarian crises in the world's most fragile and vulnerable countries. In recent months, the United Nations system as a whole has mobilized and responded rapidly to reduce the humanitarian impact of the pandemic, including through numerous appeals, resolutions and initiatives, which we welcome. We were particularly impressed by the preparation and launch of the first Global

Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, just two weeks after the pandemic was officially declared.

In parallel with the unprecedented crisis that we are currently experiencing, humanitarian needs are only increasing, further exacerbated by the pandemic, which highlights the challenges of protection in particular. The numbers of those forcibly displaced by conflict or disaster are growing. In that connection, we welcomed the establishment last year of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, whose secretariat is based in Geneva. Civilian populations, like humanitarian workers, are regularly targets for attacks. Ensuring humanitarian access and assistance is an increasingly complex task. In addition, the lockdown measures implemented during the crisis have led to a shadow pandemic of increased sexual violence. In that context, we must provide an urgent, effective, coordinated response based on the principles and values of humanity. The resolutions we adopt today must be the expression of those principles. In keeping with its tradition, Switzerland strives to promote a culture of negotiation that fosters the most ambitious compromises possible so as to best support populations in need. We are delighted that Switzerland will chair the humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council next year in Geneva.

Before concluding, I would like to emphasize four fundamental points. First, humanitarian assistance should be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. This year, the world's attention has been focused on the pandemic. However, we must also ensure that we do not neglect the humanitarian needs that existed before the pandemic. The principles of humanitarian assistance outlined in the draft resolutions before us (A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44), including the facilitation of humanitarian access and the protection of civilians by all parties to conflict, must always be respected, especially in these difficult times.

Secondly, we must be innovative and avoid taking a vertical approach. We must localize aid and adapt to local needs by promoting the participation of those directly concerned, especially women and other vulnerable groups. It is also essential to adapt our funding decisions in line with the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship.

Thirdly, international humanitarian law represents a universal legal framework for the protection of victims of armed conflict and the provision of humanitarian

assistance. The COVID-19 crisis must not be used as a pretext for violating those rights. The pandemic is a protection crisis as well as a health crisis.

Fourthly, new technologies are making humanitarian action more effective, and the fight against the pandemic has demonstrated that. However, respect for confidentiality and the protection of data collected for exclusively humanitarian purposes are both a *sine qua non*.

Ms. Abdul Ghani (Malaysia): Malaysia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Guyana, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Brunei Darussalam, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

At the outset I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/75/75), which highlights the new challenges posed by a worsening global security environment for humanitarian and disaster relief assistance efforts, particularly under the difficult conditions arising from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The recent onslaught of COVID-19 has not spared a single country. It is a humanitarian crisis as well as a health crisis. Malaysia commends the efforts of the United Nations to ensure that the international humanitarian assistance system remains operational and the crucial life-saving work of United Nations humanitarian response agencies continues, despite the complexities and challenges of working in the COVID-19 context.

We believe that a timely, predictable, coordinated and accountable response to humanitarian needs is essential to saving lives and alleviating suffering. However, that has been made more difficult as the pandemic has exacerbated existing humanitarian challenges to delivering an effective response. The scale and intensity of human suffering inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic has had grave effects on vulnerable communities, and even more so in countries that are facing poverty, conflict, the effects of natural disasters and climate change and unilateral sanctions. We reiterate the call to all the relevant parties in conflict areas to adhere to the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire at this critical time.

We would like to thank 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. Malaysia, for its

part, continues to work hand in hand with the United Nations system to ensure the provision of high-quality services and facilities for humanitarian and disaster relief efforts. Within its capacity, Malaysia continues to assist communities and countries in need. We have made both monetary and in-kind contributions to humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. This year, Malaysia has pledged a financial contribution to OCHA aimed at humanitarian relief in Iraq.

In the region, Malaysia, together with the World Food Programme, continues to support COVID-19 operations and humanitarian relief efforts through the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot located in Subang. Subang is one of six such United Nations depots, and it provides storage, logistical support and services for our humanitarian partners. The Malaysian Government contributes \$1 million annually in the form of a grant to cover the centre's operating costs. This year, large-scale humanitarian operations have used the Subang depot as part of United Nations efforts to combat the pandemic, an important factor in ensuring that comprehensive emergency humanitarian missions within the region continue unhindered.

We are concerned about the security challenges that United Nations personnel and aid workers face in providing humanitarian assistance, particularly in areas where violations of international humanitarian law continue, humanitarian access is impeded, and the protection of civilians remains a serious concern. With regard to Palestine, we note with great concern the ongoing protracted protection crisis, the major shortfalls in funding and the restricted access to essential services, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/75/84). Malaysia reiterates the call to 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 and human rights law, as well as Security Council resolutions. In that connection, Malaysia has consistently contributed financially to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to alleviate its severe funding shortfall.

Many have warned that next year we may be facing a humanitarian crisis of a kind that the world has never seen before. Humankind's future is already in peril from the reversals and loss of gains in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. We need to continue

on the path of solidarity and international cooperation. We need to make sure that the predictions of a global humanitarian crisis will not materialize next year.

In conclusion, Malaysia would like to reiterate its call for continued coordination and collaboration between United Nations mechanisms and Member States in order to guarantee effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to those affected and ensure that humankind triumphs in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Melfald (Norway): We are at the end of 2020, a year that has been extraordinary, bringing yet another record in the number of people affected by humanitarian crises. Let me start by commending the World Health Organization and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their leadership and coordination during the pandemic. The humanitarian system has adapted its responses to meet the challenges in an impressive way.

We want to stress the key role of local front-line humanitarian workers. Resources must reach front-line responders so that they can take action to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic. If we are to curb the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, global equitable access to vaccines is key. Together with South Africa, Norway is co-chairing the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator Facilitation Council to that end.

As we will join the Security Council as an elected member from 1 January, we would like to highlight some areas of particular concern to Norway. First, we have to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It is crucial to ensure that all parties respect international humanitarian law. That includes granting safe, unhindered access to civilians in need of protection and assistance. Humanitarian principles should always be the foundation of our humanitarian response.

Secondly, the protection of children in armed conflict is a key issue for peace and security. Norway will be an active member of the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict and will look for opportunities to promote the protection of education and mobilize support for the Safe Schools Declaration.

Thirdly, we must strengthen our ability to protect people from sexual and gender-based violence. The increase in sexual and gender-based violence during the pandemic has been dramatic and is having devastating effects on individuals and societies. We must step up our efforts to fund protection programmes, as well

as sexual and reproductive health services. Norway encourages more States and organizations to join the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.

Fourthly, we need a particular focus on refugees and internally displaced persons. In the current crisis, the need for protection, shelter, food, water and basic health-care services is growing. Norway has championed the establishment of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement and we look forward to its report and recommendations on how to deal with what is one of the major humanitarian challenges of our time.

Finally, we would like to commend the humanitarian workers who risk their lives while saving others. We can and must do more to protect them. We must move from words to action in order to end impunity for attacks on humanitarians.

In conclusion, Norway stands in solidarity with the people across the world who are affected by humanitarian crises and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. No country can address those challenges alone. As we end the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, and as an incoming member of the Security Council, we can assure the Assembly that Norway will continue to do its part.

Ms. Alnaser (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation is pleased to be participating in the debate on this agenda item, given our steadfast belief in its importance, and we want to express our gratitude to all those who contribute to humanitarian and other additional assistance. We reaffirm the importance of promoting and coordinating the humanitarian assistance and emergency relief that the United Nations provides expeditiously to regions affected by disasters and crises in order to save threatened lives. This is all the more true considering that we are currently experiencing increasing conflicts and disasters around the world, demanding that we promote international partnerships for greater effectiveness.

My country has been characterized since its beginnings by its deep love for charitable action, which has become a feature of our foreign policy that we can describe as humanitarian diplomacy. Moreover, the fact that our late Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, was named a humanitarian action leader is eloquent testament to the importance that my country has attached to humanitarian assistance for more than half a century.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for the roles played by Secretary-General António Guterres and by Mr. Tijjani Muhammad Bande, President of the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, and you, Sir, as President of the Assembly's current session, in providing support and aid for every area of humanitarian assistance, sustainable development, human rights, peace and security, particularly in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its ramifications.

My country has assumed its regional and international responsibilities as a centre for humanitarian action and continues to support efforts to tackle global humanitarian issues and provide assistance during incidents, crises and disasters wherever they occur. The official development assistance my country provides is double the internationally agreed percentage, with a view to always promoting a humanitarian and development approach at both the Government and population levels. My country is fulfilling its noble humanitarian vocation through that approach, which exemplifies the values and principles of the true Kuwaiti people.

Since 2008, my country has been providing 10 per cent of its total aid to affected States through United Nations organizations and agencies. The State of Kuwait's contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund therefore amount to \$1 million, in addition to next year's voluntary contributions of \$1 million to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and \$2 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, my country has contributed approximately \$290 million to combat the spread of the virus and mitigate its multiple and complex effects through solidarity mechanisms and initiatives in support of United Nations efforts and those of the worst-affected countries. We do that through our support for the World Health Organization (WHO) in order to help a number of brotherly and friendly States relieve the pressure on their health systems and provide them with what they need to build their capacity and improve their services. In addition, my country made pledges during the international donor conference organized by the European Union in support of vaccine development through the Gavi Alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, since they are both European Union focal

points and in line with the WHO initiative to accelerate the development of a COVID-19 vaccine, ensure its equitable distribution and provide it to countries that cannot afford it.

In addition, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has made donations and provided financial assistance to brotherly and friendly countries to help them meet the challenges of the pandemic. For example, we supported the establishment of an epidemiological centre for Africa in cooperation with the African Union and instituted a moratorium on loan repayments due between 1 May and 31 December of this year in response to the World Bank Group's initiative launched at a Group of 20 meeting. As a result, Kuwait's total contributions to the effort to address the pandemic and its consequences amount to nearly \$287.4 million. Kuwait has also responded to a request by the United Nations to receive and provide medical care to international civil servants working for the Organization, its agencies or other international organizations active in Central and West Asia who contracted the virus.

In conclusion, my country's delegation would like to thank United Nations officials and humanitarian actors for their tireless efforts to implement their humanitarian activities, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to realizing a world characterized by an efficient and effective humanitarian response to other such challenges.

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

The year 2020 has been a crucial one for multilateralism and for humankind. Conflicts and geopolitical tensions, demands for social justice, instability, the risk of acute food insecurity, high levels of forced displacement, disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, in addition to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, are projected to continue next year, and 235 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

We have an opportunity today to join together and realize the effective multilateralism we need by adopting by consensus the three humanitarian draft resolutions (A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44) before this plenary meeting of the General Assembly. They deal with fundamental issues — the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, international cooperation on

humanitarian assistance in the area of natural disasters, and the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has done an excellent job this year in extremely difficult circumstances, bringing coherence to the humanitarian system, analysing needs and supplementing the response in underfunded contexts. The World Health Organization is coordinating the global health response and leading the crisis management team; the World Food Programme is providing logistical and food support; UNICEF is maintaining education and child protection efforts. The rest of the system has also shown a high level of commitment. We hope that the development system will also make progress on coordination. That will represent a decisive step towards the realization of the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus and the achievement of one United Nations. That nexus will be one of our priorities in the coming year and must be achieved while ensuring full respect for the principles of neutrality, impartiality, humanity and independence. The problems we face are multifaceted, and the solutions to them must therefore also be multifaceted and complementary.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The year 2021 will be a year when we make an even stronger case for women's inclusion and leadership throughout the humanitarian response cycle. Their role in the localization agenda and in recovery will be key. In addition, we must recognize the importance of sexual and reproductive health services, which in humanitarian contexts are essential for saving lives. Women and girls who find themselves in armed conflict or emergency situations cannot escape the scourges of gender-based violence or human trafficking. I want to acknowledge the work of the United Nations Population Fund and UN-Women in this area, as well as the Central Emergency Response Fund's gender-based-violence funding window.

Education is an essential pillar of any humanitarian response that aspires to social justice. It is the most powerful tool we have for people's growth and development and the most influential in the development of countries. We must support education in emergencies and ensure that schools are safe places. We call on States that have not yet signed the Safe Schools

Declaration to do so. The 106 States that are already signatories should coordinate its implementation and compliance with it.

Medical services and the safety of health-care workers are another priority of the Spanish Government. Spain remains committed to the development and implementation of resolution 2286 (2016), which we co-facilitated during our time on the Security Council. We would like to publicly condemn attacks on all humanitarian workers, which have increased exponentially in recent months. States must investigate such attacks, and their perpetrators must be brought to justice.

Another challenge facing the international community is in the area of the defence of humanitarian access, respect for international humanitarian law and principled humanitarian action. I would like to thank the International Committee of the Red Cross for its contribution to ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and for its efforts to humanize situations of armed conflict. It deserves recognition for its work in general but also for its leadership.

There are many humanitarian crises around the world, and they all deserve our attention — the crisis in Venezuela and its neighbours, forced displacement in Central America, the Sahrawi refugee camps, the tragic situations in Palestine, Syria and the Sahel and that of the Rohingyas, to name but a few. They all require our attention. An example of Spain's commitment is its assumption of the Chair of the support platform for the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework to forced displacement in Central America and Mexico. Similar initiatives have been established in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Where the United Nations system is concerned, I also want to recognize the generosity of Spanish civil society, which will have contributed more than €90 million to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2020. Spain's decentralized cooperation has also made an important effort this year to meet the humanitarian agenda.

Finally, I would like to thank the non-governmental organizations and humanitarian workers without whose work humanitarian action would not function. Their efforts, vocation and dedication are a source of inspiration to us all. We have a decade ahead of us to fulfil the agenda for humankind, the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. Let us work in the short term in order to alleviate suffering in the medium term, recover better and develop in a greener, fairer and more inclusive way.

Mr. Rae (Canada) (*spoke in French*): The year 2020 has been particularly difficult for populations affected by the crisis. At the beginning of the year, millions of people were already dealing with conflict, climate change, natural disasters and food insecurity. The pandemic and its side effects have exacerbated those challenges, threatening critical development gains. As the people who care for their families and patients and work on the front lines, women are the worst affected. They face increasing risks of sexual and gender-based violence and have limited access to services, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health. At their peak, school closures affected more than 1.5 billion children, with particularly devastating consequences for girls and young women.

(*spoke in English*)

An unprecedented global food security crisis is emerging, with 270 million people likely to fall deeper into hunger, in addition to the 690 million who were already food insecure before the pandemic. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, warned us in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech yesterday that we are on a knife's edge. The prospect of famine is staring us in the face. Looking to 2021, the recently released *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* estimates that \$35 billion will be required to provide life-saving assistance to 160 million of the most vulnerable. To this point, we have not acted as energetically as we should. It is time now for us to act, and to act together.

First, we must provide predictable and flexible humanitarian financing in line with the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing and the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles. We must explore innovative partnerships, including with the private sector.

Secondly, humanitarian workers must have rapid, safe and unimpeded access to ensure that they can deliver assistance to those in need, based on fundamental humanitarian principles. Their safety and security must be protected. That is not happening right now. Let me put it bluntly. Many nation-States and private armies are preventing assistance from reaching people who are starving and sick. That is clearly unlawful, but it is happening. Children at school, women at home or working in hospitals are killed because those places

and people are being deliberately targeted. They are not what is euphemistically called "collateral damage". They are tracked and they are killed. The perpetrators of such atrocities must be held accountable.

Thirdly, our national Governments in the Assembly must support local and national responders, including women- and refugee-led organizations, on the front lines of humanitarian response. Gender-responsive humanitarian action is fundamental to the effectiveness of our collective responses. For responses to be need-based, the voices of women and girls, refugee and migrant populations, persons with disabilities and other marginalized people must be meaningfully included at every single stage.

Fourthly, we must prioritize education, particularly for girls, who are at the greatest risk of dropping out of school and thereby being more exposed to child, early and forced marriage, human trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence. Refugee children are also five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children. We must ensure that they are not denied their right or access to education. The future of this generation of young people is very much at stake.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada is working tirelessly to do its part. To date, Canada has launched more than \$1.1 billion for the response to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in developing countries, including \$100 million provided early in the pandemic in flexible humanitarian funding to address needs arising specifically by the pandemic. Nor have we lost sight of the humanitarian crises that existed prior to COVID-19. Canada is providing more than \$800 million in quality, flexible humanitarian funding. That is directed to humanitarian responses in the Sahel region, Yemen, South and Central America in response to the Venezuelan crisis and, more recently, to the Tigray crisis.

(*spoke in English*)

Over the past two years, Canada has also led the global Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. We launched the 2021–2025 road map, setting the strategic framework to guide collective action to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. We are pleased to be passing the leadership torch to Denmark in 2021 for the next stage of implementation. We are very proud to be actively contributing to the

implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees through the fulfilment of our pledges from the Global Refugee Forum and our work to support comprehensive refugee responses worldwide. We remain committed to doing more in 2021.

This year, the international community has reaffirmed its collective commitment to international cooperation. We have pledged to protect our planet. We have agreed to work to address the root causes, starting with conflict, that are driving so many humanitarian needs. And we continue our commitment to accelerating action to achieve gender equality, women's participation and the empowerment of women and girls. Those goals will not be easy to achieve, and we have to recognize, looking in the mirror, that we are already falling behind on the commitments we have made. However, together we can embrace the challenges that 2021 will bring us, stand in solidarity and deliver with, and for, those living in crisis globally, because we share a common humanity.

I look forward to a consensus-based adoption of the humanitarian draft resolutions (A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44) later today and would like to thank the facilitators for their excellent work.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): As we speak, global humanitarian needs are increasing significantly owing to the continued spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, intensifying regional conflicts, the rising threat of climate change, frequent natural disasters and extreme weather events, desert locust infestations, the worsening food security situation and the effects of unilateral coercive measures. In such a grim context, it is imperative to ensure that the international community upholds multilateralism, strengthens solidarity and cooperation, works together to combat COVID-19 and supports countries and peoples in humanitarian emergencies in overcoming these increasingly serious humanitarian challenges. China would like to emphasize the following.

First, we should strictly abide by international law and the norms governing international relations. Humanitarian assistance must be based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 46/182 and must remain humanitarian and professional. The sovereignty of recipient countries must be respected, their internal affairs must not be interfered with and any politicization of humanitarian issues should be avoided. All the parties to conflicts

should respond positively to the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and work for political settlements through inclusive dialogue, while all the parties concerned must observe international humanitarian law and fulfil their obligation to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access and effective humanitarian delivery. We must coordinate the efforts of the international community and push for any unilateral coercive measures to be lifted immediately in order to facilitate a full, effective and efficient response to COVID-19 by all Member States.

Secondly, we should increase humanitarian assistance and effectively improve the emergency response capabilities of developing countries. That means sharing anti-epidemic experience, providing material and technological support and engaging in cooperation on medicines and vaccines. More resources should be channelled to areas such as infectious-disease control, public-health capacity-building and food security. Humanitarian assistance should be scaled up for vulnerable people, including women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. COVID-19 vaccines should be considered a global public good and made accessible and affordable for vulnerable countries. The international community should help developing countries strengthen their capacities in disaster prevention, preparedness and response and risk reduction, foster the exchange and sharing of disaster information and enhance disaster monitoring and early-warning capabilities.

Thirdly, we should put people at the centre of our efforts and fundamentally reduce humanitarian needs. All our efforts, from offsetting the impact of COVID-19 and getting back to normal to ending conflicts and humanitarian crises, ultimately depend on the realization of people-centred development. The international community should place the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the heart of international development cooperation. Poverty eradication must be made a primary goal, and more resources should be directed to poverty reduction, education, health and infrastructure development in order to achieve better social and economic recovery and address both the symptoms and root causes of humanitarian crises.

China commends the United Nations system and humanitarian organizations for their efforts to coordinate and provide humanitarian assistance and to rapidly respond to COVID-19. We pay tribute to the

dedication of the humanitarian and medical personnel on the front lines. China firmly supports the United Nations in leading and coordinating international humanitarian assistance and global cooperation in fighting COVID-19. We welcome the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, as well as the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and other relevant initiatives.

Upholding the vision of a community with a shared future for humankind, China has been vigorously engaged in international cooperation against the virus since the first outbreak of COVID-19. We have sent 36 medical expert teams to 34 countries and extended assistance to more than 150 countries and international organizations. China has donated \$50 million to the World Health Organization and the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and has worked with the United Nations to set up a global humanitarian response depot and hub in China. Once the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed and deployed in China, we will make them global public goods and provide them to other developing countries as our contribution to building a community of health for all. China will work with the international community, actively participate in bilateral and multilateral humanitarian relief operations and continue to support other countries in need within its capacity.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The situation around the world is more alarming than ever as the number of people affected by humanitarian emergencies grows. At the end of 2019, 145 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2020, a year marked by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, that figure has risen to nearly 168 million people, or one in 45 people worldwide. In 2021, 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance. That is an increase of almost 40 per cent compared to this year and accounts for one in 33 people in the world, the highest figure in decades, according to analysts. That is a call to reflect together in order to better understand the challenges we face. The time has come to act and mobilize in the service of the people and communities ravaged by conflict, climate change, rising world hunger and the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is crucial to ensure that the United Nations continues to be the voice of the most vulnerable and a catalyst for unified global action in the service of humankind. That is the ultimate goal of humanitarian work and humanitarian coordination. It is primarily about

working together to save lives and alleviate suffering within a diverse and varied system of humanitarian partners, including Member States, the United Nations, its funds and programmes, international, regional, national and local humanitarian organizations and civil society. It is therefore vital to intensify our cooperation and collaboration at every level in order to contain, control and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to the enlightened vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco has made humanitarian action a fundamental and structural pillar of its foreign policy. Morocco has therefore always been among the first whenever necessary to provide people affected by natural disasters or armed conflicts with initial humanitarian aid, including food, medicines, tents and multidisciplinary field hospitals. Morocco also continues to strengthen its participation in mitigating humanitarian crises around the world through its effective contributions to peacekeeping operations and humanitarian efforts. In that spirit, Morocco has been contributing since the 1960s to peacekeeping operations and humanitarian action around the world, particularly in Africa, notably through the deployment of contingents of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces and medical and surgical field hospitals and the delivery of direct humanitarian aid to the populations of affected countries.

Morocco's humanitarian action has become a model based on the principles of regional and international solidarity. With that in mind, and on the instructions of King Mohammed, the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces have so far deployed 17 hospitals and provided around 2.65 million medical services for the benefit of local populations and refugees in 14 countries on four continents. Similarly, in 2020, King Mohammed ordered medical aid to be sent to some 20 brother African countries to support them in their efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Morocco's efforts and action in the humanitarian field are not limited to emergency aid but are part of a comprehensive approach to alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable, particularly through sustainable development projects. In that respect, the experience accumulated by Morocco in South-South cooperation in recent years in Africa and other continents reflects its strong commitment to assisting populations in humanitarian crises. Morocco remains committed to impartiality, neutrality and independence as essential principles for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Violations of the human rights of displaced persons are reprehensible crimes under international law and any exploitation of their suffering for political purposes is unacceptable.

In June 2020, Morocco, as Chair of the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Economic and Social Council, launched a call for action, endorsed by 173 delegations, in support of the humanitarian response to COVID-19. That appeal is not just another document on COVID-19 but a call to action. It proposes concrete operational measures that are essential to meeting the challenges of the pandemic. It calls for practical actions such as facilitating the access, passage and transport of humanitarian aid, health and medical personnel and equipment, without which humanitarian suffering, loss of life and the needs of those affected could be exacerbated. In that connection, the call for action addresses the issues of speculation and undue stockpiling that can impede access to safe, effective and affordable essential medicines, vaccines, personal protective equipment and medical equipment, as well as other humanitarian supplies and equipment. It calls for universal, timely and equitable access to and distribution of all essential health technologies and products that are of high quality, safe, effective and affordable. Finally, the call for action also aims to respond to the humanitarian impact of increasing food insecurity in the world arising from the pandemic, which has been worsened by recent locust infestations in some developing countries. It calls for ensuring that the needs and priorities of vulnerable populations are fully taken into account.

Morocco commends the humanitarian system for its coordinated response aimed at preventing sharp increases in hunger, poverty, violence and disease due to the pandemic and the resulting global recession. We would also like to commend the strong commitment and leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. His various appeals and initiatives are essential to our collective effort to fight the pandemic and its impact. His call for an immediate global ceasefire, widely supported by Member States, including Morocco, is an important step towards mitigating the devastating humanitarian effects of armed conflict and enabling a greater focus on the response to the pandemic. In addition, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan is an excellent initiative that requires our full support, including through urgent funding to meet its needs. Morocco, as a donor and member of the

Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Board, also greatly appreciates the Fund's added value in enabling rapid, timely and better coordinated responses to emergency crises. In that regard, Morocco has just announced a significant increase in its voluntary contribution to the Fund. Humanitarian assistance is an expression of the positive moral value of solidarity. Let us therefore show solidarity today more than ever.

Mr. Fifield (Australia): The events of 2020 have devastated lives and livelihoods around the globe. The front line of the humanitarian response has been local staff, national organizations, community groups, friends and families, all rallying to support one another through this dreadful year. The United Nations system has adapted and reprioritized, and the international presence in many operations has been drawn down. Although there are few silver linings this year, the situation has forced us to recognize the central and invaluable role of local and national actors. International humanitarian organizations do incredible work, but that work will be at its most powerful when conducted in genuine partnership with local actors and with the views of affected populations at the heart of decision-making.

In 2020, Australia has focused its efforts on addressing the serious effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on our nearest neighbours. Many countries in the Pacific have avoided the worst health aspects of the crisis, but the secondary effects on their economies have been profound and compounded by the disasters that continue to strike the region with increasing ferocity.

Two weeks ago, the United Nations presented the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*, painting a bleak and catastrophic picture of humanitarian need. In the year ahead, we will face compounding challenges — responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, rising food insecurity, protracted conflicts and increasingly intense disasters. However, humanitarian assistance is not a solution. We must find political solutions, hold warring parties accountable for violations of international humanitarian law and ensure humanitarian access. Now more than ever is the time to invest in a multi-hazard, cross-sectoral approach to disaster risk reduction, preparedness and resilience-building. That is why Australia is so pleased to be hosting the ninth Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction virtually in 2021, in partnership with the United Nations Office

for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Conference will focus on resilient investment and recovery, resilient systems, services and infrastructure and resilient communities. It will highlight the experiences of women, girls and people with disabilities, as well as local and indigenous knowledge. As host, Australia will also draw greater attention to the challenges faced by remote island and coastal communities, particularly our Pacific neighbours.

I conclude today with Australia's thanks to the humanitarian personnel of the United Nations who continue to work tirelessly in the back offices and on the front lines to deliver urgent humanitarian assistance to millions of people in need.

Ms. Barber (United States of America): The United States remains deeply concerned about the unprecedented rise in humanitarian needs in recent years, as well as the severe increase in the number of people in need since the onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Last week, the United Nations released the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*. The figures are stark. In 2021, 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection. That means that one in 33 people worldwide needs help — a significant increase from the one in 45 people a year ago, which was already the highest figure in decades.

The United States has long been a world leader in providing humanitarian assistance, including through the United Nations, and we remain committed to supporting those in need. The United States remains the largest single humanitarian donor, giving more than \$10.5 billion in humanitarian assistance in fiscal year 2020. The United States is committed to multilateralism and to delivering humanitarian assistance around the world. Deputy Secretary Biegun and Acting Administrator Barsa of the United States Agency for International Development hosted a virtual side event this year, highlighting the top 10 humanitarian donors, recognizing key United Nations bodies for their partnership and encouraging other donors to increase their contributions. This year donors have given more than \$17 billion to inter-agency humanitarian plans. That is very generous, but we can still do more. We call on others to join us by doing their share in supporting the humanitarian response.

We must continue to improve efficiency and effectiveness through reforms of the international humanitarian system, including by increasing

coherence among our humanitarian, peacebuilding and development efforts, empowering local actors and improving transparency, joint and impartial needs assessments and prioritized appeals. We must also press Governments and parties to conflict to uphold their obligations under international law. That 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.

The United States is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/75/L.42, on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of United Nations personnel, which sends an important message of solidarity to the many courageous people who risk their lives to deliver humanitarian assistance to millions of people across the world. As the Secretary-General's report (A/75/75) documents, instability has increased across the globe owing to the unprecedented conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The continued rise in attacks on humanitarian workers, and in their deaths, due to terrorism is abhorrent. Also troubling this year is the marked increase in attacks affecting humanitarian and United Nations premises and vehicles. We are concerned about humanitarian workers who are held hostage, such as those who were held by the Houthis in Yemen.

With humanitarian needs at already unprecedented levels, existing global security threats have exacerbated those challenges and made safe access to populations in need even more difficult for those working on the front lines of disasters and crises. Despite those constraints, humanitarian personnel risk their lives and well-being every day to carry out vital work. We thank aid workers for their courage and honour the humanitarians who have lost their lives as a result of accidents and acts of violence. We condemn the significant increase in critical incidents affecting the humanitarian personnel of United Nations implementing partners.

Attacks on civilians and humanitarian workers in armed conflicts reflect a systemic disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law. We call for respect for international humanitarian law and unequivocal respect for humanitarian and United Nations workers, including humanitarian assets, premises and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We continue to call for greater accountability for violence against humanitarian personnel in countries such as Syria, as well as greater accountability when humanitarian personnel are the perpetrators of

exploitation, abuse or violence. We also reaffirm the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse of the world's most vulnerable people. We strongly encourage others in the Assembly to strengthen their efforts to counter sexual exploitation and abuse.

The United States remains firmly committed to its 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 proudly stand behind these resolutions and would like to convey our sincere thanks and support to all humanitarian personnel working in many of the world's most dangerous places.

The United States would like to take this opportunity to clarify some key priorities. Resolutions are non-binding documents that do not create or affect rights or obligations under international law. Moreover, the fact that the United States sponsors or joins a consensus on draft resolutions does not imply endorsement. The United States has committed \$20.5 billion to the international COVID-19 response, including for the development of vaccines and therapeutics, foreign assistance and other preparedness efforts. We do not support references to the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute that do not distinguish sufficiently between parties and non-parties or are otherwise inconsistent with our positions.

Consistent with the Geneva Consensus Declaration on Promoting Women's Health and Strengthening the Family, we assert that there is no international right to abortion and that each nation has the sovereign right to legislate its own position on the protection of life at all stages without external pressure.

The United States maintains the sovereign right to facilitate or restrict access to its territory in accordance with its national laws and policies and subject to its existing international obligations. We do not endorse or affirm the Global Compact for Migration, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants or the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

With respect to the Paris Climate Agreement and climate change language, we note that the withdrawal of the United States from the Agreement took effect on 4 November. Any references to the Paris Agreement

and climate change are therefore without prejudice to United States positions. We affirm our support for promoting economic growth and improving energy security while also protecting the environment. The United States does not support references to climate change in resolutions that are inconsistent with that approach or that do not respect national circumstances and approaches. With respect to references to the special reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United States has indicated at the IPCC that the Panel's acceptance of those reports and its approval of their respective summaries for policymakers do not imply United States endorsement of the specific findings or underlying contents of the reports. References to the IPCC special reports are also without prejudice to United States positions.

When our children remember this time years from now, they may ask us to tell them stories about what we did. We would like to tell them that speaking on behalf of the American people, we lifted up the voices of the world's most vulnerable people in the virtual halls of the United Nations and provided life-saving aid during the greatest international crisis the world has faced since the Second World War. Let our new legacy be that we put aside our differences and gave the world hope during its darkest hour.

Ms. Engelberg (Denmark): Denmark aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

With 235 million people in need of humanitarian assistance worldwide, we are facing one of the greatest humanitarian challenges in our lifetime. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has created an exponential rise in humanitarian needs by adding to the adverse impact of conflict, climate change and food insecurity, among other things. The global level of extreme poverty has risen for the first time in 22 years, and several decades of development risk being undermined. The needs are immense, and we need global solidarity more than ever.

I want to focus on what the Secretary-General has rightly described as a shadow pandemic, and that is the increasing level of gender-based violence, especially against women and girls. With the pandemic and its side effects relating to security, health and financial worries, violence against women and girls has intensified. That is true in countries all over the world, including my own. Globally, every three months of

lockdown in response to the pandemic means 15 million new cases of gender-based violence, and the risk is even higher in humanitarian emergencies. All forms of gender-based violence, every act of forced submission and degradation, is a barrier to the achievement of gender equality and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is among the most widespread and devastating human rights abuses in the world. Every humanitarian effort should therefore include the policies, systems and mechanisms necessary to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence. That includes providing safe and comprehensive services to those affected.

Starting on 1 January, Denmark will take over the leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, which is a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at fundamentally changing the way that gender-based violence is addressed in humanitarian emergencies. As part of those efforts, we need more partnerships with local women's organizations to promote women and girls' safe and meaningful participation, as well as influence and leadership, in our humanitarian efforts. We need to focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in order to promote girls' access to quality education and to use the potential of education to create gender-equal societies. We need emphasis on gender in our analysis and more data disaggregated by sex and gender. Finally, we need to increase support for the core work of the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and their local partners that are dedicated to the advancement of women and girls' full enjoyment of human rights. United Nations partners must prioritize and streamline efforts to counter gender-based violence in their work.

The Call to Action has become a strong coalition of global stakeholders, and we thank Canada for its able stewardship in the past few years, as the Permanent Representative of Canada just mentioned. We look forward to working with Member States, United Nations partners and civil society to halt this pandemic within a pandemic and end gender-based violence in emergencies.

Ms. Karmazinskaya (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): This year has been a serious test for the entire international community. The coronavirus pandemic and its long-term consequences for every area of people's lives have demonstrated the urgent need for solidarity among all Member States in order

to combat the crisis and help the neediest. In that regard, we would like to begin by expressing our deep gratitude to the humanitarian and medical workers who are providing urgent humanitarian assistance to all those in need in the farthest corners of the planet and in the current difficult conditions. In that context, we strongly condemn attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel, which only create more suffering and deprive those waiting for help of the hope of salvation.

The estimates of the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* are alarming. The number of those in need is growing rapidly, record donor funding is required and the United Nations humanitarian response system is constantly dealing with new challenges. We firmly believe that the only way to resolve the issues facing the international community is by uniting in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. That is the main condition for ensuring that we leave no one behind. Developing countries and countries experiencing humanitarian crises face special difficulties during the pandemic, and it is therefore important to have a direct and open dialogue about existing problems.

For our part, we would like to touch on two key issues in the context of humanitarian response. The first is the importance of getting and using reliable data, including on attacks on medical and humanitarian targets, in order to assess needs and plan humanitarian operations. We have recently been seeing humanitarian organizations relying on unverified sources of information, often located outside the territories of the affected States. It is important that we preserve the impartial status of the United Nations, which is so vital for the universal legitimacy of its agencies' work.

Secondly, problems are often created by donors themselves through restrictions that bypass the Security Council and in the context of a pandemic appear even more inhumane. Unilateral sanctions are an obstacle to the supply of humanitarian aid and essential medicines. Ms. Alena Douhan, Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, has spoken about that on the basis of serious evidence, and the Secretary-General has called for such measures to be lifted. So-called humanitarian exceptions simply do not work. Contractors refuse to implement humanitarian projects out of fear of ending up on the so-called blacklists of sanctions regime violators. The authors of these inhumane restrictions prefer to ignore these situations. They impose sanctions on the one hand while on the other calling for respect

for human rights and humane treatment in the forums of the United Nations. It is time to listen to the urging of the United Nations leadership and to stop politicizing humanitarian and development assistance.

The Russian Federation has consistently advocated for expanding cooperation in the field of humanitarian aid under the auspices of the United Nations. We have consistently done our part, both through regular donor contributions to the budgets of United Nations humanitarian agencies and by sending humanitarian aid and Russian relief workers to regions with the most acute humanitarian needs. We are scaling up assistance to countries in support of their efforts to combat the pandemic's effects. In 2020, total Russian funding to United Nations humanitarian agencies amounted to more than \$80 million. We contributed \$1.5 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund, which we consider a key operational mechanism for financing United Nations humanitarian activities.

Next year we will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 46/182, which laid the foundation for the work of United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners in situations of conflict and natural disaster. We believe that the guiding principles of the United Nations on humanitarian emergency assistance, which are the bedrock of that work, remain relevant to this day. We think it is important that we all confirm their inviolability.

To sum up, we would like to express our gratitude to the delegations of the European Union, Sweden and Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the facilitators of the negotiation processes on the three humanitarian draft resolutions (A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44). Although the texts have undergone only technical amendments, it is important in the current environment that we adopt them by consensus, thereby reaffirming our unity and commitment to the noble goal of providing humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Mr. Skoknic Tapia (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): In today's debate, Chile welcomes our forthcoming adoption of draft resolutions A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44, and hopes to contribute to the discussion on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters and the strengthening of the coordination of such emergency assistance next year.

We are living in unprecedented circumstances, but in order to move forward constructively it is important to remember that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is not the first we have faced this century, nor will it be the last. As in the past, we must now adapt to new challenges and identify emerging needs and gaps in order to strengthen our partnerships and combat the humanitarian effects of the pandemic. We commend UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and all humanitarian actors for their resilience, adaptability and the tremendous work they have done to provide assistance to more than 200 million people.

According to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19, as of November there were more than 15.7 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 518,000 deaths in the countries with the most urgent humanitarian needs. It is clear that beyond the health crisis, the pandemic has had devastating side effects for the population in many areas, exacerbating pre-existing and current drivers of humanitarian needs by causing declines in economic activity, reducing households' purchasing power and creating numerous obstacles in food systems.

We recognize that the protection of vulnerable groups remains an issue of concern along with conflicts, climate change and natural disasters. Older adults in particular have been one of the worst affected and most at-risk groups. The health of such vulnerable groups suffers from the effects of COVID-19, as well as from their increased risk of discrimination and the physical and financial barriers that prevent them from accessing essential services. We believe it is vital to establish multisectoral partnerships to address the obstacles to the provision of humanitarian access and resources. In that regard, we believe that the continuation of essential medical services must be guaranteed, and health-care systems reformed, based on a faithful commitment to dignity, human rights and greater social inclusion. Measures must be taken to enable access to information for vulnerable people and provide psychosocial support so that they can cope with emotional distress and anxiety related to the pandemic.

We would like to emphasize that the dissemination of accurate, timely and science-based information has a direct impact on the cohesion of every integrated public-health response, particularly in humanitarian settings. Humanitarian health responses to vulnerable situations should therefore incorporate access to information as a component of response and prevention campaigns,

which are also an effective strategy for countering misinformation about the virus.

Lastly, we should emphasize the leadership of women in humanitarian contexts, as they make up as much as 75 per cent of the humanitarian workforce worldwide. In addition, local organizations led by women have been shown to be the first line of defence and key actors in humanitarian responses. We have seen them work tirelessly since the onset of the pandemic, even with limited humanitarian access and resources. We must therefore respond to their commitment and ensure their access to decision-making processes, coordination mechanisms and funding for international responses so that they can better assist their communities.

We understand that we are in a situation of global economic fragility, but it is precisely because of this that we must innovate in order to ensure that we do not leave behind the one in 45 people in the world who are currently trapped in humanitarian crises. Chile reiterates its commitment to contributing to the full realization of the right of every person to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, especially those who find themselves in such vulnerable situations.

Mr. Kakanur (India): It is my privilege to deliver a joint statement on behalf of India and Sweden on this important issue. We would first like to pay tribute to the tens of thousands of United Nations humanitarian and medical personnel around the world who have been at the front lines of a joint response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, often at immense personal risk and sacrifice.

India and Sweden share a strong commitment to strengthening the United Nations system to respond to the complex humanitarian challenges of our time. The humanitarian crises of today are more complex and protracted and make greater demands on the international community. Better coordination and complementarity in action among the various humanitarian actors are therefore crucial. The latest *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* report, released just a few days ago, is a sobering document. Humanitarian emergencies, primarily driven by natural disasters and armed conflicts but compounded this year by the pandemic, have reached a new high. The pandemic has triggered the deepest global recession since the 1930s, extreme poverty has risen for the first time in 22 years and the unemployment situation has worsened globally. Women

and young people aged between 15 and 29 and working in the informal sector have been hit the hardest. Almost 24 million children, adolescents and young people, including 11 million girls and young women, are at risk of not returning to school.

Amid that bleak outlook, however, the report does have some positive take-aways as well. First, despite facing dire employment prospects and the impact of COVID-19, we have seen young people mobilize at an unprecedented scale in response to the crisis. That is an opportunity for the humanitarian system to better integrate the perspectives and leadership of young people into humanitarian action. Secondly, increased global Internet access, coupled with new innovative technologies, offers the potential to improve humanitarian action. For example, artificial intelligence is being used for mapping outbreaks, drones are delivering medical supplies and testing samples and three-dimensional printers are helping to produce face shields, personal protective equipment kits and ventilators. Thirdly, the collaboration between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts has increased during the pandemic and the localization of humanitarian work has also been strengthened. Building on that will help meet the needs of those targeted for humanitarian assistance in the future.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2021. That essentially means one in 33 people worldwide. The United Nations and its partner organizations aim to help about 160 million people across 56 countries. That itself will require approximately \$35 billion, the highest-ever humanitarian funding requirement. The persistent shortfall in financing 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 Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, country-based pooled funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), to which both India and Sweden are long-standing donors. We would also like to emphasize the value of non-earmarked, flexible funding and predictable support to our humanitarian partners.

India and Sweden reaffirm that humanitarian principles and international law provide the basis for humanitarian assistance. We remain committed to preserving the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in responding to all

humanitarian situations. The primary responsibility for providing protection and assistance in a humanitarian crisis lies with the country concerned. International humanitarian assistance must be provided impartially in accordance with the guiding principles outlined in resolution 46/182 and subsequent resolutions. While United Nations agencies and partners are responding commendably to several complex emergencies, evolving a coherent and comprehensive approach remains a significant challenge. More coordination is required to achieve responses that are effective and tailored to their context, which facilitates greater participation of local actors.

Repeated violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law are persistent challenges. Parties to armed conflicts, including non-State actors, continue to flout international humanitarian law and perpetrate human rights abuses with impunity. We must continue to strengthen the international cooperation framework to bring such perpetrators to justice. Women and children need special measures for their protection. We believe that our approach to humanitarian response must put those affected at the very centre. That shows respect for human dignity and ensures the flexibility that is needed to make choices about the goods and services that the populations affected need the most. We must also continue our efforts to develop a multisectoral needs assessment and build strong databases in order to enhance the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of humanitarian action. The need for greater complementarity between humanitarian action and development cooperation is well recognized. Development action by national Governments and the international community should focus on reducing risk and vulnerability, which will help to build resilience and capacity.

Access for humanitarian workers, and their protection, especially in situations of armed conflict, remains a concern. Attacks on humanitarian personnel are unacceptable, and we welcome draft resolution A/75/L.42, on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of United Nations personnel. All humanitarian actors must strictly adhere to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure that victims are adequately protected.

Guided by its ancient philosophy of viewing the world as one family, India has been at the forefront in supporting fellow developing countries through

assistance and relief efforts in humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters. Those efforts have ranged from the immediate supply of relief materials to the emergency evacuation of very large numbers of people of various nationalities from affected zones. During the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, India emerged as a net provider of health security and successfully shouldered its responsibility as the pharmacy of the world, sending consignments of medicines and medical supplies to all 150 partner countries. As a responsible member of the world community, India's vaccine production and delivery capacity will be deployed to help all of humankind in fighting the crisis. Going forward, we must look beyond immediate relief and rehabilitation. India remains committed to addressing the challenges of complex humanitarian emergencies by building disaster-resilient infrastructure. It was in that context that India took the initiative at the 2019 Climate Action Summit to launch the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure, in partnership with several other countries.

In the face of the unprecedented increase in humanitarian needs, largely linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sweden has responded and acted swiftly. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Swedish Government has provided close to \$200 million in additional, unearmarked humanitarian funding. Sweden is proud to remain one of the largest donors to the United Nations humanitarian system. In line with its Grand Bargain commitments, Sweden will continue to provide multi-year core funding to major United Nations agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and CERF. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of flexible humanitarian funding. It enables timely, independent, effective and efficient humanitarian action, and that is why Sweden strongly believes that this is the right path to pursue and encourages other donors to follow suit.

Sweden and India remain particularly concerned about the pandemic's impact on hunger. The awarding of this year's Nobel Peace Prize to the World Food Programme is richly deserved and constitutes an urgent call to action, with increasing hunger and several countries now on the brink of conflict-induced famine. The cycle of conflict and hunger recognized in Security

Council resolution 2417 (2018) must be broken. Sweden is proud to be a key partner and top donor for the World Food Programme and has doubled its WFP funding to record levels in order to contribute to the fight against hunger across the globe.

The creativity and magnitude of our response must match the unique nature of the challenge. The choices we make now will determine how soon we build back better from the crisis. We, India and Sweden, reiterate our commitment to working with all Member States to ensure a unified and robust response to the world's humanitarian challenges. Our debate today represents an opportunity to send a strong and unified message of support to those in need of humanitarian assistance and to humanitarian actors worldwide. We therefore call on all delegations to adopt the three draft humanitarian resolutions (A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44) by consensus.

Ms. Offermans (Netherlands): We align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union (EU).

Another shock — that is how the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is seen in the humanitarian community, as an additional dimension of humanitarian vulnerability, an add-on to the challenges we will confront in 2021 and beyond. Ambassador Skoog of the EU clearly described how COVID-19 has resulted in grim and daunting challenges for the world, the humanitarian sector and people caught in crisis. But in the rapid reaction to the pandemic, we have witnessed the launch of a global response plan that reflects the professional attitude characterizing the humanitarian sector. It is that attitude the Netherlands would like to commend.

The Netherlands considers the response to the COVID-19 crisis to be an example of the resilience and perseverance of the humanitarian community. It shows that United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, Member States and other actors are able to come together and develop a truly coordinated response. That is something to keep in mind, to be proud of and to follow through on. It is the avenue we need for future humanitarian action. It is the only way to collectively address the impact of overarching challenges such as conflict, food insecurity and climate change. In the light of that, I would like to highlight two topics that reflect the commitment and agility of the humanitarian community — the important role of aid workers in

the field and the need to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into humanitarian action.

First, we should pay tribute to all those who deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need. They work tirelessly and are faced with increasing hardship every day. We should never forget that humanitarian and United Nations personnel are victims of great violations of international humanitarian law. In 2019, more than 125 aid workers were killed while doing their work, and the number may be even higher in 2020. We all need to use our influence to hold those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law to account. Attacks on aid workers are unacceptable. With regard to 2020, we should of course pay a very special tribute to local responders. They are the ones who have enabled the international system to actually reach and help people. When international staff were recalled or unable to travel, local responders kept the humanitarian aid vehicle moving. Localization has been on the radar for some time, but COVID-19 has enforced and accelerated it.

My second point will not come as a surprise. Here in the General Assembly Hall, at the end of 2020, I would like to stress once again the importance of mental health and psychosocial support. If 2020 has taught us one thing, it is that mental health is just as important as physical health. The Netherlands, with the support of the co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Mental Health and Well-Being, has therefore facilitated a process whereby the United Nations humanitarian agencies drafted an inter-agency call for action on mental health and psychosocial support. In the call for action, they draw a clear conclusion and commit to taking the next steps in the integration of mental health and psychosocial support into the humanitarian response, while calling on their partners to do the same. The call was launched last Wednesday.

In conclusion, let us celebrate successes, but let us also do justice to what happened this year. Let us show our support to all humanitarians by adopting today's draft resolutions A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44 by consensus.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

In recent years we have witnessed a rapid increase in humanitarian needs in the world, mainly

caused by armed conflicts and climate change. But we are now facing an unprecedented challenge to the global humanitarian situation in the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, whose impact is also significantly worsened by the economic crisis, reduced social protection, food security challenges and other factors.

In this challenging time, a timely and comprehensive response on the part of the United Nations to global humanitarian needs has become more essential than ever. In the light of that, we fully support prioritizing the current programming of United Nations agencies, focusing on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the procurement of medical supplies and campaigns on infection prevention and control and the promotion of hygiene. Ukraine welcomes the Secretary-General's leadership in the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe that coordinating the activities of all United Nations agencies aimed at countering the pandemic must remain a core priority of the Organization. We commend the United Nations agencies' comprehensive integrated approach to providing assistance to countries in contending with the pandemic, including the rapid pandemic response.

Ukraine places humanitarian issues high on its agenda. The more than six years of armed conflict caused by the ongoing Russian aggression have resulted in a protracted and complex humanitarian crisis in eastern Ukraine. The United Nations is well aware of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in that conflict zone. Despite every effort by Ukraine to implement a ceasefire, civilians continue to face serious risks to their safety, well-being and fundamental rights due to the hostilities, as well as the saturation of landmines and other explosive ordnance. The Government of Ukraine has persisted in its efforts to alleviate the suffering of Ukrainian citizens affected by the foreign aggression, particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs). It is currently focused on improving their social integration and adaptation and is exploring best practices in the work of integrating IDPs into host communities.

Ukraine is interested in seeing continued United Nations involvement in overcoming the humanitarian challenges in the occupied territories. In October, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine called on the United Nations to jointly develop a plan of action to restore the Donbas region after its occupation ends and to promote the social and economic development of uncontrolled territories. Together with its humanitarian

partners, Ukraine continues to implement humanitarian actions, including humanitarian response plans. In order to overcome the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, United Nations agencies have mobilized more than \$500 million over the past six years for the humanitarian response across various sectors, such as the provision of food, shelter and household items, winterization support and access to clean water, education and adequate health care. The humanitarian response plan for 2021 aims to provide critical humanitarian assistance and protection to 1.9 million people in need in eastern Ukraine.

The existing global humanitarian emergencies created by armed conflict, natural disasters and other causes should remain the focus of the attention of humanitarian organizations. It is essential that the United Nations continue its life-saving work in the countries concerned and sustain the humanitarian response across the world.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore that only a united global response to a significant deterioration in the world's humanitarian situation will enable us to overcome the consequences of the current crisis on the health, economic and social fronts. That will demonstrate the unity and solidarity of the international community and will be the best testament to the effectiveness of the United Nations in its seventy-fifth year.

Mr. Kelsey (United Kingdom): The year 2020 has been like no other. Tragically, many have died or fallen ill as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and the virus has triggered a global recession not seen since the 1930s. We risk losing decades of human progress, extreme poverty is rising for the first time in more than 20 years, and as the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021* laid out in stark terms, 235 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. That is one in 33 people across the globe.

But the story of 2020 is not just about COVID-19. The main drivers of humanitarian crises have not gone away. Conflict continues to take a heavy toll on civilians, and violence against humanitarian workers remains rife. The effects of climate change and weather-related disasters continue to grow. The most vulnerable, including women and girls, are being hit hardest. As a result, we are now facing the daunting prospect of famine and acute food insecurity in multiple contexts.

The United Kingdom is particularly worried about the risks in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

As we look ahead to 2021, how do we meet the humanitarian needs of 235 million people? How can we slow the rising funding requirements and how can we support humanitarians in the field? The United Kingdom remains committed to the global humanitarian cause. In September, we appointed our first special envoy for famine prevention and humanitarian affairs. His immediate focus is building the necessary alliances to drive up levels of humanitarian funding and to develop political solutions to prevent the most acute food insecurity crises.

The United Kingdom remains a leading humanitarian donor. We have provided \$1.8 billion over the course of 2020, and in the past week alone we announced almost \$90 million in funding for the Central Emergency Response Fund and \$80 million for Yemen. It is no secret that budgets are under pressure across the world. But it is staggering that the top 10 donors account for 83 per cent of humanitarian funding. Words are not enough. The major economies outside that top 10 need to step up. The trajectory of ever-increasing funding needs — \$28.8 billion needed at the start of 2020, leaping to \$35 billion for 2021 — is simply not sustainable, so we need to be better at anticipating crises. Investing in a more proactive response aimed at averting humanitarian crises could reduce the cost by as much as 30 per cent. That means using early-warning analysis and data more effectively, but also, crucially, ensuring that data is linked to plans in advance of crisis and tied to practical early action.

Humanitarian response alone is not enough, however. Humanitarian crises require political solutions. We need to ensure that the United Nations is making full use of all the levers at its disposal. Development, peace and political actors all have a role to play in preventing crises. We also have to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need and is not obstructed or frustrated, and that civilians and civilian objects are not the targets of violence. International humanitarian law must be respected, and we must unequivocally support the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. A weak normative framework helps no one.

The President returned to the Chair.

Amid those unprecedented challenges, I want to finish by celebrating the successes of the international

humanitarian community and, indeed, the successes of multilateralism. Humanitarian workers, at great personal cost and risk, have adapted and innovated to ensure the delivery of aid and services to 98 million people worldwide. I congratulate the World Food Programme on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for its commitment to tackling global starvation. Those are extraordinary achievements that we must all build on to overcome the grave challenges we will face in 2021. On that basis, we offer our full support for the consensus adoption of draft resolutions A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42 and A/75/L.44, which are before us today.

Mr. Foshanji (Afghanistan): Afghanistan expresses its sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his reports presented under agenda item 73 (A/75/75, A/75/238, A/75/317 and A/75/84). They depict a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation around the world, driven by conflict and natural disasters and exacerbated by climate change. Since the end of the reporting period, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated even further. In Afghanistan and around the globe, that situation, aggravated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, is creating an unprecedented level of need.

Afghanistan would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of humanitarian workers, agencies and civil-society organizations in responding to humanitarian emergencies wherever they occur. Their bravery and commitment are a shining example of our shared humanity. We pay tribute to the United Nations staff and other humanitarian personnel who have lost their lives in the service of the most vulnerable. Afghanistan deplores all violations of international humanitarian law and the targeting of humanitarian workers by any actors, including the Taliban and other terrorist groups.

According to the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2021*, 18.4 million Afghans are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. That level of need is an increase of almost 100 per cent since the beginning of 2020, when the level of need had already increased by 49 per cent compared to the previous year. It is a staggering number, almost incomprehensible and utterly devastating. But we cannot let the magnitude of need overwhelm us or force us into giving up. The Afghan Government is fully committed to doing everything within its limited resources to address the needs of every girl, boy, woman and man within our

borders. We ask the international community to help us overcome those challenges.

Our top priority is an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, as called for by the Government of Afghanistan and the Secretary-General and supported by almost all Member States. We call on the Taliban to consider the implication of its escalating violence at a time when 18.4 million people lack the most basic necessities and need humanitarian aid to survive. The violence must end now. We must also ensure that all people in humanitarian emergencies gain access to COVID-19 vaccines. The international community's ability to vaccinate the most vulnerable is a test we cannot fail. In collaboration with our humanitarian partners, the Government of Afghanistan is preparing to distribute the vaccine in every province. We have established a dedicated national technical working group for COVID-19 response at the Ministry of Public Health. We have worked through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility to gain access to vaccines for 20 per cent of our population. But 20 per cent is not enough, and we need further help from our partners to vaccinate everyone.

The Government is also working with partners to implement existing frameworks and policies to make humanitarian assistance more effective and efficient. For such assistance to become more sustainable, we must strengthen the collaboration between humanitarian, development, peace and climate efforts. We should fund and empower local actors in a spirit of true partnership. We should make greater use of innovative financing mechanisms, including anticipatory finance and pooled funding. Country-based pooled funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund have been invaluable in the response to the pandemic, including in Afghanistan, and they must now be replenished to the necessary levels.

By implementing such policies, empowering the United Nations to deliver its mandate and mobilizing the necessary resources, we can address the challenges that we are currently facing. Decisive action and funding to address the needs of today will prevent further deterioration of the global humanitarian situation and help to address the global spread of the pandemic. We must remember that no one is safe until everyone is safe.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Ms. Courtois (International Committee of the Red Cross): The year 2020 has been unlike any other

in recent memory. States, international and local organizations, the private sector and communities the world over are dealing with the staggering impacts of a pandemic that is still unfolding, a pandemic that has exacerbated humanitarian needs, exposing individual vulnerabilities and pre-existing systemic fragilities, including in health systems weakened by conflict. We already know that the pandemic is affecting important health activities, leading to backsliding in areas such as routine immunization against other diseases. But it has also shown vividly that in places where people already face compound vulnerabilities, the nature and impact of a pandemic is immediately multifaceted, with health, social, economic, protection and political dimensions. The broad destructive trends that existed before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including intensifying conflicts, climate change, rising inequality and protracted displacement, remain and will stay with us, making systemic responses even more essential. What we put off today will be more entrenched tomorrow.

Furthermore, many of the people we serve in affected communities express concerns that are far removed from the pandemic as solely a health issue. Protracted displacement due to expanding hostilities and rising instability, as well as the inability to access basic services, are the issues that communities affected by the crisis often identify as their more immediate concerns. We must ensure that people are supported so that they can deal with shocks to their well-being, livelihoods and aspirations, regardless of who they are and where they live. What lies at the heart of this is a question of dignity — the dignity that comes when parents do not have to choose between medical care and food for their children, the dignity of ensuring quality education for girls and boys even amid conflict and violence, the dignity of ensuring access to appropriate physical and mental health care without discrimination. As the crisis continues into 2021, what steps can we take? The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) would like to offer some recommendations for States.

First, States must meet their commitments and obligations relating to support for principled humanitarian action, including in the most complex contexts. For instance, preserving humanitarian access requires well-crafted humanitarian exemptions in counter-terrorism and sanctions provisions, so that humanitarians can reach people in need and remain

close to those affected. The impartial delivery of assistance enables organizations like the ICRC to build and sustain relationships of trust over the long term with the populations affected and with all the parties to a conflict. Trust and humanitarian access will be essential to ensuring that COVID-19 vaccines, as well as routine vaccinations, reach all those in need, particularly in areas that States themselves may not be able to reach.

Secondly, States must ensure that in the pandemic response and beyond, those delivering vital health services can carry out their work without fear of attack, discrimination or stigma. Between February and August alone, ICRC delegations monitored 650 reports of incidents of violence directed at health-care provision linked to COVID-19 — a figure that represents a mere fraction of the actual number of incidents. The rules of international humanitarian law are very clear: medical personnel and medical facilities performing exclusively humanitarian functions must be respected and protected at all times. Civilians as well as belligerents must refrain from violence against patients and providers of medical care. Furthermore, in line with their obligations under human rights law, States must not interfere directly or indirectly with access to health care for people under their jurisdiction.

Thirdly, whether during peacetime or in armed conflict, the health-care sector is also particularly vulnerable to cyber harm. We do not accept attacks on physical health infrastructure, and we should not accept such attacks in cyberspace. Such attacks endanger human lives by impairing the ability of health-care facilities to function and disrupting the delivery of care to patients. We call on States to affirm unequivocally that cyberattacks against medical infrastructure are unacceptable and unlawful and to take action to stop such attacks.

Fourthly, we — States and humanitarians — must use this once-in-a-generation disruptive event to reflect, adapt and innovate to improve responses. We see the pandemic accelerating the digital delivery of humanitarian services, such as mental-health responses. But transformation carries risks alongside benefits. We urge States, humanitarian organizations and service providers to take concrete action on effective data protection and on online misinformation, disinformation and hate speech. Humanitarian protection obligations must be made real in the digital arena.

Finally, States should support humanitarian action beyond short-term paradigms. The pandemic has lent new gravity to the understanding that we must address humanitarian challenges comprehensively and with a longer-term perspective focused on building the resilience of systems and the communities that depend on them. As attention turns to the post-COVID-19 recovery, we urge States and international finance institutions to ensure that people and communities living in areas affected by conflict, fragility and violence are served by financing that recognizes and meets their needs and that strengthens essential services. The ICRC is ready to assist States in fulfilling their commitments under international humanitarian law and their humanitarian obligations and to keep delivering for those affected.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Blewitt (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the General Assembly on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Our 192 national societies and 14 million volunteers are on the front lines, responding day and night to the crisis of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Local and national actors are doing the humanitarian work, including by addressing challenges in the area of mental health, supporting access to health-care services, providing cash assistance for those who need it and reaching the most at-risk and marginalized communities, including migrants, women affected by domestic violence and older people. I would like to emphasize three critical points.

First, humanitarian needs have increased, and climate change is exacerbating that. The IFRC's *World Disasters Report 2020*, entitled "Come Heat or High Water", notes that in the past 10 years 83 per cent of all disasters triggered by natural hazards have been caused by extreme weather and climate-related events such as floods, storms and heatwaves. They have claimed more than 410,000 lives, mostly in low- and lower-middle-income countries. Around the world another 1.7 billion people have been affected by climate and weather-related disasters in the past decade. We see a clear link between the climate crisis and the growing food crisis, as well as the COVID-19 crisis going on at the moment. Last year, the IFRC's report *The Cost*

of Doing Nothing projected that a decade from now as many as 150 million people per year will be in need if the world does nothing to address the climate crisis. That would require as much as \$20 billion per year in additional humanitarian assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic took the world by surprise and further unravelled the fragility and gaps in our systems, so we are faced with this massive humanitarian challenge today and over the coming decade.

That brings me to my second point, which is that it is the most vulnerable and those with the lowest capacity to adapt who suffer the most from the combined effects of climate change and COVID-19. The IFRC has found that in 2020 alone, 132 extreme weather events have occurred so far, 92 of which overlapped with the COVID-19 pandemic. At least 51.6 million people worldwide have been affected by floods, droughts or storms, while a further 2.3 million have been affected by major wildfires and 437 million members of vulnerable groups have been exposed to extreme heat, all while dealing with the direct effects of COVID-19 or struggling to cope with lockdown and control measures.

The world's most vulnerable — those who do not have the resources to protect themselves from disasters and have no access to social protection — are the hardest hit. Lockdowns and restrictions designed to prevent the spread of the virus also mean that jobs and livelihoods are scarce and markets and supply chains disrupted. Food insecurity, sexual and gender-based violence and restricted human mobility are only some of the clear effects we are seeing. The health, social and economic fallout from COVID-19 will affect many countries, particularly low- and middle-income countries and small island States, for years to come. Climate-related disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic highlight even more the urgent need to invest in preparedness and early action. This is a wake-up call for all of us. We need to factor climate, health and other risks into decisions more consistently. We need to recognize the scale of these crises and have the right plans and systems in place before we have to face them.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the global response is not commensurate with global needs. We are concerned about the fact that the world is failing to seize an opportunity to recover in a greener, more inclusive and resilient manner, in effect locking in policies and structures that will cause further and irreparable damage to the climate system and pose an

existential threat to many communities and nations. Yet there are myriad ways to ensure a climate-smart future. For instance, the IFRC, as a host of the Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership, launched by Bangladesh last year at the Climate Action Summit, can see that this is an opportunity to protect and keep safe as many as 1 billion people by 2030.

We are concerned about the possibility that the COVID-19 vaccine may reach only a few countries and leave the rest of the world struggling to curb the spread of the virus while losing out economically. We joined the Secretary-General in his call earlier this year for a people's vaccine. A vaccine by itself, however, is not enough. The roll-out of a COVID-19 vaccine will be successful only if there is an immediate effort to build trust in communities through scaled-up risk communication and community engagement activities. Through the Collective Service risk communication and community engagement launched by the IFRC, UNICEF and the World Health Organization, we aim to strengthen risk communication and community engagement coordination and practice, providing more consistent, systematic and quality support to Governments and partners in adopting community-centred approaches in response to the pandemic. Furthermore, the IFRC and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies are working in partnership with GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, and the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility to support the advocacy and roll-out of an equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to the most vulnerable communities and people, especially in hard-to-reach places. Ensuring equitable access to those most at risk is not only an issue of fairness and humanity, but a public-health imperative.

Lastly, we are concerned that migrants and refugees will be left even farther behind. *Least Protected, Most Affected*, a report we published a few weeks ago, highlights the extraordinary health and safety risks faced by migrants and refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are stranded, often unable to return home, left without any access to social safety nets and facing increasing risks of unwarranted deportation and detention, as well as stigma and discrimination. Humanitarian support for migrants and refugees is more critical now, and we need to ensure they are protected and supported in the time of COVID-19.

We do not have the luxury of tackling only one problem at a time. As the risks compound and overlap, so

our approaches must be streamlined. Time is not on our side. We must get our act together now. In conclusion, the IFRC and its national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, through their 14 million volunteers around the world, stand ready to work with the United Nations and other partners in supporting Governments to continue to strive to meet the increasing humanitarian needs around the world.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42, A/75/L.43 and A/75/L.44. Delegations wishing to make statements in explanation of vote or position before action on any of the draft resolutions are invited to do so now in one intervention. Before giving speakers the floor, I would like to remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Goebel (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as the Republic of Moldova, Australia, Mexico, New Zealand and Canada align themselves with this statement.

The EU deeply regrets the decision by the United States, for the second time, to call for a vote on operative paragraphs 58 and 59 of the draft humanitarian omnibus resolution (A/75/L.44) and on operative paragraph 62 of the draft resolution on natural disasters (A/75/L.11), which have traditionally been adopted by consensus. We believe that Sweden and Morocco have explained in a transparent and fair manner their desire not to open the draft resolutions this year and opt instead for technical updates. There was wide agreement among all those present not to open discussions this year. We therefore do not understand the need to call for a vote on draft resolutions that were not negotiated this year. Moreover, there was wide agreement among delegations during the negotiations last year on reverting to the previously agreed language in operative paragraphs 58 and 59 of the omnibus resolution and operative paragraph 62 of the natural disaster resolution when it became clear that lengthy concerted efforts to find alternative

wording would not lead to an agreement acceptable to all delegations. The United Nations members, many of whom hold divergent views on the issue at hand, have always been able to agree on that language, illustrating how carefully crafted and balanced those long-standing paragraphs are.

In that context, let us not forget that the international community made a shared commitment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, which includes universal access to health-care services. Weakening that language would set a negative precedent, sending us backwards in time and neglecting and undermining the commitments made by all the States Members of the United Nations. International cooperation and strengthening the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance are crucial matters that require us to act responsibly. Undermining consensus on those draft resolutions can only have negative consequences, and their impact is first and foremost on the most fundamental rights of the women and girls who need humanitarian assistance. For those reasons, the 27 member States of the European Union will vote in favour of those paragraphs, and we call on all other States to do the same.

Mr. Kelsey (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is grateful to the facilitators for their leadership on the draft resolutions (A/75/L.11, A/75/L.42, A/75/L.43 and A/75/L.44) before us, and we welcome the approach taken not to reopen the text.

We would like to express our disappointment at the call for a vote by the United States, seeking to delete agreed language on access to sexual and reproductive health services. The United Kingdom is unwavering in its commitment to gender equality in sexual and reproductive health and to rights for all, and we are concerned about the repeated attempts to push back against those long-standing rights. The United Kingdom is concerned about any attempts to curtail access to sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls, particularly as access to these vital services is being diverted during the coronavirus disease pandemic response. Sexual and reproductive health services are often life-saving, and women and girls affected by conflict and crisis need sexual and reproductive health services more than ever. Those needs are particularly acute in crises, conflict and humanitarian settings. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, which include access to quality and comprehensive health

services, are critical to the empowerment of women and girls everywhere. We will not achieve the global goals if we do not ensure all people have access to and can realize their rights.

It is therefore essential that the international community reaffirm its long-standing resolve to defend and implement its commitments on gender equality and the rights of women and girls. That is why we cannot accept this attempt to walk back previously agreed language and why the United Kingdom will support the paragraphs on which a vote has been called and urges all Member States to do the same.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.11, entitled “International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/75/L.11, the following countries have also become sponsors: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The President: A separate, recorded vote has been requested on operative paragraph 62 of draft resolution A/75/L.11.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark,

Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia.

Against:

Libya, Sudan, United States of America

Abstaining:

None

Operative paragraph 62 was retained by 128 votes to 3.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Bangladesh, Honduras and Myanmar informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.11?

Draft resolution A/75/L.11 was adopted (resolution 75/124).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.42, entitled “Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and

in addition to those delegations listed in document A/75/L.42, the following countries have also become sponsors: Angola, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Serbia, Viet Nam and Zambia.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.42?

Draft resolution A/75/L.42 was adopted (resolution 75/125).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.43, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/75/L.43, the following countries have also become sponsors: Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Iceland, Monaco, Norway, Pakistan, Palau and Serbia.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.43?

Draft resolution A/75/L.43 was adopted (resolution 75/126).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.44, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/75/L.44, the following countries have also become sponsors: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Madagascar, Maldives, Montenegro, Namibia, Nigeria, Palau, Qatar, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal,

Sierra Leone, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

The President: A single separate, recorded vote has been requested on operative paragraphs 58 and 59 of draft resolution A/75/L.44.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Libya, Sudan, United States of America

Abstaining:

None

Operative paragraphs 58 and 59 were retained by 128 votes to 3.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Bangladesh and Myanmar advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.44?

Draft resolution A/75/L.44 was adopted (resolution 75/127).

The President: We shall hear speakers in explanation of vote or position after adoption at 3 p.m. this afternoon in this Hall.

I call on the representative of the Russian Federation, who has requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Ms. Karmazinskaya (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to exercise my right to reply to the delegation of Ukraine. We regret that Ukraine has once again been unable to refrain from using the platform of the United Nations to politicize our discussion on the basis of a distorted picture of what is taking place in south-eastern Ukraine. It compels us to remind the Assembly that the humanitarian challenges facing the inhabitants of that part of the country are due to the military actions of the Kyiv authorities against members of their own population who did not recognize the overthrow of the Government in 2014. As for Russia, we are familiar with the humanitarian problems in our neighbour Ukraine. The numbers speak for themselves. Since April 2014 more than 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens have applied for Russian citizenship, refugee status or temporary residency in the Russian

Federation. In that connection, we have a very simple question. Do people really flee a good life? And why are they fleeing to another country rather than asking the Government of Ukraine for this kind of assistance? That is all.

The President: I welcome the contributions that have been made to this debate on strengthening the coordination of United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, including special economic assistance. After listening to the participants' insightful statements, I feel it is abundantly clear that 75 years after the creation of the United Nations, the humanitarian assistance the Organization provides is more essential than ever. I would like to express my deep appreciation to all United Nations agencies and their extremely dedicated staff, particularly those working in the humanitarian arena, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF and the World Food Programme. I also commend the local, national and international humanitarian aid and assistance organizations whose work is essential to the continued delivery of humanitarian aid to those who desperately need it. The coronavirus pandemic has made the needs of the most vulnerable more acute. Our efforts to coordinate humanitarian assistance can and will save lives and help to protect those in need.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.