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

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Closing of the segment

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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 3.10 p.m.

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

(continued) (A/78/73-E/2023/61; E/2023/L.19)

1. **Mr. Gürber** (Observer for Switzerland) said that, in view of the scope of the humanitarian crises facing the world, the humanitarian system was reaching its limits and the financial assistance provided by the international community remained insufficient. It was necessary to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian actions by tackling the underlying causes of crises. In keeping with its humanitarian tradition, Switzerland was committed to strengthening coordination and the responsibility of humanitarian actors by taking a global approach that combined humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding. Switzerland continued to promote a culture of dialogue to support consensus-based solutions.

2. With regard to the subjects under discussion, Switzerland wished to emphasize three key points. First, during armed conflicts, international humanitarian law was the universal legal framework for the protection of civilians and the provision of humanitarian aid. It was regrettable that that law had not been selected as a key subject for discussion during the segment. Secondly, climate change and the natural disasters arising from it had a multiplier effect, putting at risk the most vulnerable groups. Switzerland supported early action and risk reduction strategies to strengthen the resilience of civilian populations. Humanitarian responses must take local contexts into account and, as far as possible, be managed and provided at the local level. Involving local actors would ensure that humanitarian funds were used more effectively and efficiently. Thirdly, global food security was a growing source of serious concern. Conflict remained the key driver of acute food insecurity, and production, trade and transformation capacities must be protected and safeguarded in order to ensure ongoing access to sufficient quality and affordable food.

3. The Council would shortly be adopting a resolution on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. Switzerland welcomed the fact that the draft resolution addressed responses to food insecurity, including early action, but found it regrettable that it failed to emphasize issues surrounding protection and did not make sufficient use of gender-inclusive language. It was hoped that those shortcomings would be corrected in future resolutions.

4. **Ms. Liang Hong** (China) said that the world was facing multifaceted challenges linked to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, conflict, climate change and food insecurity that had escalated humanitarian needs. In response, the international community must uphold multilateralism, enhance cooperation and solidarity and help countries experiencing humanitarian crises to overcome the challenges facing them. It must also ensure respect for humanitarian principles and adhere strictly to the standards of international relations. Donor countries must provide humanitarian assistance in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 46/182; in other words, they must respect the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and uphold international humanitarian law.

5. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, the funding gap for humanitarian appeals coordinated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was \$22 billion in 2022. As certain humanitarian crises were severely underfunded, the delegation of China urged donors to bridge the funding gap, prioritizing the most severely underfunded and prolonged crises. Humanitarian assistance should reach the widest possible number of recipients and be equitably distributed. Development should be prioritized and the transition from relief to development should be made as smooth as possible.

6. Humanitarian crises were driven by a range of causes, one of the most significant of which was underdevelopment. In assisting countries that were dealing with crises, the international community should provide not only emergency relief but also development assistance to expedite the transition from relief to reconstruction and enable countries to achieve self-sustained development. The international community should strengthen support for capacity-building in developing countries in order to prevent and mitigate disasters.

Developed countries should expedite the provision of financial resources and technology transfers to enhance the prevention and mitigation capabilities of disaster-prone developing countries. Moreover, developed countries should fulfil their international obligations in relation to climate change, particularly by delivering on the commitment to provide \$100 billion per year for climate action in developing countries.

7. China actively engaged in global humanitarian responses through bilateral and multilateral channels. It had provided robust support to numerous developing countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters and famine and had taken measures to assist their reconstruction efforts and enhance their disaster prevention and mitigation capabilities. Over the past decade, it had organized close to 400 emergency relief operations, assisting millions of people affected by crises. China was ready to work with the international community to engage in bilateral and multilateral operations and support developing countries grappling with humanitarian crises.

8. **Ms. Erçelik Vandeweyer** (Observer for Türkiye) said that more than 350 million people around the world were currently in need of humanitarian assistance. The number of forcibly displaced persons was at an all-time high and now exceeded 110 million. New conflicts continued to break out while existing ones lingered on and became protracted. Urgent action was required to address the risk of deadly famine and hunger.

9. Although the response of the humanitarian system was often encouraging, as Türkiye had observed when an earthquake had struck the country in February 2023, 120 million people affected by crises around the globe were still awaiting assistance. That number was likely to increase in 2023. Measures to provide sustainable funding and access to humanitarian aid should be stepped up. Rather than limiting itself to providing emergency assistance, the international community should address the root causes of crises by establishing a long-term agenda for change while paying due attention to prevention and risk reduction.

10. The complexity of the present crises revealed the need to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. In line with the “New way of working” initiative, the international community should step up its efforts to combine development and humanitarian assistance, not only to increase the resilience of affected countries but also to promote sustainable development.

11. Türkiye was an ardent advocate of international solidarity and partnership. It had a clear vision for saving lives and protecting the environment through sustainable, collective strategies. That vision was demonstrated by the “Zero Waste” project launched by the First Lady of Türkiye, which had led to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 77/161 on promoting zero-waste initiatives to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

12. Türkiye knew from its own experience that the humanitarian crises of today had effects that transcended geography and time. As the host country with the largest refugee community in the world, Türkiye provided humanitarian relief across the continents, aiming to reach all people in need without distinction as to geography, religion or ethnicity. It made every effort to keep diplomacy alive and support the search for peace. The positive results obtained by the Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (Black Sea Initiative) showed that positive actions could be taken even in the most difficult circumstances.

13. **Mr. Tummers** (Observer for the Netherlands) said that humanitarian needs had continued to increase exponentially, including as a result of the unprovoked Russian war in Ukraine. The delegation of the Netherlands had great respect for the many countries worldwide that gave shelter to millions of people fleeing war, hunger and disease and would continue to stand by them. It wished to express its gratitude to the thousands of international and local humanitarian workers for the tremendous job that they did. Day after day, they saved millions of lives, despite the physical assaults and cyber-attacks directed against them and the unnecessary bureaucratic procedures that hindered their work.

14. Attacks on humanitarian actions were often carried out by Governments and armed groups that were unable, or unwilling, to protect the people that they claimed to be serving.

If the international community was serious about saving lives, it should respect the Geneva Conventions and protect innocent civilians and their infrastructure.

15. In that connection, it would be useful to outline a number of actions that should be prioritized. First, non-earmarked, multi-annual quality funding should be provided to people in need of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian solidarity could not depend on just a few donors when needs had never been greater. Secondly, localization and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus should be prioritized. The international community bore a shared responsibility for increasing the resilience of disaster-prone countries and addressing the root causes of humanitarian needs. Lastly, it was necessary to acknowledge the obvious point that most humanitarian crises stemmed from human actions, including climate change, conflicts, poor governance, human rights abuses, corruption and economic inequality, all of which fuelled human suffering. People suffered because they were attacked, because their schools and hospitals were bombed, because they were deliberately starved, or because they endured emotional and spiritual harm. Humanitarian aid alone was not the solution. The international community must address the underlying issues and refrain from harming civilians.

16. **Mr. Różycki** (Observer for Poland) said that the attack on Ukraine by Russia had caused a massive humanitarian catastrophe, forcing millions of people to flee war-torn cities and villages. The war had also caused large-scale material destruction and the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Poland played a leading role in assisting Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees, having spent around 2 per cent of its gross domestic product on providing such assistance. Humanitarian conditions were deteriorating in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine. The crisis was deepening daily as a result of ongoing attacks on Ukrainian cities and infrastructure, the latest example being the destruction of the dam in Nova Kakhovka, which had grave consequences for people in southern Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

17. The war in Ukraine was seriously disrupting global food production and supply chains. Several hundred million people would be facing severe food insecurity and would require urgent help. Additional support was urgently needed for countries dependent on grain exported from Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Out of 19 famine hotspots, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen were in a critical situation. The delegation of Poland welcomed the Black Sea Initiative, the establishment of the European Union-Ukraine “solidarity lanes” and the “Grain from Ukraine” initiative as tools to ensure the continued export of Ukrainian grain for persons in need.

18. Despite the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, Poland was continuing to provide assistance to partners in the Middle East who were struggling to deal with the refugee crisis triggered by the war in Syria. In that connection, Poland would continue to provide assistance to Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan and to the populations of countries affected by protracted crises, including Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan. The humanitarian assistance provided by Poland would be targeted at protecting children from armed conflict, supporting persons with disabilities and assisting women, especially in conflict-affected areas. His Government would assist with the implementation of projects organized by Polish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and would allocate funds to projects run by partner organizations with a view to protecting civilians and assisting people in areas that were difficult to access for security reasons.

19. **Ms. Méndez Escobar** (Mexico) said that food insecurity, the risk of famine and the effects of climate change required an effective and coordinated response from the entire international community. Humanitarian needs had grown exponentially in the last four years, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, disasters arising from climate change, economic crises and growing inequality within and between countries. There was an urgent need for the international community to discuss how to address humanitarian needs in a sustainable manner and how to share responsibilities fairly. According to the Global Humanitarian Overview 2023, 339 million people urgently required humanitarian assistance and nearly \$51.5 million would be needed to provide it. Meeting the humanitarian needs of affected persons would mean improving coordination and cooperation between humanitarian actors, the public and private sectors, United Nations agencies, NGOs and State entities.

20. Mexico would continue to advocate for a comprehensive approach combining humanitarian assistance, sustainable development and the building of resilience within affected communities. That approach would require long-term measures that addressed the underlying causes of humanitarian challenges, such as poverty, inequality and armed conflict. The delegation of Mexico was concerned about the serious rise in levels of food insecurity and the risk of famine in various parts of the world. It urged the international community to ensure equitable access to sufficient quantities of nutritional food and to strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems. To do so, it would be necessary to support sustainable agricultural initiatives, promote the diversification of crops and increase cooperation to improve food security globally. A close relationship existed between violence, discrimination, forced displacement and climate change. For that reason, Mexico was advocating for comprehensive measures to deal with all those challenges. Adaptation and mitigation measures should be taken to reduce the impact of climate change on vulnerable communities and ensure their resilience in the face of natural disasters.

21. **Ms. Lachaussée** (France) said that France had worked tirelessly to uphold international humanitarian law and preserve the humanitarian space, which was being undermined as humanitarian actors were subjected to attacks and obstacles were put in their way to prevent them from operating. France would strive to uphold international humanitarian law and guarantee access to humanitarian assistance throughout the world. In armed conflicts, humanitarian needs were exacerbated by violations of international humanitarian law, including acts of sexual violence against women and girls, the use of hunger to subjugate adversaries and the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in populated areas. France hoped that a large number of States would join it in signing the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

22. In 2022, France had launched the Food and Agricultural Resilience Mission and “Save the Crops” initiatives to respond to growing levels of food insecurity and worldwide malnutrition caused by the war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine. In October 2023, in collaboration with the World Food Programme, France would be hosting the first worldwide meeting of the School Meals Coalition, the purpose of which was to ensure that every child had access to healthy and nutritious food every day at school by 2030, including in vulnerable areas. France was a co-sponsor of the second Global Refugee Forum, which would be held in Geneva in December 2023 with a view to enhancing the support provided to countries hosting refugees.

23. Special attention should be paid to the humanitarian impact of climate change. In 2022, along with the European Commission, France had launched the Humanitarian Aid Donors’ Declaration on Climate and Environment, the purpose of which was to establish a community of donors who would strive to ensure that the effects of environmental crises were taken into account by the humanitarian sector. The funds that France allocated to humanitarian assistance had increased in recent years and were expected to exceed €700 million in 2023.

24. Two days previously, the Council’s general discussion had been interrupted when the representative of the Russian Federation had exercised his right of reply with reference to the statements made by the representatives of Sweden, on behalf of the European Union, Norway, Australia, the United Kingdom, Slovakia, Bulgaria and the United States of America (E/2023/SR.31) in order to claim that the State’s intervention in Ukraine was based on self-defence. The delegation of France firmly rejected that claim and reiterated its solidarity with the Government and people of Ukraine in the war of aggression being waged by the Russian Federation.

25. **Mr. Boutadghart** (Observer for Morocco) said that humanitarian assistance was a fundamental pillar of the foreign policy of Morocco. The commitment to solidarity that underpinned its humanitarian actions was demonstrated by the field hospitals that it had set up in other countries to assist people affected by crisis situations. As its actions in Africa, Asia and the Middle East had shown, it was committed to assisting people affected by crises and providing them with the medicines, health care, blankets and food that they needed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Morocco had provided medical assistance to other States within the framework of South-South cooperation. In its efforts to combat food insecurity,

Morocco had transferred 500,000 tons of fertilizer, or half the amount that it produced annually, to other African States, either as a donation or at very low cost.

26. Between 13 and 15 June, Morocco had hosted the third Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants. That event had culminated in the adoption of the Rabat Declaration, which reasserted the fundamental importance of registering refugees as a measure of international protection. It was essential for States to support registration and documentation campaigns as mechanisms for protecting refugees and assessing their humanitarian needs. Host countries were responsible for conducting such campaigns in order to prevent the exploitation of refugees, including the enlistment of children in armed militias and the diversion of humanitarian assistance. The delegation of Morocco called on the international community to mitigate the most serious effects of humanitarian crises by investing in early action and promoting inclusive development, disaster risk reduction, climate action and peacekeeping.

27. **Ms. Ishitani** (Brazil), noting that the situation on the humanitarian front, with more than 330 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, was unprecedented, said that she wished to pay tribute to all humanitarian workers, who were active in increasingly complex and often dangerous settings. Brazil strongly condemned attacks on such workers, who should be given safe and unhindered access to the places that needed them.

28. There was an urgent need for stronger commitment to international humanitarian law, which played a major role in mitigating the devastating humanitarian consequences of armed conflict. Impunity, selective or otherwise, for violations of such law should be stamped out. The devastating consequences of armed conflict on children were particularly troubling.

29. Brazil was committed to fighting sexual and gender-based violence. Access to justice for female victims of such violence had to be expanded, and institutional, social and health-care services had to be improved.

30. There should be further consideration of the root causes of hunger. Focusing on immediate relief alone was not enough. Long-lasting means of eliminating hunger would have to be found. Although conflict was a primary driver of acute food insecurity, it was not the only one. Poverty, inflation, trade bottlenecks and other macroeconomic problems interfered with access to food supplies, especially in developing countries. Unilateral coercive measures, as well as market-distorting subsidies and other forms of protectionism, hampered developing countries' ability to build resilient agrifood systems and participate fully in international markets.

31. Climate change was another great challenge. Its root causes, as well as its adverse effects, in particular humanitarian crises involving highly vulnerable communities, had to be addressed.

32. The prohibition of methods of war that caused environmental damage capable of harming the health or endangering the survival of the civilian population should be observed. Parties to armed conflict should refrain from committing acts of environmental destruction as a form of reprisal.

33. **Ms. Nzioki** (Observer for Kenya), noting that her Government wished in particular to honour the memory of those who had given their lives to provide humanitarian assistance, said that behind the numbers – the hundreds of millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance – were real people whose lives and futures were at stake. Those people must not be let down. Regrettably, however, the causes of displacement and suffering had not been eliminated; in some respects, they were resurgent.

34. Against that backdrop, there was an urgent need to act. Humanitarian action saved lives, while development assistance helped build resilience, enabling communities to cope better with crises. Geneva could serve as a hub for development-oriented humanitarian action.

35. Localization, on which there was clearly a growing emphasis, was key to tapping into local capacities and knowledge. It also ensured that humanitarian action was conducted by and with the people directly affected by humanitarian crises. Collective reflection on the finer details of making localization a reality was still needed, however.

36. There should be no forgotten humanitarian crises. All such crises, wherever they occurred, merited attention.

37. Multi-year, unearmarked funding facilitated flexible humanitarian action, which should be guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. Continued underfunding limited the assistance that could be provided, resulting in difficult decisions. Nobody should be forced to choose between equally life-saving priorities.

38. Although an economic argument for anticipatory action, which would help save money and lives, was welcome, it was even more important to make a holistic case for it. In other words, the effect of anticipatory action on the promotion of human dignity, its time-saving component and its other benefits should not be overlooked.

39. In addition to their calls for adherence to international law, the Kenyan authorities called for greater support for efforts to address the root causes of humanitarian crises. Calls for measures to adapt to the effects of climate change, one of the drivers, along with violent conflict, of humanitarian needs, must be accompanied by measures to honour climate commitments and immediate climate action.

40. **Ms. Traore** (Observer for Mali) said that Mali was in the grips of a complex humanitarian crisis caused by violent conflict in the northern and central parts of the country and widespread food insecurity. Women and children were the chief victims of the resulting malnutrition.

41. Insecurity in northern and central Mali had led to the loss of farmland, rustling, looting, crop destruction and, above all, displacement. Thirty-seven per cent of the population of Ménaka, an eastern region, had, for example, been forcibly displaced. Parts of the country had also been hit by devastating floods. High grain prices had heightened the vulnerability of poor families.

42. Despite slight improvements in 2023, large parts of the country were still food insecure. A plan had been developed with a view to improving the situation for more than 3 million people, including the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people identified in April 2023.

43. In view of the ongoing crisis, the Government of Mali requested the support of humanitarian agencies. Investment that would help the country's people adapt to the effects of climate change would be helpful. The provision of seeds for drought- and heat-resistant varieties of crops, for example, would help the people of Mali overcome food insecurity. Donors should also prioritize efforts to help displaced people return to their homes. Lastly, the Government of Mali welcome the allocation of the necessary resources to the humanitarian response plans and the Central Emergency Response Fund.

44. **Mr. Mehdi** (Observer for Pakistan), noting that the increasing number, scale and severity of climate emergencies was an immediate and growing concern, said that, in 2022, unprecedented floods in Pakistan had severely disrupted the lives of 33 million people, causing heavy losses in the country's agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors. Pakistan was responsible for less than 1 per cent of global carbon emissions, yet it was among the nations most vulnerable to the climate crisis. It was also in its fifth decade of hosting millions of refugees.

45. In the view of the Government of Pakistan, a country on the front lines of crisis, humanitarian responses, leveraging the comparative advantages of United Nations entities, other humanitarian partners, financial institutions and other actors, must involve durable solutions from the outset to effect a smooth transition from relief to development. The resource shortfall must, in addition, be remedied. Flexible, unearmarked funding from diverse sources was critical.

46. Progress on climate financing mechanisms, including for loss and damage, also had to be made. Special consideration should be given to the countries that were most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

47. The international community must come together to mobilize investment in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Affordable long-term financing for sustainable development and for measures to tackle debt distress and expand contingency funding

arrangements for countries facing acute humanitarian challenges had to be scaled up. In addition, climate risk assessments, early warning systems, climate-sensitive programming and assessments of health and nutrition needs and displacement potential should be part of humanitarian assistance frameworks.

48. **Mr. Quintanilla Román** (Observer for Cuba) said that his Government attached particular importance to the mandate of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It was of the view that humanitarian assistance should be provided in accordance with the guiding principles outlined in General Assembly resolution 46/182. It should be provided at the request and with the consent of the State concerned. Any attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States were unacceptable.

49. Regrettably, the Council had been unable to acknowledge the need to ensure the enjoyment of the right to food in the text of the draft resolution that it intended to adopt. It would thus fail to build on a number of other documents, including General Assembly resolution 77/327. Widespread hunger and poverty were exacerbated by the impact of unilateral coercive measures and genocidal, extraterritorial and illegitimate policies such as the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba, in violation of the international law and the Charter of the United Nations, by the United States.

50. Natural disasters, which appeared to be increasing in number and intensity, had a disproportionately severe impact on the poorest countries. As a result of its location, Cuba was particularly vulnerable to such disasters. It had therefore been compelled to develop a comprehensive civil defence system. Improvements to local and national early warning systems were being made, and, despite the obstacles that the United States embargo put in its way, Cuba would continue cooperating with other countries in a bid to strengthen capacity in disaster prevention and mitigation.

51. The humanitarian operations coordinated by the United Nations were critical. Every effort should be made, in particular by respecting national sovereignty, to ensure that their legitimacy was preserved.

52. **Ms. Díaz-Rato Revuelta** (Observer for Spain) said that her Government shared the concerns that had been expressed over the past two days of the segment. Tragedies such as the recent sinking in the Mediterranean of a trawler overloaded with migrants were a sign of the depths of despair that were being reached. What more had to happen before the international community moved from words to action was hard to imagine.

53. Spain, seeking to do its part, had taken two specific steps that she wished to highlight. First, under a law adopted in 2023, it set a target of allocating 0.7 per cent of its gross national income for official development assistance by 2030. In addition, in an attempt to ensure the harmonization of the country's international humanitarian operations, it had adopted a humanitarian diplomacy strategy for the period 2023–2026, its first such strategy. The development of the strategy had been informed by consultations with civil society organizations and a number of public agencies. The three objectives outlined in the strategy were to prevent and resolve conflict, promote respect for international humanitarian law and protect vulnerable people. The strategy, which was accompanied by an action plan, would facilitate the reorganization into a coherent whole of the multiple lines of humanitarian diplomacy in which Spain was active. The Spanish authorities trusted that, by leading by way of example, it would be possible to move beyond debates towards action and thus effect real change for the most vulnerable communities.

54. **Ms. Kawamba** (Observer for Malawi) said that, in recent years, the effects of climate change had contributed greatly to the global food crisis. Malawi, for instance, had been hit by multiple recent disasters, including tropical cyclones Ana, Gombe and, worst of all, Freddy. Cyclone Freddy alone had resulted in the displacement of more than half a million people. The Malawian authorities were grateful for the humanitarian assistance they had received in the wake of Cyclone Freddy's passage.

55. Although low-income countries like Malawi were not responsible for those disasters, they bore the brunt of them, and, until climate change was tackled, food crises would recur. The Government of Malawi therefore called on States to come together to address the

challenges posed year after year by climate change. Heavy investment had to be made in anticipatory action.

56. Countries like Malawi, which were host to refugees who had fled humanitarian emergencies caused by conflict, required support. Every effort had to be made to resolve conflict through dialogue. Conflict, unresolved, imposed too heavy a burden.

57. **Ms. Dalibey** (Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)) said that more than 340 million people had required life-saving humanitarian assistance in 2023. Millions of people also faced high levels of food insecurity. The dire situation had been triggered by a dangerous combination of factors, including conflict, inflation and climate change. A paradigm shift was essential to reach innovative, integrated and long-term solutions. Anticipatory action and preparedness measures would help to prevent famine and to mitigate the impact of disasters. The Islamic Organization for Food Security, a specialized institution of OIC established in 2016, promoted anticipatory action to prevent and respond to food insecurity. For instance, OIC implemented programmes of action for the development of strategic agricultural commodities, such as rice, wheat and maize, in order to increase food production in OIC member States.

58. The Islamic Development Bank Group, which was the financial arm of OIC, had endorsed more than \$10 billion for a food security response programme in July 2022 that provided long-term support to OIC member States so that they could address the ongoing food crisis and improve resilience to food security shocks.

59. Many OIC member States were affected by climate shocks despite their minimum contribution to global warming. OIC had therefore placed climate change at the heart of its agenda and reiterated its call for climate justice. Urgent action was needed to address the growing gap between humanitarian needs and funding. OIC provided emergency support through the Islamic Solidarity Fund and long-term solutions for sustainable, resilient and inclusive growth through the Islamic Development Bank. It had set up a Humanitarian Trust Fund for Afghanistan and was planning a similar initiative for the Sahel region.

60. OIC and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had agreed on a 2021–2024 plan of action to raise awareness of key principles and standards of international humanitarian law in OIC member States. As conflict resolution was a core objective of OIC, it had scaled up its mediation capacities in order to actively engage in the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts.

61. **Mr. Chapagain** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that the recent increase in droughts, floods, food insecurity, health crises and other humanitarian emergencies had reduced people's resilience to future crises. In 2022 there had been more than 350 climate and weather-related disasters. The international community was not taking action on the scale required to protect vulnerable communities. Investment in climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and early warning systems played a critical role in saving lives and livelihoods. A review by IFRC of the funding that went to climate-vulnerable countries had shown that some 30 countries, most of which were fragile or affected by conflicts or crises, received less than \$1 per person per year for climate and disaster risk reduction.

62. It was vital to invest in early warning systems and anticipatory action. Community-level preparedness was essential for good governance. Vulnerability and capacity assessments, emergency drills and community education could have a life-saving impact.

63. For example, Mali had suffered numerous types of disasters. The Mali Red Cross had cooperated with the authorities in setting up an early warning system and it had launched its early action protocol for floods in September 2022 after heavy rain had struck the country, thereby protecting more than 3,000 people from loss of life and property due to early evacuations.

64. IFRC welcomed the recognition of the importance of investing in preparedness in the political declaration of the high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the expanded commitments to early action in the draft resolution on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations ([E/2023/L.19](#)).

65. Operating with the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the IFRC network would promote community preparedness to act on early warnings, as well as anticipatory and long-term actions to support adaptation and improve resilience.

66. Funds should be allocated to communities with the greatest needs. As first responders were always families, neighbours, communities, and local organizations and authorities, it was important to invest in such actors in order to build their capacity. IFRC was investing in national societies through its capacity-building fund with a view to meeting their identified development needs.

67. **Ms. Pictet Althann** (Observer for Malta) said that the international relief agency of the Order of Malta, Malteser International, had been enhancing its food security and livelihood development projects by strengthening local health-care systems and increasing food and water supplies.

68. It supported smallholder and local farmers through practical and financial aid in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan and the strengthening of resilience in terms of water storage capabilities in northern Kenya. Other measures aimed at improving agricultural practices in Africa and the Middle East included the distribution of farming tools and climate-resilient crop variety seeds, the enhancement of local irrigation systems for agricultural production, and the provision of business plans and technical advice. Food security during and after conflict and climate crises was promoted through marketing and production services.

69. Malnourished infants and young children were provided with adequate nutrition, and food supplies were bolstered in parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Malteser International was acting in partnership with the Indian Organization for Development Education to improve food security in the Thar Desert by helping local farmers to adapt to climate change. It was helping to restore livelihoods in Indonesia, Nepal and Bangladesh through peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing schemes accompanied by agricultural supplements, such as climate-adapted seeds.

70. Projects in South and Central America prioritized environmental approaches. Emergency food aid, especially for children, and financial assistance had been provided in Colombia, Haiti and Venezuela with a view to combating poverty and supporting local food production and governance.

71. Malteser International had recently provided emergency relief to hundreds of refugees who had lost their homes in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, following fires and Cyclone Mocha, which had ravaged the city's Rohingya refugee camps.

72. Since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the Order of Malta has been assisting internally displaced persons and refugees abroad with humanitarian shelters and medical aid.

73. Following the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, Malteser International had assisted local partner organizations in procuring relief supplies and providing medical care through mobile clinics.

74. All solutions needed to respect the specific socioeconomic and environmental context of each region. Partnerships and collaboration among Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector were a crucial prerequisite for achieving meaningful and lasting progress in addressing urgent global challenges.

75. **Ms. Cesar** (Observer for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that FAO highlighted the need to move beyond relatively small-scale funding and piloting of anticipatory action to large-scale investments aimed at averting or mitigating the worst effects of a disaster. FAO allocated 20 per cent of its humanitarian funding to anticipatory action and urged donors to allocate a larger percentage of their funding to such action.

76. In 2020, donors had provided FAO with \$250 million to prevent a food crisis from being generated by the desert locust upsurge in the Horn of Africa. As a result, over 41 million livelihoods had been saved, \$2 billion in losses and a food crisis had been avoided. The response had been far more restrained in 2021, when FAO had warned of an emerging

drought in the Horn of Africa. As a result, livestock had died, livelihoods had been taken away and people had begun fleeing to camps in desperation. It was only when the spectre of famine had returned to Somalia that funds began to be received again.

77. FAO called for stronger action and funding to address the root causes of crises as well as for interventions to meet immediate needs. Humanitarian assistance should be strengthened by focusing on cost-effective actions that both met and reduced immediate needs. Agricultural assistance enabled people and communities to ensure their own survival and future recovery and laid the foundations for resilience. Yet, although two thirds of people suffering from acute food insecurity relied on agriculture for their survival, only 4 per cent of humanitarian funding was allocated to agriculture.

78. **Mr. Cirri** (Observer for the World Food Programme (WFP)) said that 345 million people were projected to suffer from acute food insecurity in 79 countries in 2023. In addition, over 40 million people in 51 countries faced severe hunger emergencies as of June 2023 and were one step away from famine. WFP was working with its partners across the humanitarian community to meet those needs. It had reached 158 million people in 2022, the largest number that WFP had assisted in its 60-year history.

79. However, despite the generosity of WFP donors and supporters, funding was not keeping pace with the explosion in needs. Current funding gaps stood at almost 60 per cent, the highest rate ever recorded. The gap often required WFP to take heart-breaking decisions to reduce rations or cash transfers.

80. Large-scale flexible funds were required to meet growing needs. Parties to conflicts should also open essential corridors and trade routes so that life-saving food assistance could be transported to those most at need. The full weight of the international system was required to prevent famine in 2023. WFP therefore urgently requested support for all food security and humanitarian actors so that the most vulnerable could be protected at a pivotal moment in history.

Draft resolution E/2023/L.19: Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

81. **The President** said that draft resolution E/2023/L.19, which he had submitted on the basis of informal consultations, had no programme budget implications.

82. *Draft resolution E/2023/L.19 was adopted.*

83. **Ms. Paumier López** (Observer for Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, noted with appreciation that the resolution reflected some priorities of the global South, including those related to capacity-building, urgent and adequate funding of United Nations humanitarian appeals, and the recognition of food insecurity as a driver of displacement. The Group was confident that the coordination and implementation of emergency humanitarian assistance by the United Nations as a whole would be strengthened by the resolution.

84. However, some important issues for developing countries had been omitted from the resolution, particularly the references in the preambular paragraph in an earlier version of the draft resolution to the need to put an end to the scourge of famine and the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient, nutritious and sustainably produced food and to be free from hunger so as to be able to fully develop and maintain his or her physical and mental capacities. The omissions were regrettable, particularly in a year in which the theme of the humanitarian affairs segment was “Strengthening humanitarian assistance at a time of unprecedented global humanitarian needs” in order to address the urgent challenges of rising food insecurity and the risk of famine.

85. The right to food was internationally recognized. It had been proclaimed in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reaffirmed in article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It was also protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In addition, the General Assembly had adopted numerous resolutions reaffirming the right to

food, the most recent of which had been General Assembly resolution 77/217, which had been adopted by consensus in 2022.

86. The right to food in the context of humanitarian assistance was a complex and multifaceted issue that required constant attention and action from all actors to ensure that no one suffered from hunger or malnutrition. The Group therefore reiterated the need to address such concerns in future exercises. The most affected people all over the world were awaiting effective solutions.

87. **Ms. Szabó** (Observer for Hungary) said that her Government fully supported the aims of the resolution. However, it had not endorsed either the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration or the Global Compact on Refugees and was therefore unable to accept any references thereto. Migration was not an appropriate means of addressing demographic, economic and labour-market challenges. Migration should be prevented rather than promoted. The root causes of migration should be addressed by providing assistance to third countries locally and by creating conditions more conducive to stable growth and development. She wished to stress that national competence for legal migration and national vaccination programmes lay with States.

88. **Ms. Graatrud** (Observer for Norway) said that her delegation regretted the fact that the resolution failed to strongly condemn the use of heavy explosive weapons in urban areas. The Secretary-General had repeatedly referred to such action as one of the major causes of civilian harm in armed conflicts. When explosive weapons were used in populated areas, 90 per cent of the casualties were usually civilian. The Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas adopted on 18 November 2022 had been officially endorsed by 82 countries. Norway called on all States to endorse and implement the Declaration.

89. **Mr. Garratt** (United Kingdom) said that the legal framework underpinning humanitarian assistance should not be politicized and should remain focused on protecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It was regrettable that more progress had not been made in ensuring that humanitarian operations were fully gender-inclusive and responsive. However, the United Kingdom welcomed the advances made in the paragraphs relating to food insecurity, which recognized the impact of armed conflict on populations.

90. Attacks on objects that were indispensable to the survival of civilians exacerbated humanitarian needs and were prohibited under international humanitarian law. All parties to armed conflicts were required to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to populations in need. It was disappointing that agreement had not been achieved on the harm to civilians caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

91. It was regrettable that a delegation had blocked the reference to the environmental impact of humanitarian assistance, which was an important issue for developing countries. The United Kingdom would continue to emphasize in the General Assembly the importance of United Nations coordination and collaboration among humanitarian development and peace-building actors, and it hoped to work constructively and productively with other delegations in that regard.

92. **Mr. Banzet** (Canada), speaking on behalf of New Zealand, Switzerland and his own delegation, said that he was particularly pleased that the resolution recognized the need for urgent and concerted action at all levels to end famine, food insecurity and malnutrition, the need to protect civilian infrastructure indispensable to the survival of civilian populations and the increasing threat of disinformation campaigns to principled humanitarian action. However, greater attention should be paid to gender-responsive approaches, conflict-induced hunger, anticipatory action, climate change and the centrality of humanitarian protection aimed at alleviating risks and preventing civilian harm. Concerted and collective humanitarian action was required to end suffering and save lives in the face of growing and intersecting humanitarian needs and challenges.

93. **Ms. Widstam** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States, said that the resolution was an operational humanitarian document reflecting the

principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. The additional focus on famine and malnutrition, protection of civilian infrastructure, the need to narrow the humanitarian funding gap, existing concerns of locally recruited personnel and the impact of disinformation on humanitarian action were all positive steps forward. The European Union also welcomed the references to international humanitarian law. It would welcome in future resolutions expressions of concern about explosive weapons in populated areas, as their use posed a serious risk to civilians and humanitarian operations. Stronger references to anticipatory action to support the building of resilience and references to the need for gender-responsive humanitarian services would also be welcome.

94. **Ms. Brosnan** (United States of America) said that she wished to add some clarifying remarks in relation to the new resolution. She welcomed the timely updates that detailed the actions needed to address global food insecurity. However, it was deeply disappointing that the language on protecting civilians from the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons had not been able to be included. Her delegation looked forward to reinforcing the role of affected communities in the collective response to humanitarian crises in future versions of the resolution.

95. Her Government continued to advocate increased collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in crisis-affected and fragile contexts. Her delegation would have liked to see greater progress towards making the resolution a biannual discussion, as negotiating the resolution every two years would contribute to more effective dialogues on humanitarian issues.

96. Trade language adopted by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council had no relevance for United States trade policy, its trade obligations or commitments, or the agenda at the World Trade Organization, including discussions or negotiations in that forum. While the United Nations and the World Trade Organization shared common interests, they had different roles, rules and memberships. Moreover, such language must not undermine incentives for innovation, such as technology transfer that was on both voluntary and mutually agreed terms.

97. Lastly, the resolution did not alter international law. Her delegation understood the abbreviated references to certain rights in the resolution as shorthand for the more accurate and widely accepted terms used in the applicable instruments. While the United States was a strong supporter of the delivery of humanitarian assistance consistent with humanitarian principles, those principles did not impose binding legal obligations on States. Similarly, the call for a more effective response to humanitarian emergencies affecting children, “guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child”, in no way implied that the United States had obligations in that regard.

98. **Ms. Delaney** (Observer for Australia) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the delegation of Canada.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

99. **Mr. Ustinov** (Observer for the Russian Federation) said that his delegation rejected all accusations regarding the special military operation in Ukraine made by the delegations of the Netherlands, France and Malta. The reasons for the special military operation had already been explained several times. Terrorist attacks had been directed against the Russian-speaking population of the Donbas over a period of several years. States members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had refused to provide the Russian Federation with legal guarantees of its security in the context of an unprecedented militarization of Ukraine. Moreover, Ukraine, with the assistance of its Western sponsors, had sabotaged the Minsk arrangements, which had been approved by the Security Council. The actions of the Russian Federation had been in line with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

100. He wished to remind the delegation of Poland that it was the Ukrainian armed forces that had triggered the conflict in the Donbas in 2014 by deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure, including health, education and utility facilities. The destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant had been the consequence of consistent shelling by the armed forces of Ukraine and their intent to destroy the dam to enable Kyiv to attain military

superiority. Some civilians had suffered, as it had not been possible to evacuate all of them. There had been no opportunity to provide fresh water to the Crimean Peninsula.

101. **Ms. Brosnan** (United States of America) said that her delegation rejected the appalling and egregious choice of words used by Cuba during the meeting. Describing sanctions as “genocide” was inaccurate, deeply offensive and dismissive to the victims of actual genocides. Economic sanctions were a legitimate, important, appropriate and effective tool for responding to harmful activity and addressing threats to peace and security. The United States was not alone in that view or in that practice. In cases where her country had applied sanctions, it had done so in accordance with international law and with specific security- or human-rights-related objectives in mind.

102. **Mr. Różycki** (Observer for Poland), speaking on behalf of the Netherlands, the United States, the United Kingdom and his own delegation in response to the false and misleading narrative presented by the representative of the Russian Federation, said that he wished to restate his resolute condemnation of the war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine, which constituted a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. He resolutely supported the inherent right of Ukraine to self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter. He strongly condemned the indiscriminate and deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure by the Russian Federation. Under no circumstances could civilians be legitimate targets.

103. He wished to recall that General Assembly resolution ES-11/6 adopted in February 2023 with the support of 141 Member States had reiterated the demand that the Russian Federation should immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its military forces from the territory of Ukraine, and called for the cessation of hostilities.

104. The Russian Federation had weaponized food and security. The war of aggression had far-reaching consequences for many countries, notably through its impact on the global economy, food and commodity prices. In order that work to mitigate the effects of the war and provide assistance could continue, he urged Russia to refrain from attempting to politicize the humanitarian discourse by spreading its narrative of disinformation.

105. **Ms. Paumier Lopez** (Observer for Cuba) said that the genocidal aspects of the blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba were well recognized by the international community, which was why the resolution against that policy had enjoyed overwhelming support in the General Assembly. What was deeply offensive was confusing economic sanctions with an extraterritorial blockade, and interfering in other States’ political systems while making baseless accusations of human rights violations. Unlike the United States, Cuba was among the countries that had ratified the most human rights treaties, and it upheld its obligations. The United States was requested to stop telling lies to try to justify an inhumane policy that was rejected the world over.

106. Between August 2021 and February 2022, the blockade had gravely affected the production and acquisition of food in Cuba, costing the agricultural sector over \$270 million. A considerable group of banks had refused to process payments to suppliers of the Cuban food importer for products such as soybeans and vegetable fat. The inability of the Cuban company Bravo S.A. to purchase meat directly from the United States market had caused additional expenditure of around \$525,200. Representatives of the United States should think very carefully before suggesting that the blockade against Cuba did not constitute genocide and did not affect the rights to life, health and food of all Cubans.

107. **Mr. Ustinov** (Observer for the Russian Federation) said that he wished to remind the delegation of Poland that the conflict in eastern Ukraine had started in 2014 with terrorist attacks by Ukraine against the Russian-speaking population. Those attacks had continued until the start of the special military operation and were ongoing. The actions of the Russian Federation were therefore directed towards its own defence and the defence of that population in eastern Ukraine.

Closing of the segment

108. **Mr. Griffiths** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that the meeting had taken place at a particularly critical moment:

global humanitarian needs were higher than ever and growing at an alarming rate. A shockingly high number of people – around 360 million – were currently in need of humanitarian assistance. Since the start of 2023, system-wide scaling up of action and support had been required in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Syria. However, despite record amounts of funding, soaring needs were far exceeding available resources. The segment had explored how, in order to relieve some of the strain, Governments, local communities, humanitarian organizations, women's organizations, civil society, development actors, international financial institutions, the private sector and young people could all contribute to doing things differently, more effectively, and with better results for people affected by crises.

109. A key theme of the partnership panels throughout the week had been the need to deepen and expand collaboration at the operational, policy and geographical levels. The Council had agreed that an integrated multisectoral approach across humanitarian development and peace interventions was critical. That included redoubling efforts to prevent, reduce and end violent conflict, which was the key driver of food insecurity. It also meant working with the development community to ensure that support reached livelihoods in the most food-insecure communities.

110. The discussions had also highlighted the disproportionate impact of crises on women and children. It was necessary to insist that all parties to conflict should uphold their obligations, and to demand accountability for those who did not. More must be done to elevate protection as a system-wide responsibility before, during and after crises.

111. The climate crisis was one of the most urgent challenges that faced the international community. The Council had heard calls for investment in disaster preparedness, adaptation and climate-resilient infrastructure and had discussed the importance of making available equitable climate finance. It had also heard calls to support the swift implementation of the Early Warnings for All initiative, which aimed to protect everyone on the planet through multi-hazard early warning systems by 2027.

112. In the months ahead, maintaining the status quo would not be an option. A shift in humanitarian operations would be needed in order to optimize the impact on people in need, provide better value for money and support the resilience and fundamental leadership of local communities. First, therefore, there must be continued efforts to make responses context-specific and centred on people. It would be necessary to listen more carefully to those in need, including women and girls, and community leaders. Secondly, both Member States and organizations must use their influence and opportunities to demand that parties to conflict allowed the unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to civilians in need. Thirdly, in order to have any chance of narrowing the gap between surging needs and available funds, greater joint efforts would be needed to address the root causes of the unprecedented humanitarian need, including climate change, uneven economic growth, widening inequality, conflict and an increasingly polarized geopolitical landscape.

113. **The President** said that disregard for international humanitarian law, protracted conflicts and the climate crisis were driving human suffering and holding back sustainable development. The discussions had shown that a triple nexus approach was needed to break the cycle. The resolution adopted represented a significant step forward in collective efforts to address food insecurity and the risk of famine, the humanitarian impacts of climate change and the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

114. The resolution reaffirmed the importance of international humanitarian law: progressive language had been added on the prohibition of attacks against objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, the protection of civilian infrastructure, and the functioning of agrifood systems and markets in situations of armed conflict. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine showed how urgent and needed those protections were. The resolution also highlighted the importance of strengthening coordination among humanitarian organizations, Governments and civil society actors to ensure a comprehensive and effective response. The resolution was the first to underline the link between food insecurity and displacement.

115. The discussions had underscored the importance of adopting a holistic approach to the global food security crisis. The world needed political solutions, climate adaptation and

mitigation, and faster, more effective and less risk-averse humanitarian and development efforts. As development aid was not reaching the most vulnerable, a paradigm shift was needed. In order to address the drivers of food insecurity, flexible and urgent funding was required. A multitude of speakers had given ample evidence that beginning a humanitarian response before a foreseeable shock occurred was faster, more dignified, more cost-efficient and more efficient at saving lives. Anticipatory action must therefore be implemented and improved.

116. Women and girls must be prioritized and present at the decision-making table when strategies, risk assessments and programmatic responses were designed. Funding must be allowed to reach local stakeholders and NGOs, especially women's organizations that were often at the forefront of the response. He hoped that the following year's resolution would be bolder in that regard.

117. The discussions had emphasized the need to reinforce protection from the onset of a crisis and ensure that it was funded, flexible and multi-year. Participants had also spoken about the "power of proximity" – of humanitarians being with the populations they were helping. In that respect, it was vital that States and parties to conflict respected and upheld all their obligations under international humanitarian law, especially when fighting occurred in populated places. Panellists, NGOs and Member States alike had stressed that international humanitarian law and human rights were not abstract concepts, but rather the safeguards that protected civilians from being attacked, starved, raped and displaced.

118. Deeper and broader partnerships across siloes were required to tackle the increasingly complex challenges faced. Such partnerships should involve the private sector, academia, civil society, local and regional actors, women, young people and foundations. Given the enormous challenges ahead and the scarcity of resources, all partners must pool their expertise in new and creative ways and do more to support, empower and harness the competences of local actors. Although there were limits to what a humanitarian response could achieve, efforts could be made more effective by leveraging the unique capacities and mandates of each partner.

119. The climate crisis was the key challenge of the age, and it was critical to harness collective action and ambition to address it. Scaling up investment in disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation, especially in the most vulnerable and exposed communities and countries, would be key. The Early Warnings for All initiative must be in place by 2027. Climate-related displacement was on the rise and set to worsen if the international community did not correct its course.

120. Reason for optimism remained. Despite the enormous strain it was under, the humanitarian system was strong. However, it needed to be more agile, grounded in humanitarian principles and responsive to the people it served to meet the unprecedented needs that lay ahead. Respect for international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence would be essential. The funding gap must be closed through support for humanitarian response plans, the Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds.

121. By taking concerted action to implement what had been agreed, the sad trends that drove millions more people into suffering each year could begin to be reversed. The time had come to turn ideas into actions.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.