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Humanitarian affairs segment

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President: Mr. Massari (Vice-President)(Italy)

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*In the absence of Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria), Mr. Massari (Italy), Vice-President, took the Chair.
The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

Opening of the segment

1. **The President**, noting that the global humanitarian situation had already been dire at the beginning of 2023, said that the need for humanitarian assistance had shown no sign of abating in the six months since then. Accordingly, the theme of the humanitarian affairs segment was “Strengthening humanitarian assistance at a time of unprecedented global humanitarian needs: driving transformation and solutions to address the urgent challenges of rising food insecurity and the risk of famine, protection risks and climate change.” The segment would offer an opportunity to emphasize the need for sustained responses and lasting solutions to those challenges and to stress the importance of empowering women and girls and respecting human rights and international law.

Agenda item 9: Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

2. **The Secretary-General**, in a pre-recorded video statement, delivering a keynote address, said that global humanitarian needs were once again at record levels in 2023. There were 360 million people in the world in need of humanitarian assistance, up 30 per cent since the start of 2022. More than 110 million people had been forced from their homes and more than 260 million people faced acute food insecurity, with some at risk of famine.

3. The reasons behind those figures had not changed: unresolved conflicts ground on while new wars had been launched, with a devastating impact on civilians; global economic woes, precipitated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and aggravated by the worldwide impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, were hitting the most vulnerable hardest; sustainable development – the ultimate prevention tool – had stagnated or gone into reverse; and the climate crisis had contributed to the deaths of thousands of people and displaced millions more over the previous year. Ordinary people were paying an unacceptable price as parties to conflict violated international law; attacked hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure; and committed rampant human rights violations, including gender-based violence against women and girls.

4. Humanitarian aid agencies and the partners of the United Nations on the ground were finding new ways to provide emergency aid around the world. In response to growing humanitarian needs, they were reaching more people and delivering more aid, while making every dollar go as far as possible. Over recent years, humanitarian aid had helped to avert famine in Somalia, Afghanistan and the Sahel. In 2022, aid workers had ramped up deliveries to support some 15.4 million people in Ukraine. Since the start of 2023, humanitarian workers had reached 17 million people in Afghanistan, 2.8 million people in Nigeria and 2.5 million people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of major aid operations. The humanitarian community had come together to mobilize financial resources, advocate for civilians caught up in conflict, anticipate crises and meet needs in underfunded emergencies. Humanitarian workers had done so despite growing insecurity and attacks on them and their supplies; he saluted their efforts.

5. What needed to be done was clear, but there was a lack of funds to do it. Chronic underfunding and record levels of humanitarian need were stretching the system to breaking point. Halfway through 2023, just 20 per cent of the funds needed under the global humanitarian appeal had been received, causing a crisis within a crisis. United Nations agencies had already been forced to reduce food aid in the Syrian Arab Republic, Bangladesh, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Afghanistan and Yemen and, without a solution to the funding crisis, further cuts were inevitable.

6. The segment offered an important opportunity to discuss a range of issues, including how to increase humanitarian resources; how to deliver more efficient and effective humanitarian aid; how to better protect individuals in crises, particularly women and girls; how to reduce food insecurity by supporting sustainable development and addressing the root causes of conflict; and how to increase resilience by investing in climate adaptation.

7. The global humanitarian crisis was damning evidence of a collective failure to address the gravest problems of the time. As work was underway to strengthen the humanitarian system, it was also essential to double down on efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, recommit to international law, address the climate crisis and ease human suffering.

8. **Mr. Rajasingham** (Director, Coordination Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), speaking on behalf of Mr. Griffiths (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), delivering a keynote address, said that, unfortunately, the trend noted the previous year, with a series of megacrisis driving record levels of humanitarian need, had persisted in 2023: the renewed conflict in the Sudan since April 2023 and the recent destruction of the Kakhovka dam in Ukraine had demonstrated the impact that violent conflicts, which were at their highest number since 1945, could have.

9. Tens of thousands of civilians had been killed or injured in conflicts over the previous year and the suffering had been compounded by attacks on civilian infrastructure, deliberate starvation, sexual violence and impediments to humanitarian access. Women and girls were particularly at risk: 94 per cent of those caught up in crises described severe or extreme risks of gender-based violence, trafficking and other harmful practices. In addition, millions of children had been unable to access education for prolonged periods and faced an increased risk of trafficking, domestic violence, child labour, child marriage, forced displacement and abduction.

10. Extreme weather events and climate-related disasters were also having an increasingly deleterious impact: while more than 30 million people in the Horn of Africa were facing acute food insecurity and hunger as a result of the most severe drought in recent history, parts of Pakistan, West and Central Africa and Central America had been devastated by flooding.

11. In 2022, the humanitarian community had responded to the urgent needs of 157 million people across 69 countries, despite facing active hostilities, attacks, arbitrary arrests and movement restrictions. However, the humanitarian system remained under significant strain as funding struggled to keep pace with the growing needs. While record funding had been received in 2022, it had represented just 57 per cent of the amount required; the figure for 2023 currently stood at just 19 per cent. The humanitarian community had thus been unable to reach all those in need, and more effective and efficient ways of working had to be found.

12. In 2023, the Office, along with Türkiye, had made a key contribution to the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the related memorandum of understanding between the Russian Federation and the United Nations. The resulting exportation of grain and other products had made a major contribution to reducing food prices and mitigating the impact of the conflict on global food security, thereby demonstrating the importance of using every available lever to ensure humanitarian access, particularly in times of war.

13. In more localized approaches, in 2022, the Office had used country-based pooled funds to allocate \$364 million to local and national partner organizations and, in 2023, had launched pilot initiatives in four countries to explore how to implement more effective humanitarian action at the local and national levels. The use of early action and anticipatory approaches in 2022 had resulted in four new activities in Burkina Faso, Chad, the Niger and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and anticipatory responses for flooding being triggered in Nepal and South Sudan. Member States were urged to commit resources to those initiatives, which had successfully facilitated agile responses to emergencies, with a focus on pervasive protection issues, such as gender-based violence.

14. Climate change was having a profound impact, challenging community resilience, increasing competition for resources, diminishing capacity to recover and reversing development gains. It was essential to increase investment in disaster preparedness, adaptation and climate-resilient infrastructure and to place protection, particularly of women and girls, at the centre of humanitarian action. Women and women's organizations should be empowered as frontline responders and no effort should be spared in preventing and addressing gender-based violence.

15. Stopping the exponential rise in needs and reducing the vast sums needed to address them required more resolute action by the international community to tackle the underlying causes, such as conflict, economic inequality and climate change. Long-term commitment and cooperation would be needed to reverse the current trends and facilitate progress. He hoped that all parties could work together towards the common goals to build a better future for all.

16. **The President** invited the Council to watch a short video of children in different countries who had been affected by crisis and conflict speaking about their hopes, which were shared by all children around the world: to go to school without fear, to live in peace, to play and to go home. Everything possible must be done to turn those hopes into reality.

17. *A film featuring testimonies from children was projected.*

18. **The President** said that the current humanitarian system was strong, despite the significant strain it was under. However, it needed to be even stronger and more agile, grounded in humanitarian principles and responsive to the people it served. The Council's discussions would help identify opportunities to reinforce and strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance and enable lessons and good practices to be drawn from the adaptations underway in order to face the challenges within humanitarian operations, thereby fostering the building of new partnerships and the pooling of efforts across organizations.

Panel discussion: "Addressing the unprecedented global challenge of food insecurity and the risk of famine: scaling up prevention, response and resilience"

19. **The President**, noting the historic proportions of the food insecurity crisis, said that a robust and multisectoral response was required to meet emergency food needs while also helping to build resilient and productive food systems. Ways needed to be found to scale up such efforts and sustain them in the long term. The panel discussion offered a platform to explore ways of improving understanding of, and the response to, those challenges, focusing on actions and recommendations to prevent and address rising food insecurity and the current and future risk of famine.

20. **Mr. Rajasingham** (Director, Coordination Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), panellist, said that 258 million people in 58 countries were currently facing acute hunger levels. In South Sudan, for example, it was projected that 8 million people could be severely food insecure by the peak of the lean season and more than 1.4 million children could suffer from acute malnutrition and die from a lack of proper treatment. Four more countries – the Sudan, Burkina Faso, Haiti and Mali – had joined Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen on the list of countries at the highest alert level. Nonetheless, he was hopeful that the course could be reversed, and the Secretary-General's appointment of Ms. Reena Ghelani as the United Nations Famine Prevention and Response Coordinator would help towards that end.

21. The response to food insecurity must be multisectoral, with protection at its centre. The Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework had been implemented to provide the background information required for humanitarian needs overviews and response plans, including an analysis of the interlinkages between the various drivers of needs and their root causes. A new methodology for the Framework had recently been finalized for the 2024 humanitarian programme cycle; it would improve the way that needs were measured and understood across sectors and would offer a more human-centred approach.

22. While the humanitarian appeals run by the Office had raised almost \$30 billion in 2022, funding had still fallen short of requirements and partners had been obliged to divert resources from certain critical humanitarian programmes. Member States were asked to increase their contributions to humanitarian response plans so that United Nations agencies and partners could scale up their actions to prevent the spread of famine. Funding should be flexible and multi-year to enable colleagues on the ground to make the most informed and strategic funding decisions possible. The Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds were lifelines for millions of people and allowed for the allocation of resources based on need. Member States were encouraged to continue their support for them and to fund the Central Emergency Response Fund to the level of \$1 billion. International financial institutions and development banks also had an important role to play in closing the

funding gap, and work was underway with the World Bank to launch the Food Security Crisis Preparedness Plan.

23. Scaling up and mainstreaming anticipatory action was also a priority. In 2022, the Central Emergency Response Fund had financed half of all activated humanitarian anticipatory action globally, saving countless lives, supporting livelihoods and ensuring food security ahead of projected shocks in several countries.

24. A further priority for the Office was to increase the participation, and its effectiveness, of local and national non-governmental organizations in all humanitarian response efforts, in an inclusive fashion, to pave the way towards a more effective and efficient humanitarian system, better able to meet the multifaceted needs on the ground.

25. **Ms. Guarnieri** (Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, World Food Programme (WFP)), panellist, said that the global food and security situation was again deteriorating and needs were growing exponentially in 2023. Some 40 million people in 51 countries faced severe hunger; the populations of four countries – Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan – were experiencing catastrophic situations. Resources were shrinking and not keeping pace with needs. By the same date in 2022, coverage of the Programme's funding had been 26 per cent higher than was currently the case.

26. In 2022, WFP had assisted an unprecedented 158 million people with food, cash transfers and livelihood support. Over \$3 billion-worth of the assistance had been distributed as cash, an increase of 42 per cent over the previous year. Nearly 20 million schoolchildren had received nutritious school meals, and humanitarian support for climate solutions had been scaled up, benefiting over 15 million people.

27. While humanitarian action had been scaled up, it was fragile, and the funding gap had forced humanitarian organizations to make heartbreaking choices. Food rations and other assistance had been reduced for millions of people in Yemen and Afghanistan and for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. A vital lifeline for the population in Palestine had been reduced drastically, and it was expected that the number of beneficiaries in the Syrian Arab Republic would have to be cut by some 40 per cent.

28. WFP nonetheless had plans to scale up its operations, using focused, evidence-based actions that had a proven impact. Partnerships with national and local actors were key to ensuring success. Early warning capabilities, when matched with anticipatory action, could ensure particularly effective results by empowering local people to take action before problems became major. For example, in Bangladesh, WFP had recently distributed cash to 24,000 households and disseminated early warning messages to 60,000 more to help people prepare for a major cyclone by buying food and medicine and relocating to safer areas and by being prepared for reconstruction.

29. In 2022, 50 per cent of WFP food purchases had been made locally or in neighbouring regions, thus adding \$1.6 billion to local economies. Multi-year investments had been made in land restoration, water resource management and nutritious and resilient crop development and livestock management. In the Niger, such resilience investments had helped to enable some 500,000 people to attain self-sufficiency. Investments aimed at making social protection systems more inclusive and shock-responsive were an opportunity to provide a safety net for billions of people.

30. Humanitarian action alone could not solve the global food crisis. Political action was required to ensure unimpeded access to vulnerable people, to resolve conflicts and to ensure greater investment in climate action, social protection and resilience.

31. **Ms. Ghelani** (United Nations Famine Prevention and Response Coordinator), panellist, said that the number of people facing hunger had doubled in just five years, and humanitarian needs had tripled, with staggering consequences. Conflict, economic stagnation and the climate crisis were interrelated and must all be addressed head-on. Some 117 million people, or half the people facing hunger in the world, lived in 19 countries affected by violence, and those countries were the recipients of some 80 per cent of resources for food assistance. Clearly, conflict resolution had enormous potential for greatly reducing humanitarian needs.

32. The food security of some 57 million people in the 12 poorest countries was seriously affected by climate change, and the number of climate disasters was expected to rise in coming years. Climate change mitigation, such as through the use of tolerant crop varieties and drought and flood control, was both inexpensive and effective, as the benefits outweighed the costs by two to five times. Thanks to such activities, an area of the Niger that had previously received \$60 million worth of food aid every year had recently become a net exporter of nutritious food.

33. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance owing to social, governance and economic factors, such as their countries' crippling external debts, had tripled since 2021, to over 80 million. Some countries were now paying more to service their debts than they spent on health and education.

34. It was imperative to place women and girls at the centre of efforts to combat the current crisis. Women produced two thirds of the food in Africa, and research had shown that investments in women farmers could in five years reduce the number of people living in poverty by as many as 150 million.

35. Although development aid accounted for the major part of overseas development assistance (ODA), it was not reaching the people most in need; of the approximately one third of ODA that went to the countries most affected by extreme hunger, only 11 per cent was devoted to activities for food production or agriculture. A shift of just 2 per cent of ODA to programmes in rural areas could have a major impact. On the other hand, humanitarian aid, which generally did reach the most needy people, was both poorly funded and insufficiently focused on anticipatory action, resilience and sustainability.

36. **Ms. Sprechmann Sineiro** (Secretary-General, CARE International), panellist, speaking via video link, said that it was critical for women to be more centrally involved in decision-making related to food and security and in responses to the risk of famine.

37. CARE International had a long history of focusing on and amplifying women's voices. Unfortunately, there was still a long way to go to counter the prevailing patriarchy in the humanitarian system and in most of the communities affected by crisis. It required challenging power, shifting gender norms and pushing decision-makers to act outside their comfort zones, which was not without risk. However, there was no substitute for women's direct participation. The evidence clearly indicated that women's participation and leadership resulted in women-friendly decisions. Yet women who assumed leadership roles were often subjected to backlash. Speaking publicly about famine could be seen as a political statement in many contexts. It was thus necessary to teach women to weigh risks against benefits and to ensure that risk mitigation measures were in place. Women had to understand their environment in order to succeed.

38. Engagement with men and boys was an effective means of reducing violence against women and of identifying male champions. For her organization, partnerships with women's organizations such as the Feminist Humanitarian Network were essential, as they made it possible to advocate for women to have a seat at the table and play a meaningful role in actions. Unfortunately, in many contexts, having a seat at the table still did not mean being taken seriously. Many local women's organizations reported intimidation, with meetings dominated by male, English-speaking participants using inaccessible jargon. CARE International helped to remove such barriers by calling for interpretation and translation services, by helping to influence agendas and by training women in public speaking.

39. To increase their influence, what women's organizations needed most was funding. It was common for her organization's local partners to use their own resources to be able to participate in meetings, at the expense of their chronically underfunded local organizations and activities.

40. The statement that "women ate last and least" illustrated the importance of placing women at the centre of efforts to combat poverty and hunger. Food insecurity and hunger led to an increase in gender-based violence and deepened gender inequality, which in turn was a key driver of the global hunger crisis. Food policies and organizations responsible for gathering evidence and developing solutions to address food insecurity often overlooked gender inequality as a driver of food insecurity; they largely ignored women's roles in

producing, processing, purchasing and preparing food. Women were the majority of small-holder farmers, yet they continued to face endless obstacles to moving from subsistence farming to profitable value chains.

41. Protection and food security were related; hunger pushed women into risky coping strategies in order to feed themselves and their families. Understanding that relationship required a context-specific approach, as risks and needs were highly dependent on local dynamics. A single approach could not be used throughout one country or even one community. It was imperative to listen to the affected people to ensure a successful response.

42. **Mr. Paulsen** (Director, Office of Emergencies and Resilience, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), panellist, said that hunger had become entrenched; according to the Global Report on Food Crises 2023, 38 countries had been in a state of food crisis for seven consecutive years, and the number of people affected in those countries had more than doubled in that time. Repeated shocks had devastated rural livelihoods, leaving no time or resources for recovery and engendering growing debt burdens. In 2021, of the 30 humanitarian response plans coordinated by the United Nations, 12 were for countries that had been the subject of consecutive appeals for more than 10 years. There had been humanitarian appeals for Somalia for 25 years running.

43. Despite sustained growth in humanitarian efforts, needs had soared. By 2021, although some \$10 billion had been provided in humanitarian assistance, the amount per person had been falling since 2018. It was impossible to address needs without sufficient funding, provided in a synchronized and coherent manner.

44. One of the issues in addressing the food crisis was the imbalance in investment. The greatest part of assistance in the food sector was provided in cash or in kind, while activities centred on nutrition and agriculture received far less. Yet attention to livelihoods and agriculture could have strong, long-term effects. Over two thirds of the people affected by acute food insecurity lived in rural areas and were generally involved in food production. Without relentless shocks and stresses, they would be able to help alleviate the food crisis. It was essential to pull them out of poverty so that they could have agency and resume productive activities.

45. Humanitarian activities included a range of actions that addressed more than food insecurity. Response to Ebola outbreaks, protection of civilians in conflict situations and the coverage of urgent needs following natural disasters were just some examples. Each called for a discrete, contextualized combination of interventions. The response to a protracted food crisis and the prevention of famine, a largely rural phenomenon, called for nuanced humanitarian efforts to optimize their effect. It was thus critical to have coherent, synchronized funding across all sectors to ensure a meaningful and useful humanitarian response. Preventing famine was clearly not only about the provision of in-kind assistance and agricultural development; it must also include funding and activities to support water supply and nutritional and health interventions. The only way to reverse the slide towards food insecurity was by adopting a nuanced humanitarian response that not only saved lives but reinforced the livelihoods of the most vulnerable and marginalized people.

46. Investment in agriculture was an example of how to maximize impact. In 2022, FAO had reached 35 million people through emergency and resilience programming, 6 million of them in Afghanistan. In 2023, it would assist 8 million people there: wheat seed packages costing \$250 each had been distributed, enabling families to produce enough to support themselves and cover their own needs, as well as to produce seeds that could be shared with other farmers for years to come. The expected improvement in the winter wheat harvest in 2023 was in large part attributable to that distribution. The effectiveness of such anticipatory action in the context of integrated, timely, multisectoral responses was proven. The funding was needed to follow it through.

47. **Ms. Msabeni** (Deputy Secretary-General, Kenya Red Cross Society), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the three-year-long drought and hunger crisis in Kenya had affected almost five million people and areas that had never been hit before. The work carried out by the Kenya Red Cross Society in local communities had shown that an anticipatory approach could help reduce the impact of such crises and be cost-effective. For every \$4 that the Society typically spent on an intervention, it could save \$3 if it took action early enough.

Sadly, although warnings about the drought in Kenya had been given in 2021, the response had been slow to materialize.

48. An anticipatory approach must be embedded in disaster risk management policies, which, in many countries, currently paid insufficient attention to preparedness. Climate research should serve as a basis for providing early warnings and taking early action. The Kenya Red Cross Society worked closely with the country's meteorological departments and shared the information obtained from them with local communities. It had helped communities develop early action protocols and plans covering preparations for and mitigation of the impact of coming hazards. It also engaged in cross-border efforts to alleviate hunger, increase food security and build resilience. Both the acute nature of the current crisis and the long-term food insecurity of the communities in the region must be addressed through well-coordinated multisectoral interventions involving the Government, local communities and all partners. Investments should be made in local communities to help them develop their own responses to the challenges that they faced.

49. **Mr. van Mens** (Observer for the Kingdom of the Netherlands) said that Security Council resolution 2417 (2018) on conflict-induced food insecurity was of even greater relevance now than at the time of its adoption. The resolution made clear that the link between conflict and hunger was a matter of international security and of concern to everyone, reiterated the prohibition under international humanitarian law of the starvation of civilians and addressed the role of a rapid response in situations of acute food insecurity. His Government welcomed the reports thus far prepared by the Secretary-General, pursuant to the resolution, on instances where conflict had led to severe food insecurity and called for such reports to be issued more frequently. Grave hunger-related violations of international humanitarian law must be investigated and, where appropriate, the perpetrators held to account. The Human Rights Council could play a role in supporting such investigations.

50. **Ms. Dätwyler Scheuer** (Observer for Switzerland) said that, ultimately, food security was a question of good governance, sustainable agriculture and a healthy humanitarian system. Her country's response to the food crisis comprised bilateral and multilateral assistance, short-term humanitarian assistance and longer-term transformational cooperation. More resources needed to be provided for the short-term humanitarian response; in the midterm, there should be a focus on the transition to a more people-centred, localized, forward-looking and flexible approach; and in the long term, food systems must be transformed and humanitarian aid tied to peace policy and development aid. A panel discussion might usefully be held during the Council's next humanitarian affairs segment on the factors that had thus far prevented the international community from achieving those objectives.

51. **Mr. Quinn** (United Kingdom) said that the £143 million committed by his country to East Africa earlier in 2023 would help address one of the world's most devastating humanitarian crises through nutritional support, emergency food and cash assistance, and sustainable water supplies. Later in the year, the United Kingdom would, together with partners, inaugurate the Child Nutrition Fund to tackle child wasting and build resilience to famine in vulnerable countries. The response to the food security crisis must include climate-related funding for countries where climate shocks most threatened the stability of food systems and harness the power of scientific forecasts to anticipate shocks and trigger the release of prearranged funds. Diplomatic action must be taken to protect civilians in armed conflict, guarantee access for humanitarian actors and safeguard infrastructure.

52. **Ms. Widstam** (Sweden) said that urgent action was needed to address the hunger crisis. The underlying causes of hunger and the nexus between climate change, conflict and food insecurity must be addressed. Sweden prioritized global efforts to limit climate and environmental change and support adaptation efforts, and was strongly committed to preventing conflicts.

53. The current level of funding for humanitarian assistance was insufficient to meet the huge global needs and, worryingly, was forcing humanitarian organizations to scale down their operations. Efforts to reach the most food-insecure populations must be prioritized. Flexible funding was the most efficient and effective way to fund the response to hunger. A

greater focus needed to be placed on prevention, and anticipatory action taken in response to early warnings.

54. **Mr. Nkabeni** (Observer for South Africa) said that many communities were on the brink of food insecurity, with those in developing countries, particularly in Africa, most at risk. A recent inter-agency joint statement had identified 24 hunger hotspots, of which 16 were in Africa.

55. The economic reconstruction and recovery plan launched by South Africa in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic would help address food insecurity through its focus on agriculture, forestry, agroprocessing and rural development. Land reform and the greater inclusion of young people, women and indigenous people in agriculture would contribute to sustainable solutions. The resilience of food production systems needed to be enhanced through adaptation and reductions in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. Inequalities in access to food required urgent attention. The role of partnerships would be indispensable in bringing about sustainable, efficient and equitable agricultural production and food systems.

56. **Ms. Castello** (Canada) said that the unprecedented levels of food insecurity and malnutrition had been driven by increased conflict and the impacts of climate change. Efforts to address food insecurity must be inclusive and empower women, who faced increased protection risks, including gender-based violence, in such situations and were also critical agents in food production and preparation.

57. Canada had increased its allocations for food and nutrition from 2021 to 2023 but, recognizing that such a short-term approach was not sustainable, had taken steps to improve the quality and effectiveness of its response, including by supporting the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification and the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework. However, more needed to be done, including through increased cash assistance and the use of flexible funding to provide earlier responses. Canada welcomed the pioneering work of the Central Emergency Response Fund on anticipatory action and agreed that coordination among humanitarian, development and peace actors needed to be stepped up. Partnerships with local and national actors must be strengthened, and women-led and women's rights organizations empowered.

58. **Ms. Salvesen** (Observer for Norway) said that, in order to respond to food insecurity, certain issues needed to be addressed: humanitarian access, which was often hampered by violence, corruption and bureaucratic constraints, must be ensured; the link between climate change, conflict and hunger must be recognized and addressed, with attention paid to the safeguarding of ecosystems and biodiversity; and Member States must increase the amount of flexible funding they provided. Flexible funding allowed organizations to respond to sudden crises, take anticipatory action and use funds where they were needed most urgently. Her Government called for close cooperation among actors engaged in humanitarian, development and peace efforts.

59. **Ms. Le Thi Tuyet Mai** (Observer for Viet Nam) said that multilateral cooperation and international solidarity played an important role in the response to food insecurity. In the immediate future, support must be provided to countries threatened by the food crisis, global supply chains must be restored and the rising prices of agricultural products must be brought under control. In the long term, Member States must work towards the overarching goal of building a resilient, inclusive and sustainable food system.

60. Sustainable agricultural development had played an important role in turning Viet Nam from a country unable to produce enough food for its population into a leading exporter of several agricultural products. The country was accelerating the restructuring of its agricultural sector and addressing the links between food production, energy and water resources and climate change adaptation. The country's approach was people-centred and promoted the participation of women in all aspects of food production, processing and distribution. In achieving their goals of building modern agricultural systems and becoming sustainable food suppliers, low-income countries like Viet Nam expected greater international cooperation in terms of financing and technology transfer. Viet Nam was ready to share its experiences in ensuring national food security with other countries.

61. **Ms. Hasselfeldt-Sepe** (United States of America) said that, before Russia had invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the food security situation for hundreds of millions of people across the globe had already been extremely fragile. The world was now facing a global food security crisis of historic proportions. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, approximately 126 million people were acutely food-insecure, a figure 70 per cent higher than in 2019.

62. The swift increase in humanitarian assistance to Somalia, mobilized in large part by the United States, had, as at the end of June 2023, helped to stave off the onset of famine in parts of the country, demonstrating that a universal increase in humanitarian assistance could prevent the onset of famine and large-scale deaths. However, it was likely that the crisis would persist until at least late 2023 if rainfall continued to be poor and adequate humanitarian assistance did not reach the country's most vulnerable populations.

63. The ongoing historic drought in Ethiopia had resulted in a dire food security situation, with limited access to food and income, widespread livestock deaths and large-scale displacement. The United States Agency for International Development was helping to provide the needed long-term response through its new Generating Resilience and Opportunities for Women initiative, under which up to \$335 million would be put towards tackling urgent challenges facing women in food and water systems and unlocking opportunities for women to advance economically. The United States called on other donors to join it in the fight against famine and global food insecurity.

64. **Ms. Nzioki** (Observer for Kenya) said that, globally, most of those affected by hunger were living in areas affected by war and violence. Conflict forced people to leave their homes, redirected resources from the agricultural sector and rendered agricultural land inaccessible. According to the 2023 Global Terrorism Index, 58 per cent of the 830 million people in the world facing food insecurity lived in the 20 countries most affected by terrorism. Extreme environmental effects related to climate change, in particular droughts and floods, were placing immense stress on food production. The Horn of Africa was experiencing a prolonged drought, which had brought the entire region to the brink of famine. Throughout the world, economic shocks were reverberating across the agricultural sector.

65. The right to food was enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya, but the food crisis was having an impact on real lives, eroding dignity, undermining development commitments and causing social and political upheaval. While humanitarian support was essential to saving lives, long-term food security and sustainability could not be achieved without addressing the root causes of the crisis, building resilience and ensuring that societies were able to withstand shocks. Action was needed in various areas. First, the conflicts that fuelled food insecurity needed to be ended as a matter of urgency. Kenya was fully engaged in the promotion of peace in Africa and called for greater emphasis on peaceful conflict resolution. Second, climate commitments needed to be honoured to prevent insecurity, despair and death among the most vulnerable, who bore the brunt of adverse weather events. Third, efforts to increase access to food should address both economic and physical access. Trade disruption and excessively volatile food and agricultural prices were inevitable without further action, in particular at the multilateral level. Sound national policy environments remained crucial to facilitating optimal food production and supplies and cushioning the most vulnerable. Fourth, the needs of all segments of society, including women and children, should be taken into account in policymaking. Fifth, it was important to adopt an anticipatory approach and focus on regional or cross-country learning and experience-sharing. Short-term responses to crises should be coordinated with longer-term national processes and priorities to ensure complementarity and sustainability.

66. **Mr. Alba Fernández** (Mexico) said that there was a clear link between food crises and the damage and losses caused by disasters – in just two decades, Mexico had lost over 1.3 million hectares of crops, to a value of \$2.9 million, to such disasters. When formulating public policies for the protection of crops and food supply chains, the systemic nature of the risks affecting food production and distribution needed to be addressed. Such analysis should not be limited to inter-State conflicts, climate change and economic crises. The promotion of multisectoral disaster risk reduction efforts was therefore crucial. In some cases, long-term planning was hampered by incomplete or poor-quality information on risks to the primary sector. For that and other reasons, risk atlases should be promoted as a tool for improving

understanding. In combination with climate-change modelling, analysis carried out on the basis of such atlases could generate reliable information to facilitate the implementation of immediate preventive action.

67. **Mr. Christensen** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that, as the reports of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification on Somalia had consistently shown, multisectoral assistance was key to preventing famine. IOM had significantly scaled up the assistance that it provided in the Horn of Africa. In Somalia, it had spearheaded the provision of multisectoral assistance packages under the humanitarian country team's integrated response framework. Sustained assistance was needed to build resilience to future droughts, and IOM had been striving to promote sustainable water sources in the region, particularly in Somalia. Camp coordination and camp management played a role in preventing the spread of diseases, improving health outcomes and reducing the vulnerability of displaced populations to malnutrition, all of which helped to reduce the risk of famine. It also promoted community engagement and participation in decision-making. IOM currently managed over 600 camps in Somalia alone. It was important to ensure that funding was provided in proportion to the needs of each affected country. While IOM received half of the funding needed for its operations in Somalia, the corresponding proportions for Ethiopia and Kenya were one third and one quarter, respectively.

68. **Ms. Valdés García** (Oxfam International) said that affected populations had been trapped in a cycle of poverty, vulnerability and hunger for many years. They had now resorted to extreme coping strategies that would have irreversible consequences on their lives. Oxfam International saw a specific need to make the food system fairer and improve pre-emptive action. With regard to funding, one solution might be to set a percentage of development assistance that should be allocated to the humanitarian sector. There was a need to mobilize the private sector, where feasible, and to work with climate actors to ensure that a percentage of climate funding was used to support affected communities. The recipients of such funding should be front-line and local actors and women's rights and refugee-led organizations. Humanitarian needs were a testament to the failure of the development sector as a whole. Concerted action was therefore needed to formulate cohesive solutions.

69. **Mr. Rajasingham** (Director, Coordination Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said that spending on anticipatory action made good economic sense, as it brought benefits in terms of prevention. Moreover, such action afforded a level of dignity to populations, which was essential to sustainable growth and progress in the future. In that regard, it was important to forge strong partnerships with regional actors.

70. It was also critical that the humanitarian response should be multisectoral, encompassing the development, political and economic fields, and have protection, in particular for women and girls, at its heart. Humanitarian actors had seen their role shift, as other actors were failing to address development, governance and political needs. Much stronger collaboration was therefore needed in that regard.

71. Inadequate funding would lead to further vulnerability in the future; better targeting of development funding was an imperative part of any solution. In particular, anticipatory financing needed to be scaled up to ensure a much broader impact. Lastly, those affected, including mothers and children, should have a role in decision-making; their involvement in determining the direction of programming would produce a more effective humanitarian response.

72. **Ms. Guarnieri** (Deputy Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, World Food Programme), said that the growing need for humanitarian assistance meant that enhanced efforts were required to improve access to support and services, even as the resources available were shrinking. While additional funding was essential, there was also scope to improve the allocation of existing funds to facilitate anticipatory action. Regional organizations had a role to play in that regard. Through the African Risk Capacity, the African Union had helped to establish a system of risk insurance as part of which funds would be disbursed in response to early signs of drought. The World Food Programme would continue to support regional institutions to develop such initiatives. In addition, cooperation with development and diplomatic actors and within the humanitarian

sector itself needed to be optimized. Lastly, the affected populations should be granted a louder voice in decision-making and front-line actors must be given more support.

73. **Ms. Ghelani** (United Nations Famine Prevention and Response Coordinator) said that a consensus had emerged regarding several areas in which action was needed. First, humanitarian actors needed prompt access to funding that had been pledged, so that it could be put to immediate use. Second, the international community should not shy away from addressing the drivers of hunger. Third, more flexible funding was needed. If the necessary political will could be found, one solution might be to forge a commitment on anticipatory financing. Fourth, where necessary, it was important to ensure that development financing was channelled to the right actors on the ground in rural areas. Lastly, women and girls should be at the centre of humanitarian operations.

74. **Ms. Sprechmann Sineiro** (Secretary-General, CARE International), speaking via video link, said that the prerequisites for preventing and responding to hunger were supportive regulatory systems, women-friendly and gender-equal environments, policies and interventions, sustainable agriculture, climate change adaptation and resilience, disaster reduction efforts and anticipatory action. A multisectoral approach, an emphasis on peace, security and social justice and further investment in emergency agriculture were needed. Those solutions could not be scaled up without political will. CARE International called on all stakeholders to ensure that gender equality and the meaningful participation of women and girls were at the centre of that process.

75. **Mr. Paulsen** (Director, Office of Emergencies and Resilience, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that, while the volume of financing was important, so too was its nature. A number of donors had shown laudable leadership in pioneering flexible financing models. The next step in the evolution of the humanitarian response was to ensure further flexibility, perhaps of a different kind. Some of the affected countries had been facing the same situation for many years without any sign of improvement, which showed that humanitarian responses needed to evolve. With regard to anticipatory action, humanitarian actors should move away from specific anticipatory projects towards an overall anticipatory approach to crisis management and financing. Once the alarm had been raised in a particular area, funding needed to materialize at scale much more quickly than was currently the case.

76. Regional and subregional mechanisms, such as the Coordination Centre for Disaster Prevention in Central America and the Dominican Republic and the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel, played a key role in improving understanding of what was happening and finding solutions. In collaboration with various agencies, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development was carrying out transformative work on integrated water management solutions and post-harvest loss management in East Africa. More systematic and consistent action in support of regional and subregional mechanisms would be beneficial.

77. **Ms. Msabeni** (Deputy Secretary-General, Kenya Red Cross Society), speaking via video link, said that strengthened multisectoral cooperation would enhance the efforts of the sector as a whole. Humanitarian actors also needed to ensure that funding that had been pledged was received and was utilized in a coordinated manner. Moreover, the sector should strengthen its engagement with local actors and invest more at the local level. The COVID-19 pandemic had confirmed the capacity of local organizations to remain active on the ground at a time when regional and international organizations had been limited to remote work; investment in anticipatory action should also go through local organizations.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.