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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 13 July 2005, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Verbeke (Vice-President) (Belgium)

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

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In the absence of Mr. Akram (Pakistan), Mr. Verbeke (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (A/60/86-E/2005/77, A/60/87-E/2005/78, A/60/89-E/2005/79 and E/2005/48)

1. **The President** said that humanitarian assistance was important to Governments and to the people they represented. While it was the responsibility of individual Member States to ensure the well-being of their citizens, fulfilling that duty by providing assistance to those in need was part of their collective duty as members of a "humanitarian community". An important component of that endeavour was the current humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council, which not only provided members of the international community with a unique opportunity to reflect on the previous year and share ideas and experiences, but also compelled them to identify the collective challenges they faced and agree on practical measures to address them. It was therefore critical to reach agreement on the resolution currently before the Council, since it endorsed practical improvements to humanitarian operations and provided guidelines for such operations in the coming year.

2. The humanitarian affairs segment would also afford an opportunity to reflect on one of the most defining humanitarian crises of the previous year during the Council's panel discussion on the lessons learned from the Indian ocean earthquake-tsunami disaster. He attached particular importance to the panel, since it would allow the Council to take stock of the lessons learned from the tsunami and take steps to apply them in future so as to prevent the recurrence of such a tragedy.

3. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that he welcomed the fact that the current draft of the declaration to be adopted at the General Assembly's High-level Plenary Meeting took up many of the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all". He then introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/60/87-E/2005/78), which offered concrete

recommendations for strengthening the overall capacity of the humanitarian system to ensure a faster and more predictable response. In recent years, the United Nations humanitarian system had grappled with a series of increasingly complex crises and had launched several large relief operations simultaneously. It had frequently succeeded in galvanizing international support and solidarity, often in the absence of effective political or security action to tackle the causes of the crises or conflicts. In Darfur, for example, the mortality rate had fallen by two thirds since the previous July, but the militias had not been disarmed.

4. The degree of success of the system's efforts should be measured not only in terms of the number of lives preserved but also in terms of the amount of support received from the world's nations. There was clearly room for improvement in humanitarian relief efforts. Indeed, an analysis of the humanitarian response review he had commissioned the previous year, combined with the findings of independent assessments of the system's performance in Darfur and in tsunami-affected countries, pointed to a need to improve the predictability of emergency response in several key areas.

5. First, core technical and logistical capacity must be strengthened over a broader base, since there was general agreement that some of the challenges faced in both disasters and emergencies stemmed from a lack of capacity among humanitarian organizations to consistently meet the essential needs of vulnerable populations. Clear sectoral leadership must be established to boost overall capacity. Strengthening the system's core capacity also meant systematically building and sustaining capacity in disaster-prone countries and regions, as well as strengthening the political will of Governments with response capacity to put their assets and expertise at the disposal of the global humanitarian response system. The operations and capacity of non-governmental organizations must also be supported in view of the critical role they played in shaping technical response on the ground.

6. Secondly, more predictable and timely funding of emergency activities was necessary, including immediate access to start-up funds to cover early deployment costs and funds for unforeseen developments. Furthermore, flexible funding was required to promote equity of response; indeed, many African emergencies were grossly underfunded. That

was disturbing and unacceptable. Therefore, to ensure a more effective and predictable system of funding for urgent and critical needs, the report of the Secretary-General had proposed the expansion and improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund through the addition of a grant facility based on voluntary contributions. However, the grant portion of the expanded Fund must not come at the expense of agency budgets or consolidated appeal process funding and would need to be replenished regularly through an annual donor pledging conference. In view of the usefulness of the small and flexible emergency response funds established at the field level in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they should be applied to other crises.

7. Thirdly, the best use must be made of existing resources through improved coordination of human, financial and material resources at all levels. Maximizing the full capacity available required partnerships with regional, national and local organizations, as well as more consistent engagement and more formal standby agreements, particularly with Governments, non-governmental organizations, private corporations and military and civil defence partners. Plans were being made to improve the selection and training procedures for humanitarian coordinators and to provide such personnel with greater delegated authority. The key to an effective humanitarian response was predictability in addressing humanitarian needs in a timely fashion, mobilizing funds to address all crises and tapping into the significant human, material and financial resources available worldwide.

8. **Mr. Xu Jing** (World Tourism Organization) introduced the note by the Secretary-General on post-tsunami actions undertaken by the World Tourism Organization (E/2005/48) and provided an update on developments since its submission. The tsunami had adversely affected four countries that were heavily dependent on tourism: Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Referring to the efforts that had been made to expedite the recovery of tourism in those four countries, including the Phuket Action Plan, he noted that considerable progress had been made in a short span of time as a result of the tremendous support received from Governments, especially those of the Netherlands and the Republic of Korea, and from regional organizations, other international partners and the private sector.

9. The tsunami disaster's impact on total volume of tourism had been limited, resulting in a loss of less than 3 per cent of international tourist arrivals. However, tourism accounted for 70 per cent of the Maldives' foreign exchange earnings and was the lifeline of Phuket; hotel occupancy rates in those countries currently stood at 40 and 30 per cent, respectively. The current priorities of the international community should continue to be focused on communications and on conveying the message that those destinations were open for business. Initiatives in that regard had already been launched, including tours to the affected areas for the press and for tour operators, television campaigns to present positive images and the promotion of online information. The international community should also focus efforts on helping small and medium-sized enterprises to secure access to funds to get back on their feet. There were encouraging signs, however. The Government of Thailand had put in place an early-warning system which would generate more confidence in the long run and had also developed a master plan for green-belt development.

10. **Ms. Bowen** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the tsunami disaster (A/60/86-E/2005/77) and hoped that his recommendations would further consolidate efforts towards the development of early-warning systems for disaster mitigation and prevention. In view of the scale of the continuing demands placed on the United Nations humanitarian system as a result of the increasing incidence of natural disasters, the Group also welcomed the Secretary-General's report and recommendations on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/60/87-E/2005/78). In that regard, she reiterated the Group's support for the guiding principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 as the basis for all responses to emergency requests for humanitarian assistance, while stressing the primary role of the States concerned in the organization and delivery of such assistance.

11. The recent tsunami disaster had pointed to the need for improved standby and coordination mechanisms. More attention should be focused on strengthening financial mechanisms and establishing predictable funding sources for all emergencies,

particularly neglected emergencies that did not receive strong media coverage, and underfunded sectors. In that regard, the Group supported the Secretary-General's recommendation to expand the use of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to address a variety of financial gaps in order to meet rapidly growing needs in the initial phases of an emergency.

12. The Group welcomed the 2003 Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, which could serve as a valuable tool for promoting best practices among donors and facilitating improved humanitarian coordination. In that regard, donor partners were encouraged to ensure that the priority needs of developing countries were appropriately addressed. Welcoming the increased focus on the issue of transition from relief to development, she noted that reconstruction following natural disasters or complex emergencies was of paramount importance in bridging the funding gap between emergency assistance and aid for development. In that regard, she welcomed the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the subject (A/60/89-E/2005/79).

13. One of the greatest challenges for the United Nations system was defining its role in complex emergency situations. Noting the Secretary-General's efforts to establish guidelines in that regard, she pointed out the need to better ensure that humanitarian organizations worked as appropriate with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in order to ensure that all issues were addressed from the earliest stages of the planning and design of multidimensional peacekeeping operations with humanitarian components.

14. **Mr. Jones Parry** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries (Bulgaria and Romania), the candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey), the stabilization and association process countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), and, in addition, Iceland and Lichtenstein, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the collective efforts of the international humanitarian community must be guided by realities on the ground and by lessons learned. The European Union therefore welcomed the strong operational focus of the Secretary-General's reports (A/60/86-E/2005/77, A/60/87-E/2005/78 and A/60/89-E/2005/79) and supported the humanitarian response review process initiated by the Under-Secretary-

General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

15. The number and scale of humanitarian emergencies over the past year alone had posed significant challenges for the humanitarian community, and the affected Governments had demonstrated strong leadership in guiding an immediate and effective response. Their efforts had been commendably supported by the United Nations system and the wider international community, but coordination in the aftermath of disasters could be further improved.

16. The European Union praised the efforts of all stakeholders to respond to the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami of December 2004. It would remain engaged in those efforts, and had pledged 2.3 billion euros for humanitarian programmes and reconstruction. Although the humanitarian response to the region affected by the tsunami had been generally reliable and effective, the same could not be said of the response to other emergencies, particularly in Africa. Some of the factors affecting response were specific to individual crises, but others seemed to be systemic.

17. The coordination of capacity could be greatly enhanced through measures to strengthen the quality and leadership of United Nations humanitarian coordinators. Pooling funds behind the coordinators, for distribution in accordance with agreed priorities and pressing needs, might help improve field-level coordination. There was also a need for better coordination, assistance and protection for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and humanitarian agencies should participate more actively in implementing the collaborative approach, which had not always worked well in practice.

18. The European Union supported the Secretary-General's proposal to mobilize technical expertise and essential common services rapidly, inter alia at the regional, national and local levels. It also supported the proposal to develop specialist technical expertise for major crises in water and sanitation, shelter and camp management and protection. Lastly, the European Union recognized the need for more equitable, flexible and timely funding for humanitarian crises, and welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to improve the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). It very much hoped that progress could be made in that regard at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

19. The systemic issues to which he had referred were relevant not only to immediate humanitarian crises but also to situations of transition, for which national ownership, effective coordination, realistic and timely needs assessments and early funding were all vital. The European Union supported the process to strengthen the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), and called upon Member States to give more weight to disaster mitigation and preparedness in development-planning and poverty-reduction strategies.

20. The European Union welcomed the progress made by the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs in the development and use of a framework for post-conflict needs assessment. However, there should be greater coherence between their efforts and those of United Nations political, peacekeeping and human-rights actors in post-conflict countries. The European Union also supported the proposed Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Support Office, and hoped that they would be agreed upon at the September summit meeting of Member States.

21. The United Nations must work more effectively in restoring peace, security and governance in post-conflict situations. With respect to integrated missions, the European Union wished to emphasize the importance of coordination and information-sharing among all relevant United Nations actors. Moreover, the mandates and operations of such missions must be organized so as to ensure respect for the humanitarian principles — humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence — underlying the provision of humanitarian assistance. The European Union wished to underline the importance of those principles and of the need to respect, and ensure respect for, international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law for the protection of civilians, and to reaffirm that parties to conflicts had a responsibility to ensure safe and unimpeded access to affected populations.

22. **Ms. Ghanashyam** (India) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. While India appreciated the self-critical approach of the Secretary-General's reports, those reports did not reflect the differences between the dynamics of complex emergencies and those of natural disasters. With respect to resources, India had repeatedly drawn attention to the international

humanitarian community's poor response to the needs of Africa. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), in its current form, was of limited usefulness as a financial instrument for humanitarian response. The proposal to expand the Fund to include a grant facility component deserved serious consideration.

23. With respect to coordination procedures and agreements with the military, she said that it might be useful to assess the extent to which military assets were made available to the United Nations disaster-response system, in coordination with those Governments that were willing to provide such assets. The use of military assets in disaster response should be made at the request and with the consent of the receiving State, in accordance with the relevant provisions of national and international law.

24. With respect to paragraph 53 of document A/60/87-E/2005/78, India was concerned at the attempt to dilute the principle of State sovereignty in the area of protecting civilians, and strongly believed that it was important to avoid politicization of the United Nations humanitarian system. Moreover, since IDPs fell within the jurisdiction of the State concerned, India disagreed with the assumption, reflected in that paragraph, that protecting and assisting IDPs might not require the consent of the national Government.

25. The recommendation, contained in document A/60/86-E/2005/77, that the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement should be extended to natural disasters would require further discussion among Member States. In addition, the United Nations humanitarian system should focus on developing national capacities rather than attempting to substitute for them. Humanitarian assistance should be guided by the principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182, and the affected States should continue to play the primary role in the organization, coordination and delivery of all such assistance.

26. **Ms. Smith** (Australia) said that her delegation strongly supported efforts to ensure that emergency response mechanisms were as timely and effective as possible. Greater predictability in funding, improvements in mechanisms for the development and deployment of standby capacities and the setting of benchmarks for the delivery of humanitarian assistance were all practical ways to strengthen the system of

humanitarian response. The international humanitarian community must aim to increase the impact and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and find ways to monitor and evaluate its efforts effectively.

27. Australia welcomed the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to assess and strengthen emergency-response capacities through the humanitarian response review, and agreed that more must be done to ensure that the United Nations had access to the expertise and capacity required in order to respond in all humanitarian sectors, including protection. Australia fully agreed that humanitarian activities should be better coordinated at all levels.

28. While recognizing that it was not easy to achieve a universally coordinated response to a complex humanitarian emergency, her delegation was convinced that improving the capacity and authority of United Nations humanitarian coordinators was central to the improvement of coordination at the field level. Her delegation would urge the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to consider the creation of a regional humanitarian coordinator position, which could significantly strengthen the role of humanitarian coordinators. That office and the United Nations Development Group agencies must work harder, and in a more collaborative manner, in all relevant areas, not solely within the framework of management structures established in response to crises.

29. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (A/60/87-E/2005/78), coordination was important not only in the emergency phase of humanitarian action, but also in the transition from relief to development. Australia supported the organization's focus on transition, and encouraged an open sharing of ideas by the international community. It was essential that humanitarian response should be used to lay the groundwork for transition, and there was a need to strengthen administrative and governance systems in the transition phase in order to provide a solid foundation for development. Emphasis should be placed on local ownership of recovery programmes and on recognizing and using local expertise.

30. The Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami had drawn renewed attention to the need to find ways to prevent or mitigate the effects of natural disasters. Further work was needed to integrate disaster preparedness and mitigation measures into national

development strategies. Similarly, the international community must place high priority on conflict prevention, with a view to avoiding or at least minimizing complex emergencies. In that respect, her delegation urged the United Nations system, and the international community as a whole, to give the needs and challenges of fragile States the priority and attention they required.

31. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) said that the catastrophe of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami had demonstrated the need for the forecasting of emergencies, preventive preparedness and rapid response. The Russian Federation therefore supported the proposed measures to strengthen natural disaster preparedness and planning mechanisms. National early-warning, damage-assessment and mitigation systems should be further improved and international cooperation should be enhanced.

32. His delegation supported the work undertaken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) on the deployment of a regional Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System, as part of a global early-warning system to be established by 2015. The scale of the disaster in the Indian Ocean had also illustrated the importance of developing an effective and efficient international humanitarian system. In that regard, it was essential to strengthen the coordination capacity of the United Nations and its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which should work to improve coordination at the national level by strengthening the role of resident coordinators and enhancing system-wide links.

33. Another way to improve response capacity was to establish standby arrangements with both national and regional providers of humanitarian services. The United Nations should use the more competitive, higher-quality services available from specialized agencies and organizations with relevant expertise and experience. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should also focus on improving the mobilization of humanitarian funding. In that regard, it could enlarge the donor base by encouraging the participation of non-traditional donors. The United Nations consolidated appeals process was a crucial tool for mobilizing donor resources, and further improvements should be made in the preparation of

such appeals, which should be flexible enough to attract non-traditional donors.

34. In the case of large-scale humanitarian operations, transparency and accountability in the disbursement of resources were particularly important, and the Russian Federation appreciated the Office's use of a financial tracking system. His delegation had taken note of the Secretary-General's recommendation to expand the CERF, which played a key role as a standby funding mechanism for large-scale emergencies, and was ready to help find a consensus-based solution as to the modalities of that expansion.

35. In order to ensure a smooth transition from relief to development, the United Nations should focus in particular on strengthening its coordination functions in the field. Transitional programmes should take the affected country's medium- and long-term development policies into account. Furthermore, disaster-prevention efforts should be integrated into recovery and rehabilitation programmes. The Russian Federation agreed that the United Nations should implement the complex approach to post-conflict situations, in which the humanitarian component was integrated into multidimensional peacekeeping operations conducted under the relevant Security Council mandate and in which a resident or humanitarian coordinator was appointed as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the affected country.

36. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The capacity constraints identified in the humanitarian response system must be addressed promptly and disaster-prediction mechanisms must continue to receive the urgent attention of the humanitarian community. Stronger and more effective leadership and performance by the resident and humanitarian coordinators could address one of the main concerns expressed following the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami: the need to improve coordination, both within the United Nations system and between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

37. In particular, South Africa supported the suggestion that the humanitarian community should draw on countries' national expertise in order to increase rapid-response capacity, and welcomed the

recognition, reflected in the reports before the Council, of the role that could and should be played by regional organizations within the context of improved partnerships. South Africa also welcomed the proposal to establish improved mechanisms for the deployment of regional standby capacities.

38. The response capacity of the international humanitarian system was strongly influenced by the availability and predictability of funding. The finding that resources allocated to major crises in recent years had been diverted from other areas and that pledges to replenish aid budgets depleted by large-scale crises had not been kept was extremely worrying. The Secretary-General's proposal to consider the expansion of the CERF therefore deserved support and further attention.

39. The proposal for more flexible and adequate resources at the field level also deserved serious attention; in that context, South Africa supported the recommendations to improve the humanitarian system's rapid-response capacity. In addition, the need to observe humanitarian principles in peacebuilding missions should be recognized. His delegation looked forward to constructive discussion on that and on other related issues.

40. South Africa recognized that much had been done to strengthen the response capacity of the United Nations humanitarian system, but also that the system could be further improved; it therefore looked forward to the outcome of the humanitarian response review. Dialogue among Member States should aim to strengthen the focus of intergovernmental resolutions in order to improve their implementation in the field.

41. **Mr. Frisch** (Switzerland) said that emergencies of all kinds (natural disasters, crises and conflicts) continued to take a heavy toll on civilians. That was clear from the report of the Secretary-General on the consequences of the tsunami of 26 December 2004. While national authorities had the primary responsibility for ensuring that humanitarian organizations had access to civilian populations in situations of distress, such access was too frequently obstructed — at times deliberately — by both State and non-State actors. International law, international humanitarian law, human rights and the rights of refugees must at all times be respected.

42. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, finalized at the January 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction, aimed to provide a structure for

common efforts to reduce the risk of disasters at all levels. It reflected the ambitious goal of changing the current paradigm and developing a genuine culture of prevention. But to achieve that goal, the populations concerned must be fully involved in the effort. Mechanisms for preventing, preparing for and responding to natural and man-made disasters were indispensable for diminishing the impact of disasters on millions of vulnerable people. Furthermore, local communities and representatives of civil society, such as national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, should be integrated into such efforts.

43. Given the variety of mandates, functions and situations on the ground, it would not be easy to improve the coherence of United Nations efforts on behalf of peace. Switzerland nonetheless continued to support that goal. But the result of integration must not be the subordination of humanitarian actors to political mandates and structures. Rather, humanitarian action must continue to be based on the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. Recognition by the various parties and by the civilian population of the independence of United Nations humanitarian organizations was a key element. The goal of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian action at all levels had long been supported by Switzerland, which was also fully behind the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its efforts to carry out its mandate. The primacy of humanitarian organizations in providing emergency aid was all-important. The instruments for civil-military cooperation in crisis situations already existed and should be scrupulously applied by States and by the entire United Nations system. In the context of civil-military coordination tasks, it was especially important for the above-mentioned Office to provide resources that were adequate in terms of both quality and quantity.

44. **Ms. Bragg** (Canada), applauding the steadfast commitment of those on the front lines of response to the protection and assistance needs of disaster-affected populations, said that the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Darfur crisis had challenged the United Nations in different ways. While the essential architecture of the current humanitarian system was sound, weaknesses in agency capacity must be addressed. Canada supported the development of more robust standby arrangements, including the deployment of national assets and expertise in support of United Nations emergency

response efforts. The Indian Ocean tsunamis had also highlighted the need for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to improve existing coordination efforts for the use of military assets in disaster contexts. Investing in national, regional and international efforts to maintain high-quality and experienced humanitarian staff must likewise be a top priority, as veterans of humanitarian efforts in Cambodia, Angola, Afghanistan, Rwanda and Bosnia were close to exiting the system. The Organization must ensure that the new generation of staff was prepared to respond to the multidimensional crises it would face.

45. Canada strongly endorsed proposals to improve the selection and strengthen the authority of United Nations humanitarian and resident coordinators, and encouraged improved coordination within and among country teams. But it continued to be frustrated by the inability of many country teams to identify and address gaps related to civilian protection. That deficiency had been most obvious in the development of consistent United Nations approaches to IDPs. Canada supported a collaborative approach to dealing with their plight, and urged the respective heads of United Nations agencies to continue to work with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, to clarify their respective roles in situations involving IDPs. Canada supported efforts to increase the predictability, flexibility, timeliness and equity of humanitarian funding. Proposals to that end were in line with the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative. But a much broader base of donors must be engaged. Canada was making greater efforts to provide funding early in the calendar year and was working with others to explore innovative funding mechanisms to reinforce the coordination and coherence of country team responses. It also supported proposals to review and improve the Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

46. The Darfur crisis had demonstrated the limits of humanitarian action. The Secretary-General's report (A/60/87-E/2005/78) referred to a "new deal" for humanitarian aid, but it left a crucial factor out of the equation: the affected State. Ultimately, humanitarian aid was a palliative. There could be no substitute for the role of States in fulfilling their responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law. Where they were not willing to do so, the international community must become engaged. Canada therefore

actively supported proposed reforms aimed at strengthening the international peace and security architecture, increasing the human rights capacity of the United Nations and addressing the transition from relief to development through such mechanisms as the Peacebuilding Commission, all of which were at the top of the global agenda. Each of those steps could mitigate the need to resort to humanitarian action and could make a real difference in the lives of millions of people otherwise at risk of conflict and natural disaster.

47. Mr. **Cho** Hyun (Republic of Korea) said that, seven months after the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, the strengths and expertise of United Nations leadership in coordinating international assistance were clear, as were the lessons to be learned from the response effort. But several points stood out as areas in need of particular consideration. The most prominent was the need for coordination between relief bodies and local and national authorities in disaster-affected countries. Strong national and local institutions were essential components of efficient resource mobilization. That lesson had been effectively demonstrated in Aceh and Jakarta, where many volunteers had been admitted thanks to reduced entry barriers

48. The strengthening of key partnerships and the clarification of overlapping areas of responsibility between various national and international humanitarian actors was a proven means of enhancing coordination. The Republic of Korea had organized a Public-Private Assistance Partnership Forum, chaired by the country's Prime Minister to campaign for more assistance and to coordinate the relief activities of civil society, businesses and Governments. As a result, its civil society had generated a total of \$47 million in emergency relief, nearly matching the Government's pledge of \$50 million. The nation's military had also joined the effort, dispatching a cargo flight and two cargo carriers to Indonesia and Sri Lanka with relief materials donated by non-governmental organizations.

49. It was also essential to invest in disaster preparedness through education and preventive planning. The Republic of Korea had taken various initiatives to enhance disaster preparedness capacity. As Chair of the 2005 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting, it had identified the issue as one of seven on the meeting's agenda. In March 2005 APEC had adopted the Strategy on Response to and Preparedness for Emergency and

Natural Disasters and had established a Task Force for Emergency Preparedness. The Task Force would promote cooperative efforts for disaster preparedness and would recommend ways to enhance regional disaster preparedness to the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in November 2005.

50. A final point worth noting was the challenge arising from the sheer quantity of funds made available in the aftermath of the tsunami. His country supported the creation of a transparent financial tracking system integrating private entities, international organizations and Governments that contributed to relief and recovery. A mechanism within the United Nations system that monitored the use of funds during emergencies was essential. Coordinating the immense needs created by a disaster of such scope as the tsunami had been a daunting challenge to the humanitarian system. To further strengthen that system, the Council should achieve full integration among the myriad bodies comprising the international assistance effort, reduce vulnerability to disaster through preventive measures and promote financial transparency and accountability.

51. **Ms. Hughes** (United States of America) said her country agreed with the five humanitarian goals set down in the draft outcome document for the upcoming High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, and emphasized — along with the Secretary-General — the need to strengthen the response to the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), whom the United Nations system and Member States had failed to help sufficiently for too long. The Organization might consider having a lead agency in every country with IDPs. She also supported a much more operationally robust Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that was capable of deploying human-rights monitors who could contribute to the protection of populations at risk.

52. Recent crises had demonstrated the need for clear lines of authority, responsibility and control among United Nations agencies from the moment an emergency unfolded. The Emergency Relief Coordinator must use his authority more forcefully and be willing to designate an operational lead agency when appropriate.

53. Humanitarian needs required strong international support. The United States remained the single largest donor of humanitarian resources. In June,

President Bush had announced \$674 million in additional resources to respond to emergencies in Africa, and had called on all countries to make new pledges while continuing to fulfil the commitments already made to meet the vast needs on that continent. In particular, she called attention to the growing food crisis in southern Africa. The nations of the world had demonstrated time and again their enormous generosity, most recently in response to the tsunami disaster. That crisis illustrated the international potential of coordinated assistance when an event captured the world's attention. At the same time, many of the crises in Africa received little media coverage. The United Nations must make the world more aware of essential needs in all regions.

54. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, hosted by Japan in January 2005, was another successful example of international cooperation and had set the stage for new efforts that should reduce losses of life and property. She called on all nations to advance the outcomes of that conference, including the development of a global tsunami early warning system; that endeavour was now being led by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. On United Nations preparations for a possible outbreak of avian flu, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations had taken the risk seriously and had commendably developed a coordinated approach. In that context, special attention must be focused on the needs of vulnerable populations beyond the reach of national health services.

55. **Ms. Eckey** (Norway) highlighted two important issues on the humanitarian agenda: "humanitarian space" in integrated missions and an expanded Central Emergency Revolving Fund. Both were related to the goal of greater coherence and effectiveness in United Nations crisis response. In his 2004 report to the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General had referred to the shrinking space of humanitarian action and had pointed out the need to establish clearer guidance on civil-military coordination. Norway had therefore decided to co-finance an independent study which had been followed by a conference on integrated missions, held in Oslo in May 2005. Norway had great expectations that the United Nations would benefit from the momentum generated by those steps.

56. On the humanitarian side, there was still an attitude of reluctance towards integrated missions because of "humanitarian space" concerns and a feeling that "integration" had been too synonymous with "subordination". While strong integration might increase intra-United Nations cohesion, it risked undermining the United Nations position in wider humanitarian coordination, as had been the case in Liberia. There seemed to be a growing awareness that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should remain outside the mission structure in situations of tension or conflict.

57. There was no standard blueprint for all missions. The concept of integration provided a sense of direction but no clear organizational solutions. The planning processes for integrated missions should be as inclusive as possible from the start, and the field level should be involved. The needs and expectations of local populations must be taken into account in all phases. Moreover, coherent planning required coherent funding, which brought her to the second issue: the expanded Central Emergency Revolving Fund. Norway had contributed to the financing of the humanitarian response review. Among the many interesting recommendations of the review, she singled out the need to overhaul the Fund as a means of improving the financing of humanitarian action. Although the details of an expanded Fund needed to be worked out, Norway favoured the direction recommended in the review. Norway was prepared to contribute about \$15 million in 2006, provided that the General Assembly adopted the necessary changes in the statutes of the Fund. The urgent need for better financing was evident. The establishment of new and/or expanded funds and the improvement of humanitarian delivery systems were important. But those steps did not obviate the need for increased resources to be made available for humanitarian action.

58. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) said that the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 had been a catastrophe affecting all mankind. But as a result of unprecedented efforts by the international community and by the Governments of the affected countries in the course of the past year, the relief effort was gradually proceeding towards recovery and reconstruction. He deemed it highly necessary for the current session of the Economic and Social Council to hold a panel discussion on lessons learned from the earthquake/tsunami disaster. The Secretary-General's

reports reviewed the situation over the past year in the field of humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts, refugees and IDPs, and people affected by HIV/AIDS and other major diseases. In recent years, a growing number of organizations and agencies had been involved in humanitarian relief work in various parts of the world. They included the United Nations and other international organizations, regional organizations, civil society and the military. In China's view, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should further strengthen its coordination and guidance of relief operations in order to enhance the comparative advantages of various relief agencies, optimize the use of available resources and avoid duplication and waste to the extent possible.

59. Emergency humanitarian assistance needed substantial financial support. The consolidated appeals process established in the 1990s was an important means of mobilizing resources, and had played a significant role in providing humanitarian assistance to countries and regions affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies. In recent years, however, there had been a disturbing decline in the level of resources raised through that mechanism. In 2005, for example, under the consolidated appeals process for 14 African countries, by the end of May eight of them had received less than 20 per cent of the total amount planned. China hoped that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would intensify its resource mobilization activities, and called on the developed countries with the ability to do so to increase their contributions in order to help mitigate the sufferings of the affected populations. China itself, as a country prone to earthquakes, floods and drought, annually suffered huge losses in terms of human lives, property and economic development. Nevertheless, the Chinese Government had done its part, as a friendly neighbour of the tsunami-affected countries, by providing \$20 million in cash and in kind through the United Nations system. Through bilateral channels, it had also provided emergency humanitarian assistance to some developing countries as an expression of its sympathy and compassion for the Governments and peoples of those countries.

60. **Mr. Gómez Robledo** (Mexico) said that prevention programmes that promoted social and economic development and respect for human rights could significantly reduce the recurrence of armed

conflicts and improve national capacity to respond to natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies. Reiterating his Government's commitment to the international framework that regulated humanitarian assistance, in line with the guiding principles established in General Assembly resolution 46/182, he said that the central responsibility of States to initiate, organize, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance within their territory also entailed a duty to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations by, inter alia, ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers and giving them access to disaster areas and vulnerable groups, on the understanding that they must respect local laws, culture and customs at all times. While reaffirming the need to strengthen the United Nations role in leading and coordinating international efforts in support of affected countries, he said that the guiding principles laid down in resolution 46/182 must in no way be interpreted as an obstacle to any measures that the Security Council might take to protect civilians when the State concerned was unwilling or unable to fulfil its protection obligation. Mexico endorsed the view that, once all possibilities of a peaceful solution had been exhausted, and provided that action was taken under Security Council authority, the international community must be able to take any measures required to protect civilians from serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Indeed, in its most recent advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice had emphasized that the obligation to respect and to ensure respect for the 1949 Geneva Conventions went far beyond the obligation not to recognize a given situation. The issue clearly needed to be addressed by the Council and the General Assembly; ignoring it would not make it disappear.

61. Expressing his delegation's condolences to the people of Cuba and Haiti following the loss of life caused recently by hurricane Dennis, he stressed that the United Nations must give priority to addressing natural disasters, particularly in developing countries, without diminishing its attention to other humanitarian emergencies. In that regard, it was essential to strengthen international cooperation and to take a comprehensive, long-term approach to disaster response based on a genuine culture of prevention. The Asian tsunami of December 2004 had demonstrated the important coordination role played by the United Nations through its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Mexico had channelled over

\$3 million to the Office's fund for tsunami victims and was committed to implementing the agreements reached at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, in which it had participated.

62. Noting with concern the selective attention given to countries that suffered humanitarian crises, he said that humanitarian assistance must not be conditioned by political considerations or interests not in keeping with the principles of such assistance. Mexico therefore endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation to expand the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), as it would allow for an effective and immediate response to the most pressing needs. Mexico was also in favour of more systematic coordination and cooperation with States and regional bodies. Given the importance it attached to the transition from relief to development, it supported the creation of new financing mechanisms that would provide predictable resources for reconstruction and technical assistance. Moreover, Mexico had participated in discussions on establishing a Peacebuilding Commission.

63. Lastly, while acknowledging that the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (E/2005/L.19) contained provisions that represented substantive advances towards meeting the challenges facing the international community, his delegation was concerned by the fact that the debate on the protection of vulnerable groups was constantly pushed to the background. He hoped that agreement would be reached on the issue during the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

64. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See), noting the unprecedented response to the Asian tsunami of December 2004, said that the Holy See had provided over \$4 million in emergency relief, which dozens of Catholic agencies had followed up with reconstruction projects in the countries affected. In addition to the ongoing work of religious institutions throughout the affected region, the estimated \$650 million made available by agencies related to the Holy See had been applied first to the most urgent emergency needs — safe drinking water, food, shelter, etc. — and then to reconstruction and rehabilitation projects. Noting that reuniting and supporting families continued to be of vital importance, he said that the Holy See was convinced that religious and spiritual support, which was all too often overlooked, was

integral to any genuine human healing. As the Holy See was committed to respecting religious and cultural differences and working to facilitate greater trust among believers of all faiths and non-believers, interreligious cooperation and peacebuilding initiatives would continue to be an important part of the Church's work.

65. One of the main lessons learned from the tsunami was that there was a great deal of untapped good will among ordinary people. Noting that the international media made the world seem more and more like a global village, he praised the deep sense of common humanity that had emerged from the crisis. With substantial funds available and an urgent need to deliver aid, there would always be a temptation to use up precious resources without proper planning. The Church's agencies and institutions in the areas affected had therefore examined ways of avoiding the creation of a bloated bureaucracy so as to ensure that the greatest amount of funding reached its final destination. Streamlining and coordination were essential in that regard. There was also a need to increase international cooperation in order to create and strengthen mechanisms for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness at all levels. In that regard, he welcomed the renewed commitment to improving early-warning capacity. Lastly, the tragedy had presented the affected Governments and people with an unprecedented opportunity for reconstruction and development. The cooperation witnessed in the wake of the tragedy must not be squandered, but must be built upon for the good of survivors and all the peoples of the region.

66. **Mr. Osman** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), lamenting the fact that lessons seemed continually to be relearned rather than acted upon, said that, ever since the Iranian earthquake of 2003, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) had emphasized that better community-based preparedness was the single most important contribution that Governments and the international community could make to national security. Red Cross volunteers had provided the real local strength on which communities had depended in the wake of the tsunami. Sri Lanka, in particular, needed more well-trained volunteers if it was to withstand such calamities in the future. One example of excellent community-based preparedness was Bangladesh, where the Red Crescent Society was a

member of the Government's National Disaster Planning Committee and was active in developing the capacity of high-risk communities to respond to cyclones and floods. Such well-coordinated action on the part of Government agencies, the Red Crescent and civil society, combined with local community awareness, considerably reduced the suffering inflicted by the cyclone season. That model, which he hoped would be replicated worldwide, was one of the pillars of his organization's long-term plan for tsunami recovery.

67. IFRC was profoundly engaged with the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies in searching for ways to make their work more effective and efficient. While acknowledging that their roles and channels of accountability were different, IFRC saw a natural connection between its work and that of its colleagues on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. It was therefore looking at ways to strengthen that connection through discussions on the various reform proposals being considered, while also developing modalities for its own future work and preparing for the Committee's discussions on humanitarian response capacity. The connection was also relevant to another important IFRC contribution to international humanitarian capacity-building: the International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) Programme. Recalling that the Secretary-General's report (A/60/87-E/2005/78) had noted the Council's support for the work being led by IFRC and that General Assembly resolution 57/150 emphasized the need for intergovernmental oversight of the IDRL process, he said that IFRC hoped to be able to elaborate further on its work following the November 2005 session of its own General Assembly. One crucial element of disaster preparedness was "legal preparedness", as general laws and policies designed to regulate the entry of persons, goods and transport were often not attuned to disaster situations and became fatal obstacles at times of greatest urgency.

68. Since the timely exchange of information was crucial, IFRC would stress the importance of "e-preparedness" — the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in building and maintaining community resilience and for disaster preparedness and response — at the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Tunis in

November 2005. In order for humanitarian coordination to be extended to all levels of the community and for lessons learned to be acted upon, Governments needed to implement the commitments they had made at international conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to include their Red Cross or Red Crescent societies in their national disaster planning committees, in line with those societies' status as auxiliary partners to public authorities in the humanitarian field. It was extremely important to combine coordination with effective implementation as highlighted in the *World Disasters Report 2005*. The report, to be launched in October, would draw upon a number of points mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, including the need for effective and value-adding coordination and the important role of ICTs in disaster preparedness and response.

69. **Mr. Maradona** (Intergovernmental Institution for the Use of Food Microalgae Spirulina Against Malnutrition), expressing his delegation's full support for the goals of the Millennium Declaration and the development consensus reached in Monterrey and Johannesburg, said that the Intergovernmental Institution for the Use of Food Microalgae Spirulina Against Malnutrition, which was based in Rome, was working tirelessly to promote and implement the Millennium Development Goals, with specific emphasis on eliminating hunger during emergency humanitarian relief efforts and in non-emergency situations.

70. Recalling that the Institution was the only intergovernmental organization with observer status in the United Nations system that focused solely on using microalgae foods to alleviate extreme hunger, he said that spirulina platensis produced 250 times more protein per hectare than beef cattle and used 50 times less water. Food microalgae such as spirulina, which was rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals, were intended to be used in synergy with other rehabilitative measures, to add precious nutritional elements that were otherwise hard to find in local diets. Plans were under way, in cooperation with Italy, France, China and India, to increase spirulina crops in countries with the most suitable conditions for high productivity. Such plans could help redress the current situation, in which some 40,000 children died needlessly of malnutrition-related causes every day, and would be a huge breakthrough in implementing the Millennium Development Goals on hunger and child mortality.

Food microalgae could also be used to fortify the emergency foods used to save victims of humanitarian emergencies and to provide nutrients to infants and mothers. Spirulina had been declared a national strategic food by the Chinese Science and Technology Commission, was the subject of the annual All India Coordinated Project on Spirulina and was currently used for rehabilitative purposes in many countries around the world. Spirulina platensis could boost the Organization's emergency response capacity by providing starving and highly malnourished people with better nutrition and food rehabilitation. International support was needed to raise awareness in that regard.

71. Recalling that spirulina had been around for thousands of years, he said that it was essential for Member States to take concrete steps to alleviate malnutrition and hunger by signing the Convention for the Use of Food Microalgae. His organization stood ready to play a role in combating malnutrition and extreme hunger, and called on bilateral and multilateral institutions, civil society and non-governmental organizations to join forces so as to maximize efforts in that regard.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.