



General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

60th plenary meeting

Monday, 7 December 2009, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Christian (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 70 and 71 (continued)

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/336)

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

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/64/84, A/64/327 and A/64/331)

Draft resolutions (A/64/L.19*, A/64/L.31, A/64/L.32 and A/64/L.33)

(b) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/78)

Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence

Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/313)

Mr. Al Mansour (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation is pleased to take part in the discussion of an important item on the General Assembly's agenda: "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance".

We share the grave concern that His Excellency the Secretary-General expressed in his report (A/64/336) regarding the increase in the number and frequency of natural disasters over the past few years. These disasters have caused thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in economic losses, exacerbating the economic and financial crises and climate change. The economies most affected were those of the developing countries, whose efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals were negatively affected.

The State of Kuwait is convinced of the importance of providing humanitarian assistance and is thus pleased to be at the forefront of the countries that provide all forms of humanitarian assistance to help those afflicted by natural disasters and to alleviate their suffering, especially in developing countries. On the basis of my country's belief in the need for a rapid response and because of its sense of responsibility in this regard, it provides direct bilateral assistance in this area.

Since independence, the State of Kuwait has provided financial assistance to a number of countries and regions on all continents without discrimination. In this respect, I recall that the State of Kuwait has supported the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) since its establishment. It is seventh on the list of the 10 countries contributing the most to this Fund. It is eager to continue this support on an annual basis and in an impartial manner in order to respond to immediate and urgent needs. At the same time, we call upon members of the international community to increase its contributions to the Fund so that it

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continues to achieve its annual goals, as specified by the General Assembly.

The State of Kuwait commends the accomplishments of the United Nations over the past few years. The Organization has played a prominent role through its specialized agencies and programmes in responding to emergencies and facilitating the transfer and provision of urgent humanitarian assistance. My country appreciates the efforts of all United Nations staff members in providing humanitarian assistance and all the sacrifices they have made. It expresses its concern over any attacks targeting them or threats against them, in particular in situations of conflict or natural disaster.

My country calls upon host Governments to fulfil their role in guaranteeing the security of all those working in the humanitarian field. It reiterates the call of the Secretary-General urging all parties concerned to take part in the response to emergencies and natural disasters and to encourage respect for humanitarian principles in an impartial, neutral and independent manner.

Allow me to briefly give the Assembly an idea of the humanitarian assistance provided by the State of Kuwait aimed at mitigating the impact of disasters and tragedies that have taken place all over the world. For example, His Highness the Emir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit held in early 2009, established a fund of \$2 billion, to which Kuwait contributed \$500 million. Our brotherly nation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, also contributed \$500 million in order to support small and medium-sized enterprises, to encourage new job opportunities and improve the standard of living of Arab people and to combat poverty.

The State of Kuwait also established in 2008 the Decent Living Fund in order to finance research in the agricultural sector and to provide urgent assistance to the most severely affected countries; it contributed \$100 million to that Fund. The Cabinet of the State of Kuwait issued a decree in 2007 allocating 10 per cent of the value of any contribution made by the State of Kuwait to any afflicted State to organizations and specialized agencies active on the ground.

The State of Kuwait allocates 1.31 per cent of its gross domestic product to development assistance to developing countries, which is more than double the

agreed objective of 0.7 per cent for developed countries set by the United Nations.

Assisting the Palestinian people and alleviating their suffering is an obligation incumbent upon the entire international community. In this context, I commend the United Nations, its specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations for all their efforts in providing assistance in emergency situations and in supporting humanitarian, development and economic needs.

I should like to highlight the State of Kuwait's continued provision of assistance in various forms to the Palestinian people, either directly to the Palestinian Authority or through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Last year, the State of Kuwait contributed \$35.5 million to support the Agency, which provides relief and humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. Kuwait's contribution to UNRWA is the fifth largest of any country.

The State of Kuwait calls on Israel to put an end to its inhumane practices aimed against the Palestinian people, to expedite the removal of all restrictions on movement and border crossing in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Al-Quds Al-Sharif, to stop all settlement activities and to halt the construction of the apartheid wall. These practices have caused the Palestinian economy to deteriorate and have impeded the delivery of the international humanitarian and medical assistance and foodstuffs that are vital to the survival and development of the Palestinian people.

In response to United Nations calls for emergency assistance following the 2004 tsunami, my country finished building the village of Jaber Al-Ahmad in Indonesia. Through the rapid response of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society, the State of Kuwait also provided urgent assistance to the friendly State of the Philippines, which had recently been subjected to storms and typhoons that displaced thousands of its people. Our Red Crescent Society paid a visit to the afflicted regions and supervised the delivery of assistance to those in need.

In conclusion, I should like to point out that the State of Kuwait will continue to provide assistance at the bilateral level and through the specialized United Nations agencies in all fields in response to the natural disasters, other challenges and international global crises that impede the achievement of the Millennium

Development Goals. We will do so through both our governmental and non-governmental organizations, such as the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development, civil society and charitable organizations, in the hope of achieving a world in which everyone lives in security, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Tawana (South Africa): I thank you, Sir, for giving me the floor on this important issue. My delegation recognizes the important role played by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in further strengthening the coordination of the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

The United Nations humanitarian system faces the reality of increasing demands amid declining resources. It faces rising food prices, increased input costs and the impact of climate change. The financial and economic crisis has compounded the challenge for all Member States, in particular the developing world.

Despite these challenges, the international community needs to provide adequate, timely and predictable resources to address these humanitarian emergencies. Member States need to demonstrate commitment to the United Nations humanitarian community and to ensure effective humanitarian relief during these difficult times.

Although the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has only been in operation for the past few years, various successes have already been registered. One of its major achievements has been its ability to achieve its goal of providing assistance in a timely manner to reduce the loss of life, which is a critical element in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Another important element for my delegation is the ability of CERF to contribute to the so-called forgotten emergencies, many of which take place on the African continent.

However, we recognize that challenges within CERF still remain and need to be addressed to ensure that the Fund can contribute more effectively to the work of the United Nations humanitarian system. My delegation would therefore also support the principle that continued efforts are needed to improve the humanitarian response to natural and man-made disasters and complex emergencies at all levels. This includes the continued strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance in the field.

Respect for the leading role of national Governments in these endeavours remains paramount.

My delegation condemns acts of violence directed against humanitarian personnel. We believe that humanitarian workers should provide assistance based on the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, as enshrined in resolution 46/182 and other related General Assembly resolutions.

Humanitarian personnel need to have safe and unhindered humanitarian access in their areas of operation within the framework created by General Assembly resolutions. Humanitarian personnel often work in difficult situations in their endeavour to assist vulnerable communities. We need to allow them to improve the lives of those who need assistance the most. In this regard, I wish to express my deepest condolences to the families of all United Nations and humanitarian personnel who have lost their lives in the line of duty, and I highly commend those who continue to serve affected communities.

It is also important that States that have not yet done so adopt preventive measures and effective responses to acts of violence committed against civilian populations, as the protection of civilians during armed conflict remains of serious concern to my delegation.

The sixtieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions highlights the reality of how the zeal of one man, Mr. Henry Dunant, could make a difference to the lives of millions of people throughout the world. It is incumbent upon the international humanitarian community to ensure that the ideals of better protecting the vulnerable are upheld and expanded, thus contributing to a better world for all of us.

The current financial and humanitarian crisis highlights the critical need for effective partnerships among Member States, the United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations that work together to ensure a coordinated approach to providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance to affected communities around the world. Under the leadership of national Governments, these partnerships could also include the engagement of regional organizations in helping to improve humanitarian responses and standby capacities.

The increased frequency and scale of natural disasters in recent years, which have resulted in massive loss of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences for countries, is of serious concern to my delegation. Many developing countries do not have the capacity to deal with the consequences of these disasters. The increasing impact of climate change-related disasters also needs our concerted attention.

It is therefore important for developed countries and relevant international organizations to increase their assistance to the affected States. This assistance should include supporting efforts to enhance national and regional capacities to implement plans and strategies for preparedness, rapid response, recovery and development. Furthermore, we wish to highlight the importance of delivering emergency humanitarian assistance in a way that would support early recovery and sustainable rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

It is also important for the international community to support such efforts through, inter alia, the transfer of technology and expertise to developing countries, and to support programmes aimed at enhancing the coordination capacities of affected States. We further wish to encourage efforts made by donor communities to adhere to the principles of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative.

My delegation wishes to welcome the commitment made by Member States during the recently concluded World Summit on Food Security, held in Rome last month, which sought in particular to re-energize efforts to halve the number of people who live in hunger and face malnutrition by 2015, and to work towards achieving food security and access to food for all. It is critical that the commitments made at the Summit be implemented in the shortest possible time. It is unacceptable that more than a billion people should live in hunger today. South Africa would like to reiterate its commitment to contributing to the effective working of the humanitarian system.

With regard to item 71, “Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence”, my delegation has noted with interest the progress made in the provision of aid to the survivors of the genocide. It is our wish that this progress be intensified to the benefit of all the people of Rwanda. However, we have also

noted that several challenges remain, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/313). We therefore appeal to the international community to continue to support the people of Rwanda as they overcome these highlighted challenges in an effort to help them improve their quality of life.

South Africa is already engaged in several endeavours aimed at assisting and improving the quality of life for the people of Rwanda. We intend to continue to do so, with the aim of contributing to the international efforts to assist that country. We believe that, together, we can do more to provide humanitarian assistance in a manner that is faster, more predictable and coordinated.

Mr. Normandin (Canada) (*spoke in French*): If there has been one constant in the work undertaken by humanitarian actors, it is that it occurs in an ever-shifting operating environment. Indeed, looking back not even 20 years to the adoption of our humanitarian framework resolution 46/182, we see that this landscape has altered significantly. We do not need a crystal ball to see that the humanitarian landscape will continue to change rapidly and generate new needs in non-traditional contexts. Trends, such as increasing migration, population growth, urbanization and environmental changes will impact the future of humanitarian assistance and coordination.

States and societies already struggling with the implementation of basic governance functions will find themselves further taxed by all these changes. The most vulnerable will, unfortunately, continue to feel the brunt disproportionately, but the interconnectedness of these issues means that no country and no people is likely to be spared.

Canada believes strongly that we have made progress in addressing the changing humanitarian landscape and the challenges that have emerged. Enormous strides have been made to improve our ability to respond swiftly, effectively, predictably and coherently across the entire spectrum of natural disasters and complex emergency situations. And yet, we continue to struggle to find strategies to overcome the obstacles to humanitarian access and threats to the safety and security of aid workers.

Humanitarian access is at the heart of our ability to assist populations at risk. Despite the General Assembly’s repeatedly stated commitment to humanitarian principles — including access — our

implementation has faltered; some countries deliberately flout that consensus. Moreover, we are all too aware that attacks against aid workers have increased sharply in recent years.

Such attacks, the majority of which are directed against national staff, are unacceptable. This Assembly must therefore support improvements to security management, training and resourcing, better cooperation among all concerned, and the recognition of security as a cost of doing business. For the humanitarian community operating in the most dangerous contexts, the challenge is to identify new options tailored to each circumstance. Finally, when attacks do occur, those responsible must be held to account.

(spoke in English)

There are three key areas on which I would like to focus our work if we are to address the challenges at hand and that loom before us: streamlining our work, supporting a strengthened evidence base and enhancing dialogue.

First, we are making positive gains in streamlining our work to avoid duplication and to stretch finite resources. Critical to that is ensuring that we are not operating in isolation and that we move past rivalries, share information, and bring together the increasing diversity of actors involved in humanitarian assistance. For example, in the context of natural disasters, by integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into long-term development planning, we can enhance resilience and reduce vulnerability.

Moreover, the cluster approach was created to strengthen overall humanitarian responses, including response capacity and effectiveness. We also need to continue our efforts to address issues such as accountability within that system.

We need to be skilful in our approaches. Natural disasters and conflict environments are multifaceted and ever-changing. That relies on having a solid framework, tools and mechanisms at our disposal, but also allowing enough flexibility to account for the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all model.

Here, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and an increasing number of pooled funds contribute to our ability to respond swiftly to a humanitarian crisis or crises that are overlooked. But

the CERF must categorically be complemented by other efforts. We have repeatedly called for improvements in the knowledge and capacity of its humanitarian and resident coordinators, as well as the strengthening of the consolidated appeals process and the needs assessments that underpin them.

Secondly, our work relies on ensuring a strong evidence base. At the heart of this is the urgent need to improve needs assessments so that there is a credible, objective and evidence basis for the allocation of resources. Canada also believes that we must continue working together to make progress towards better common or joint needs assessments. Further, we welcome the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to better monitor access constraints.

Finally, the Government of Canada feels strongly that we need to continue to enhance dialogue across a range of actors, particularly at local levels. We need to work more closely with local communities and ensure a participatory process in which they are actively involved in planning and decision-making. We are greatly supportive of OCHA's outreach efforts in that respect. Outreach sessions build partnerships among recipients, local communities, donors, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. They provide opportunities to share different approaches, roles and perspectives and deepen knowledge on key aspects of the humanitarian system.

But we must also include in our discussions those in the development, scientific, financial and private sector communities who have expertise and capacity that could be leveraged. Each set of actors brings its own added value to operations, and we must capitalize on that to ensure the greatest impact.

In conclusion, while we cannot avoid the challenges before us, should we not be daunted by our task. Large challenges disguise large opportunities. Collectively, we have a wealth of knowledge, resources and networks to draw upon. Let us continue to be strategic in our plans, innovative in our delivery, and synchronized in our approach.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): The unprecedented demands on the international humanitarian system over the past year have consequences for all of us — Governments, the United Nations, international humanitarian organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society. 2009 has seen

the emergence of new conflicts as well as a range of natural disasters, while the large number of protracted emergencies that necessitated response in 2008 still require the attention of the international community.

The magnitude of those emergencies is illustrated by the scale of the United Nations consolidated and flash appeals, with funding requirements for 2008 totalling \$7.1 billion and a staggering \$10 billion for 2009. But those figures only give us a glimpse of the immense destruction and human suffering caused by those emergencies, and even that snapshot is incomplete. In 2009, various natural disasters not covered by appeals still required a comprehensive international response in support of national-led efforts.

Our own Asia-Pacific region has not been immune from the impact of protracted crises and sudden, onset disasters. The past few months alone saw the tsunami that struck Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga; the earthquake in West Sumatra, Indonesia; several typhoons and storms in South-East Asia, particularly the Philippines; and floods in Nepal. And even that list is by no means complete. There is a compelling need to reduce the impact of future calamities by investing more in disaster risk reduction and in disaster preparedness.

The international community needs to do much more — and to do it urgently — in the area of mitigation and adaptation to deal with the effects of climate change. The small island nations of the Pacific are among the world's most vulnerable to the effects of that change and to the potential impact of disasters. And, collectively, we must invest more in the early recovery process to bridge effectively the gap between life-saving humanitarian work and longer-term sustainable development.

New Zealand supports the United Nations in its leadership and coordination of international humanitarian action, both in preparedness and response. More specifically, we endorse and value the particular role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with which we closely engage, particularly through our membership of the Donor Support Group, of which we will take up the Chair in July of next year.

New Zealand supports the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles. We will continue to provide unearmarked core funding to United Nations and other

international agencies to enable them to prioritize effectively on the basis of their strategic priorities and needs. We will continue to support the Central Emergency Response Fund to assist early, effective and equitable responses. We will also be as responsive as possible in the allocation of funding to specific appeals of the United Nations and other international agencies.

Much has been and is being done to strengthen the quality of United Nations in-country humanitarian leadership and coordination, the rigour, robustness and consistency of needs assessments, and the quality of humanitarian appeals and reporting. We urge that those efforts continue with national Governments as full, active partners. With the international humanitarian system facing immense pressures and demands, it is absolutely essential that the work of the United Nations be based on maximum efficiency, relevance and effectiveness, and that it can demonstrate clear results and impact.

New Zealand stresses the need for United Nations humanitarian interventions to be undertaken in close partnership with local civil society, national and international NGOs, the Red Cross and the private sector, all of which have much to offer and must be treated as equal partners.

It is also essential that the work of the United Nations, national Governments and other agencies address in full the importance of gender equality and the needs and rights of women and girls. We also urge all Governments and other relevant parties to ensure that the United Nations and other organizations involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance enjoy full, unrestricted and timely access to the victims of emergencies and disasters and to those in need of humanitarian assistance.

It is extremely disturbing that the past year has seen an escalation in bombings and other attacks on United Nations facilities and personnel engaged in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and that there have also been many attacks on personnel of the Red Cross Movement and of non-governmental organizations engaged in humanitarian work. It is hard to imagine a more obvious manifestation of evil than attacks clearly intended to kill or injure humanitarian workers and to impede their efforts. New Zealand abhors such atrocities and calls on all parties to all conflicts to respect international humanitarian law and the related conventions.

In every situation where humanitarian assistance is provided, our collective and individual purpose is to prevent and alleviate human suffering, regardless of location — a purpose that deserves our full support. New Zealand stands ready to provide for that purpose, and is therefore unequivocal in its support for the international humanitarian system.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Governments of India and Sweden. At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports that have been prepared for discussion under the agenda items being debated today.

As brought out in the Secretary-General's reports, the global demand for humanitarian assistance continues to show a rising trend. The year 2008, in particular, witnessed enormous loss of human life and widespread destruction caused by natural hazards, ranging from the deadly cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake in China to Hurricane Ike in the United States. While there has been an increase in the severity of natural hazards, vulnerabilities caused by the financial and economic crisis and the rising prices of food and energy have further accentuated the challenges on the humanitarian front. Complex emergencies continue to affect millions of people. The necessity for the coordination and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance can thus hardly be overemphasized.

India and Sweden reaffirm their respect for and adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence that guide the framework for humanitarian assistance. It is important that the letter and spirit of these principles be scrupulously respected, since they are essential for preserving the space and integrity needed for delivering humanitarian assistance to all people in need. We are gravely concerned about recent security incidents, and firmly and resolutely condemn the deliberate targeting of humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

Member States have the primary responsibility of protecting and meeting the needs of people in need of humanitarian assistance. At the same time, there are situations in which Member States find it difficult to manage emergencies on their own. The role of the United Nations and other humanitarian actors thus

becomes important for carrying out humanitarian efforts in coordination with the host Government.

India and Sweden deeply value the critical role of the United Nations in coordinating emergency humanitarian assistance. There is an imperative need to continue to work to develop ways and means by which the capabilities of the United Nations in delivering international humanitarian assistance, and its role in coordination, can be further enhanced and strengthened. This would imply an augmentation of the operational coordination capacities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, an enhanced synergy of efforts within the United Nations system, and the improved delivery of humanitarian assistance by relevant United Nations entities, as well as greater transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

We must give greater attention and resources to disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness. At the same time, efforts should be focused on building local, national and regional capabilities. We are happy that there is growing recognition that timely and effective emergency assistance can increasingly be undertaken at the local, national and regional levels. We need to consider adopting a more proactive strategy of building partnerships with disaster-prone countries at both the national and regional levels, focusing on disaster preparedness as part of a comprehensive disaster risk management approach. Greater coherence, exploiting synergies, and complementarities at the country level are critically important in ensuring an effective, coordinated and efficient response.

In its brief history of four years of operation, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has been a success. It has strengthened its operations and is playing an important role in supporting relief operations. India and Sweden are happy to note that CERF is emerging as a useful tool for jumpstarting relief operations following sudden disasters and filling gaps in time-critical emergencies. It is heartening to note that CERF has been able to surpass the target of \$450 million set by the General Assembly for its annual funding, with contributions from 109 Member States. Nevertheless, this does not leave any room for complacency, as the United Nations system still only channelize a minuscule proportion of global humanitarian assistance.

All Member States share a common goal: the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. We must

continue to work to strengthen this consensus, based on our shared interests, through constructive and informed dialogue. This would be helpful in bridging differences among Member States and ensuring a well-targeted, timely, predictable and need-based humanitarian response.

Mr. Webb (United States of America): I would like to open my remarks by thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/64/84). His analysis of current trends and challenges facing the humanitarian community serves Member States by highlighting the devastating impact that man-made and natural disasters have on communities in countries throughout the world and by bringing to our attention ways that we can collectively improve efforts to save lives, reduce suffering, protect the vulnerable and initiate recovery from humanitarian crises.

In order to deliver critical assistance to populations in need, humanitarian agencies must be present. Even in the best of times, that is dangerous work that is undertaken by dedicated and often heroic people. However, the United States is deeply concerned about increasing violence targeting humanitarian workers, which is intended to limit the presence of humanitarian actors, including United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Recent attacks against the World Food Programme Office in Islamabad and the United Nations staff house in Afghanistan reflect a deliberate strategy by armed groups to disrupt and disable the operations upon which vulnerable people depend most. The United States urges the United Nations and Member States to take comprehensive and far-reaching measures to improve the safety and security of humanitarian workers, including national staff, so that humanitarian operations may continue to serve those in need. We reaffirm our commitment to the humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian assistance, and encourage all parties to conflict to do the same.

Aside from security considerations, the Secretary-General cites overly bureaucratic procedures as a major impediment to the timely mobilization of humanitarian operations. A number of Governments erect deliberate barriers between humanitarian aid

agencies and communities in crisis based upon calculations that put politics ahead of people in need. They delay issuing visas, restrict travel permits and hold up vital equipment in customs for months or longer. Those campaigns to limit the presence of humanitarian actors in zones of crisis cause needless suffering, and they cost lives. Those unacceptable measures should be rejected by the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States, which share a commitment to prompt and effective humanitarian action.

To the degree that distrust of humanitarian agencies feeds into those obstructions, that mistrust is baseless. The assistance provided by United Nations agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement — including food, water, sanitation, shelter and protection — does not present a threat, but rather an opportunity to work collaboratively with the international community in meeting the needs of those whose lives have been up-ended by conflict or natural disaster.

We applaud the high-level attention that the United Nations has given recently to the protection of civilians and to violence against women in conflict. The recent adoptions of Security Council resolutions 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1894 (2009) reaffirm both the ongoing need to vigorously address protection challenges in conflict and post-conflict environments and the will of the international community to develop robust responses to avoid and deter violence against innocent civilians, as well as to impose accountability measures when violations of international humanitarian law have taken place. We encourage the effort of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations humanitarian agencies to work in a constructive yet vigorous manner with Member States to address protection concerns.

The United States remains committed to continuing its leadership role in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance. We are determined to meet current and upcoming humanitarian challenges with appropriate resources and engagement, so that the international disaster response system functions in an effective and timely fashion. We strongly support the continuing collective efforts at humanitarian reform in order to improve the impact of humanitarian response by ensuring greater leadership, predictability, accountability and partnership.

Finally, the United States would like to recognize the indispensable contribution of humanitarian workers in delivering assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and other disaster-affected groups around the world. The international and national staff of aid agencies put their lives at risk on a daily basis to reach millions touched by conflict and natural disasters. We pay special tribute to humanitarian aid workers who have lost their lives in the course of their duties over the past year. As a matter of urgency, we must come together to show our support for the work of United Nations and other humanitarian actors who make the difference between life and death in disaster-torn communities.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for his introduction. I should now like to make a few comments under this agenda item.

According to the Secretary-General's report, there was a declining trend in the frequency of natural disasters in the past two years. However, the impact and gravity of those disasters have remained severe. Owing to the global financial and economic crisis, the vast number of developing countries are suffering the multiple impacts of economic reversal, increased vulnerability and insufficient assistance. Their efforts at disaster relief, reduction and preparedness have been seriously challenged by the lack of funds and technology. The current global humanitarian relief situation has become more difficult. The common task and challenge facing the international humanitarian community now includes how to further enhance trust and cooperation among all relevant partners, how to cope with the tension between the increase in demand for global humanitarian assistance and the decrease in resources, how to genuinely help developing countries build their capacities for disaster relief and risk reduction and how to realize the goal of speedy post-disaster recovery and long-term development.

China believes that the Guiding Principles on Humanitarian Assistance, set out in the annex to resolution 46/182, constitute both the prerequisite and foundation for effective humanitarian assistance. Partners in humanitarian relief in particular, including humanitarian agencies and personnel of the United Nations, must abide by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, respect the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of affected countries, comply

with international humanitarian law and the laws of the host country and respect local culture and traditions, so as to ensure the credibility and smooth implementation of United Nations humanitarian relief work. China supports the relevant United Nations entities in intensifying training for their personnel and enforcing a stricter and more effective accountability system, so as to ensure full respect for and implementation of the Guiding Principles.

Since the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, relevant United Nations resolutions have reiterated the importance of helping developing countries to strengthen their capacity in disaster reduction, preparedness and relief. However, affected countries have received very limited support for their capacity-building efforts at the national and local levels. Facts have shown that the lack of capacity has become one of the major constraints hampering effective response to humanitarian crises by affected countries.

China calls upon the international community to make it a priority in humanitarian assistance work to help countries stricken by disasters to strengthen their capacity for disaster reduction and relief. The United Nations system should endeavour to enhance existing humanitarian response capacity, knowledge and institutions. It should also urge the parties concerned to earnestly fulfil their commitment to transfer disaster relief and reduction technology and expertise to developing countries and to help affected countries achieve a smooth transition from relief to development. China looks forward to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General next year, which will fully reflect the progress made in the area of capacity-building.

Under the guidance of Under-Secretary-General Holmes, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has played a unique coordinating and guiding role in the area of humanitarian assistance, for which the Chinese delegation expresses its appreciation and support. China believes that with the deepening of the reform of the United Nations humanitarian assistance system, the coordinating role of OCHA should be constantly strengthened. China hopes OCHA will make further efforts in following areas.

First, it should endeavour to obtain timely, adequate, flexible and predictable resources for humanitarian assistance.

Secondly, it should conduct in-depth studies and make guiding recommendations on ways to help disaster-affected countries enhance their disaster response capacity.

Thirdly, it should take concrete measures to keep United Nations humanitarian decision-making and operations free from the influence of media visibility concerns and from deviation from relevant humanitarian principles and mandates.

Fourthly, it should maintain both its policy focus on and resource input into non-climate-related natural disasters.

Finally, it should improve staff recruitment so as to ensure full representation and help promote communication and mutual trust between OCHA and the developing Member States.

The Group of 77 and China has submitted to the current session of the General Assembly a draft resolution on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development. The Chinese delegation calls upon all Member States to actively engage in the consultations and reach a consensus as soon as possible.

China is a disaster-prone developing country. Disaster reduction, preparedness and emergency relief are perennial and arduous tasks facing its governments at all levels. While coping with the enormous challenges posed by natural disasters, the Chinese Government attaches great importance to international cooperation in the field of humanitarian assistance. At the request of the Governments of the affected countries and upon the appeal of the international community, China is taking an active part in international relief efforts and widely sharing its experience in disaster relief and disaster reduction. As always, China will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations system and the international community in the field of disaster risk reduction, preparedness and relief, and do its part in helping affected countries and their people overcome disasters and rebuild their homes.

Mr. Sergejev (Ukraine): I would like to join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his

reports. Ukraine aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Sweden, who spoke on behalf of the European Union, addressing all aspects of humanitarian issues under agenda item 70. However, in my national capacity, I would like to make some remarks that are of particular interest to Ukraine.

United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance has been acquiring growing importance in the light of the increased number of humanitarian threats and challenges in the world today. It is necessary, in our view, to ensure that responses to humanitarian situations are comprehensive and coordinated and that they preserve the fundamental principles of humanitarian assistance: neutrality, humanity, impartiality, respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States.

Ukraine attaches the utmost importance to the role of the United Nations, and particularly that of the United Nations Development Programme, in the strengthening of international cooperation in mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

During the current session of the General Assembly, States Members of the United Nations will review the implementation of resolution 62/9 on Chernobyl issues and the realization of the United Nations action plan for Chernobyl recovery to 2016 aimed at implementing the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions, which seeks to maximize limited resources, avoid duplication of efforts and build on recognized agency mandates and competencies.

We are looking forward to adopting a new comprehensive and ambitious resolution on Chernobyl issues in the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, bearing in mind that next year we will be half way through the third decade following the Chernobyl disaster. In April 2011, we will commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy. That should be reflected in a new resolution. We find it essential to once again remind the international community of the consequences of that tragedy in order to avoid such disasters in the future, on the one hand, and to address issues of secure and environmentally friendly nuclear energy for the benefit of humanity, on the other hand. Accordingly, under the auspices of the United Nations, Ukraine is planning to organize an international conference in

Kyiv in April 2010. We hope that the General Assembly will support this idea.

Ukraine strongly believes that, given the scope and magnitude of the Chernobyl catastrophe and its severe long-standing consequences, the Chernobyl issue should remain on the agenda of the General Assembly and be considered in future plenary sessions as part of the humanitarian cluster with a special focus on economic assistance.

I cannot but emphasize the importance of the efforts of the international community to complete construction of the shelter facility and related nuclear safety projects at Chernobyl in accordance with international standards, in order to transform the site into a stable and environmentally safe place. We appreciate the contribution made by all Member States and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as representatives of civil society, the private sector and donor community, to the development of cooperation to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

As the Chernobyl disaster has affected many parts of the world it is important that we continue to study its consequences so as to enable mankind to never forget the bitter lessons of the past.

The Government of Ukraine remains fully committed to cooperate with the other two affected States, as well as with all international partners, to mitigate the legacy of the Chernobyl tragedy. Ukraine is also cooperating with other Member States within the humanitarian cluster and we support and have co-sponsored the four draft resolutions under this agenda item to be adopted today by the General Assembly (A/64/L.19, A/64/L.31, A/64/L.32, A/64/L.33).

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): Rwanda welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence (A/64/313). Since the first adoption of a resolution on the subject, at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly (resolution 59/137), progress on its implementation has been slow. However, significant inroads have been made towards ensuring that the provision of assistance and support to survivors in the future will be possible.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the progress my Government has registered in the 15 years since the genocide. Today, we can say that our present dispensation is based on a political culture that values diversity, consensus-building and power-sharing towards a common purpose. For the first time, Rwandans are at the centre of planning processes and are active participants in the implementation of programmes that impact their lives. Examples include the development of Rwanda's Vision 2020 campaign, the design and execution of our national unity and reconciliation strategy, the delivery of the gacaca system of justice, and the drafting of a new Constitution that encapsulates the values we have adopted.

We now have a system of laws and institutions that guarantees justice for all and creates an environment that gives Rwandans the confidence to pursue their potential unhindered. By investing heavily in socio-economic development, we are encouraging a mindset shift away from a passive attitude of dependency to one of self-sufficiency, innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit.

The Secretary-General's report identifies a number of key actions and initiatives that have been undertaken by the United Nations system. Those include the comprehensive programme aimed at addressing access to economic and social rights by genocide survivors and at enhancing their political participation at the national and local levels. They also include institutional support to such key institutions as the justice sector, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, the National Police and the Prosecutor's office.

The actions and initiatives described in the report, however, point to wider United Nations support in Rwanda under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. It is therefore imperative that the United Nations system, in collaboration with my Government, identify and develop specific programmes aimed at providing assistance to survivors of the Rwandan genocide.

The report also points out that numerous challenges remain. Ensuring the participation of children, young people and women in the democratic process; providing alternative and complementary education for out-of-school children; enhancing the retention rates at the primary, secondary and tertiary

levels; and enhancing housing and associated amenities for vulnerable groups such as orphans, widows, returnees and the internally displaced are some of the challenges facing survivors in Rwanda today.

Rwanda has undertaken initiatives to address those challenges through such home-grown approaches as the *gacaca* courts; *Itorero*, a culture-based platform through which people solve their problems and which promotes national unity and executes all Government development programmes at all levels; and *Igando*, a tool to build coexistence within communities. This year, the Rwandan diaspora, in collaboration with the Government and local civil society organizations, launched the One Dollar Campaign for Genocide Survivors, which aims to ensure that every orphan in Rwanda has a decent home and that the social welfare of all genocide survivors is catered to.

In conclusion, it is crucial that the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report be implemented so as to ensure that survivors are offered the assistance they need and deserve. Rwanda remains resolutely committed to addressing those challenges with the active participation, of course, of the United Nations system and our development partners.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call on the Permanent Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Füllemann (International Committee of the Red Cross): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) appreciates the opportunity once again to address the General Assembly on strengthening coordination of humanitarian action, in particular in the context of armed conflict and other situations of violence.

Throughout 2009, armed violence and political instability have continued to torment far too many people across the globe. As ICRC representatives observe day in and day out, one of the main features of current conflict situations is the coexistence of a range of risks with combined effects on the populations affected. A weak State, a debilitated economy, collapsing infrastructure and armed hostilities carried out by a variety of politically driven actors and criminal groups, as well as environmental degradation, drought, floods or pandemics, increase the vulnerability of entire populations. The inherent

complexity of such situations makes it particularly difficult to determine an appropriate humanitarian response.

Humanitarian agencies face steadily growing needs as a result of those multiple risks. At the same time, their operating environment has become ever more diverse and challenging. Limited access to the people in need — for political or security reasons, or owing to a lack of acceptance — remains a frequent problem. Repeated attacks against humanitarian workers show how hard it is to ensure adequate safety for beneficiaries and humanitarian personnel alike.

ICRC operations have not been spared these security challenges. We have experienced several serious incidents lately. While several host Governments have been duly shouldering their primary responsibility for coordinating humanitarian aid, they have in some cases been subjecting the work of humanitarian organizations to strict conditions, to the point of sometimes impeding sorely needed and purely humanitarian services.

In many situations, a growing number and variety of actors — political, military, development, humanitarian — coexist with distinct objectives and different approaches. We also observe that armed forces, be they national or international, tend to become increasingly involved in humanitarian action, which is sometimes exploited for political purposes.

United Nations peace support operations increasingly combine widely different activities. That is problematic in situations of conflict, when these operations appear to support only one party to the conflict. All of that has sometimes blurred the lines between roles and objectives, reducing the acceptance of humanitarian action by the warring parties and potential beneficiaries.

Each entity — political, economic, military, humanitarian — has an important role to play. Nevertheless, the ICRC feels that it is essential that in all circumstances, especially armed conflict, a clear and visible distinction be preserved between the different roles and activities of political, economic, military and development actors and humanitarian organizations. Humanitarian action, in particular, must be kept clearly separate from political and military agendas, including those of international actors. That is equally important for comprehensive or integrated approaches to crisis management.

On the basis of the role assigned to it by the States, the ICRC has continued to strive to help people where the needs are most pressing. Working with the consent and acceptance of host States, it has tried hard during 2009 to maintain and, where possible, enhance its operational coverage in difficult contexts such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Sudan and Darfur, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, more recently, Yemen and Pakistan. At the same time, it has also continued to work tirelessly in those countries to enhance compliance with international humanitarian law by all parties to conflict. It will strive to continue demonstrating in practice both the value of its neutral, impartial, independent and exclusively humanitarian approach and the relevance of humanitarian law.

Critical to that endeavour is proximity to the people we seek to help. We understand proximity as both physical closeness and a genuine understanding of realities and vulnerabilities. ICRC protection and assistance work can be carried out only with direct access to the people in distress. Such direct access enables our staff to identify the most urgent needs and to respond to them in a meaningful way.

However, access to conflict zones often depends on the safety risks involved, as well as on a positive acceptance of our staff's presence by the people we seek to help and by other parties concerned. Demonstrating the neutrality, independence and impartiality of its work and its ability to deliver relevant and purely humanitarian aid and services is how the ICRC goes about seeking that acceptance. Our many years of experience have taught us that achieving that aim in armed conflict and other situations of violence requires engaging in a sustained confidential dialogue with all actors.

For the ICRC today, as in the past, engaging not only with the host State, but with all parties involved in a given situation is an essential and established practice. Those include State authorities — military and civilian — and non-State actors, whether or not they are recognized by the community of States, be they formal authorities or informal groups, and no matter how they are described by others.

That inclusiveness enables our organization to conduct its humanitarian activities in a transparent and predictable manner. Building relations and sustained dialogue with all concerned, including other

international actors, is intended to generate understanding of and thus acceptance for the ICRC mission so that we may obtain access to people on all sides who are in need of protection and assistance, including detainees and wounded people on both sides of the front line. It is also the best way of promoting compliance with humanitarian law and principles by all parties, including non-State armed groups, which are also bound by that law. Acceptance of the ICRC's mission and presence is also important for the safety of its staff.

Developing a substantial, constructive and cooperative dialogue with relevant authorities and parties has also helped us to better understand the values, customs and sociocultural rules prevailing in the contexts in which we operate. That dialogue has ultimately enabled us to benefit from the support of those entities in resolving often sensitive matters of humanitarian concern and coordinating protection and relief activities.

Coordination is vital in order to avoid gaps and duplication, and thus to optimize the response to ever-increasing needs. The ICRC therefore remains fully committed to coordinating with all relevant entities, including other humanitarian actors, in particular those with major operational capacity, and to doing so in a spirit of complementarity.

The ICRC's approach to coordination is driven by its operational requirements and the need to preserve its independence. In the field, other components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in particular the national societies of countries where we conduct operations, are our primary operational partners.

Our focus on operational needs and on reality-based action, as well as on preserving our neutral, independent and strictly humanitarian approach, is also essential to how we coordinate with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. That is why we favour interaction with operational agencies in our field work and have always refrained from being associated with any approach that combines objectives of a different nature. That approach has proved particularly useful in situations where the United Nations plays a strong political role or is engaged in peace operations along with its humanitarian work, and particularly where there is an integrated United Nations presence.

The ICRC has continued to actively participate as an observer in inter-agency coordination mechanisms at both the global and field levels. Within those mechanisms, it has never hesitated to share, to the extent compatible with its independent status, its experience and technical expertise. It remains strongly committed to continuing to do so, helping in that way to further strengthen humanitarian response.

This year, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has remembered two important dates: the Battle of Solferino, which was fought 150 years ago, and the 60 years since the adoption of the Geneva Conventions.

The principles that prompted Henry Dunant to act when faced with the horrors of the Battle of Solferino and that eventually led to the Geneva Conventions are that all those who suffer in wartime — whether friend or foe — must be aided without distinction. We call those principles “humanity” and “impartiality”, and they remain the bedrock of humanitarian action. Since then, we have identified neutrality and independence as additional and particularly valuable principles for guiding our work in conflicts and other situations of violence and forming ICRC’s identity.

Warfare has evolved enormously over the past 150 years. Historians say that 40,000 soldiers were wounded or killed at Solferino, but that only one civilian died. Today, civilians have become the main victims of hostilities, even though they are clearly protected by the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols.

To better understand the most pressing concerns of people directly affected by armed conflict, the ICRC carried out a worldwide opinion poll entitled “Our world. Views from the field”. It revealed that millions of people live in constant fear that they or someone they love will be killed or wounded or disappear, and that millions are struggling to provide for their children or simply to survive. On average, half of those interviewed had experienced war first hand, and many said they had been displaced or had lost contact with a close relative.

Wounds, humiliation, ill-treatment, and limited access to essential goods and services such as water, electricity and health care also emerged as widespread problems. Displacement ranked as the most traumatic experience, just behind losing a loved one and economic hardship. Significantly, the poll also showed

that people most often turn for help to those closest to home — in other words their families, neighbours and broader communities.

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols have proved essential to saving lives, allowing thousands of separated families to be reunited and bringing comfort to large numbers of prisoners of war. If the rules were better complied with, much suffering could be avoided. The ICRC therefore appeals to all States and all parties to armed conflict to renew their efforts and to take all the measures needed to make those legal provisions a reality on the ground.

The present operational environment for humanitarian organizations is challenging and the humanitarian needs are often immense. The ICRC strongly believes that respecting complementarity between different humanitarian organizations and the distinction that must be drawn between different types of approaches and interventions by various types of actors is the best way to guarantee an adequate overall response that makes a real difference in the lives of the men, women and children whom we strive to assist and for whose protection and dignity we work.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I call on the Permanent Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Jilani (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): I am grateful for the opportunity, on behalf of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to address the General Assembly on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

Today, as the Asia-Pacific region reels from one devastating disaster to another, more than 12 million people have been affected. Typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis and flooding have uprooted millions, left them homeless and stripped them of their livelihoods. The national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies, with their staff and volunteers as first responders, have sprung into action with massive emergency assistance.

The impact of an emergency or a disaster in terms of the level of human loss and suffering, as well as the economic cost, depends on the preparedness and resilience of the affected communities. That is why the International Federation invests heavily in

preparedness and in strengthening the capacities of the local communities. The training of community-based volunteers as first responders has clearly contributed to minimizing the loss of life across disaster areas.

Nevertheless, much needs to be done in the field of disaster preparedness and risk reduction. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report (A/64/84), we need to strengthen preparedness, with greater emphasis on risk reduction and, particularly, on strengthening response capacities at the local, national and regional levels.

One other critical element in the efforts to minimize the impact of disasters and maximize the effectiveness of international response efforts is legal preparedness. In that context, we are pleased to note that over a dozen States have already adopted new regulations, using the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance, known as the IDRL Guidelines, which were adopted by the thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. We would like to encourage all Member States to use the IDRL Guidelines in their discussion and adoption of national and regional legal agreements and instruments in order to facilitate and regulate international disaster relief and recovery.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The International Federation works on the basis of the principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to inspire, to facilitate and to promote all humanitarian activities carried out by its member national societies to improve the situation of the most vulnerable people. We are guided by our seven fundamental principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. Those principles are at the heart of our approach to humanitarian work under the theme "Saving lives, changing minds" as part of our Strategy 2020, adopted by our General Assembly in Nairobi two weeks ago.

Humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence have become synonymous with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. We believe that our strict adherence to those principles has allowed us to operate in quite difficult and complex situations. That reflects the unique character of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement,

ensuring access and acceptance by all when it really matters for the most vulnerable people.

The safety and security of humanitarian personnel and volunteers are of great concern to the International Federation. Our ability to reach the most vulnerable in difficult circumstances and in all corners of the world depends on the level of safety of our staff and volunteers, expatriate as well as local. As highlighted by the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report, safe, timely and unhindered access to vulnerable populations is a prerequisite for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. Member States and non-State actors are urged to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, facilities and supplies within their areas of control.

In a recently published opinion piece, our Secretary General, Mr. Bekele Geleta, and United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. John Holmes, highlighted that the increasing threat to life and livelihood posed by climate change is already palpable and that the need for effective action to be agreed in Copenhagen is increasingly urgent. That is a unique opportunity to put in place a comprehensive global approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The International Federation is in constant dialogue with a number of partners, including within the United Nations system and the non-governmental organization community, in order to influence the outcome of the Copenhagen Conference. We will be represented at the Conference by a delegation that includes a number of national society leaders from around the world.

Finally, we would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's call upon Member States to maintain a diversity of humanitarian funding channels and to provide consistent and predictable support to those channels in order to meet existing and growing humanitarian needs. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and gratitude to all those Member States that have been providing generous support to the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, to our emergency appeals and to the development plans of national societies, either directly or through their national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I now call on the Permanent Observer for the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Dall'Oglio (International Organization for Migration): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is pleased to take the floor today with reference to the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/64/84).

Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance is a topic intrinsically characterized by collaboration and partnership with a broad range of humanitarian actors, particularly in the areas most relevant to IOM's operational work: responding to situations of population displacement and sudden population movements. In this context, IOM would like to welcome the first ever Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, adopted by the African Union in Kampala in October. The Convention will be the first legal framework of its kind, and its adoption will help promote and strengthen regional and national measures to prevent or mitigate internal displacement, and provide for durable solutions.

The report of the Secretary-General offers a valuable opportunity to take stock of progress made in implementing the humanitarian reform agenda and to draw lessons for the future with respect to new modalities of acting together. The provision of humanitarian assistance is becoming increasingly complex, as, more than ever before, the various crises have an interdependent impact. Unfortunately, trends for 2009 do not seem to indicate substantial improvements. As the Secretary-General points out,

“Humanitarian stakeholders are increasingly concerned about the combined impacts of current global challenges such as climate change, extreme poverty, the food crisis, the financial crisis, water and energy scarcity, migration, population growth, urbanization, terrorism and health pandemics” (A/64/84, para 37).

This complexity makes coordination and cooperation all the more relevant and important to ensure that gaps can be identified and vulnerable populations protected in an adequate and timely manner.

Climate change, migration and displacement are among the most pressing issues on the contemporary global agenda, and they have been the focus of major international attention since the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report in 2007. As a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), IOM has joined forces with other humanitarian actors to raise awareness of the humanitarian impact of climate change and to call for urgent adaptive action to climate change.

As a result of these combined efforts in pursuance of the successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol, it is hoped that the humanitarian consequences of climate change, including provisions for protecting and assisting those who may move, migrate or otherwise relocate as a result, will receive adequate attention. In this regard and in preparation for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this month, IOM has been devoting particular attention to the link between climate change and population mobility by analyzing the available data, and will release tomorrow a volume entitled *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Addressing the Evidence*.

Furthermore, as the Secretary-General points out, “extreme weather events — such as floods, cyclones and droughts — continued to trigger humanitarian emergencies, causing over 235,000 deaths and affecting more than 211 million people [this year]” (*ibid.*, para. 3).

Indeed, humanitarian agencies are already seeing increased food insecurity, public health threats, migration and displacement, and other related consequences. In this operational context, IOM will continue working to develop a comprehensive, coordinated and proactive approach to addressing the migration-related consequences of climate change from a humanitarian and human security perspective, including in conjunction with its assigned responsibilities under the cluster approach in natural disaster situations. In this regard, we need to recognize migration as a possible element of broader adaptation strategies, while seeking to increase the resilience of vulnerable populations in the face of climate change and environmental degradation.

To conclude, IOM is committed to those most vulnerable in times of crisis and remains dedicated to working resourcefully and effectively with its IASC

partners. We express here our deep appreciation to our donors and partners, in particular to Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes and the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their unwavering commitment to the improvement of humanitarian response capacities.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I now call upon the Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Shafer (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): First, allow me to express my sincere thanks, on behalf of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta, for the opportunity to take the floor and present the views of the Order on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations.

The Order of Malta, as an international sovereign with full diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with 104 Member States, concentrates its activities on humanitarian policies and programmes throughout the world. The Order's 80,000 dedicated volunteers and 20,000 employees carry out this important work in 120 countries, always in accordance with the Order's principles of political and religious impartiality.

There is no question that effective coordination in the area of rapid response to large-scale natural disasters and other tragedies is vital to the shared humanitarian mission of the Order of Malta and the United Nations. The Order fully recognizes the pre-eminent role that mechanisms such as the Central Emergency Respond Fund (CERF) and United Nations agencies can play in this respect. The Order is at the fore of numerous emergency relief and long-term development projects in many of the countries receiving CERF support — the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Sri Lanka and Palestine, to name just some — and we are encouraged that CERF continues to make progress towards its objectives. I am pleased to say that the Order will be announcing on Wednesday, at the High-Level Conference on CERF, that it will be contributing to the Fund in 2010. The Order encourages all Member States to join it in this support.

The Order of Malta works actively in partnership with United Nations agencies, States and local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

to further strengthen the synchronized response to humanitarian challenges.

In Kenya, alternating severe drought and flooding mean that one third of the population is suffering from hunger and disease related to malnutrition and lack of potable water. The Order works in the most severely affected northern part of the country, along with the World Food Programme and the local diocese. We are building six health centres, two hospitals and one hospital dispensary, with drugs and medical consumables for the treatment of malaria and bacterial infections. The Order provides further relief for nearly 20,000 people through supplementary food consisting of oil, beans and maize, especially for vulnerable groups such as pregnant and breast-feeding women, children under five and the elderly. Additionally, mosquito nets and water-purification tablets are distributed.

The earthquakes and typhoons that struck Indonesia, Viet Nam and the Philippines in October killed and injured thousands and directly affected the livelihoods of tens of millions. The Order joined United Nations agencies and international NGOs in reacting quickly to this event. In all three areas, the Order immediately acted to provide desperately needed items: food, blankets, sleeping mats, hygiene kits, tool kits, cooking sets and temporary building materials. Furthermore, the Order is rehabilitating schools and infrastructure in the field of basic health care, and will be implementing community-based disaster preparedness projects.

Like the Secretary-General, the Order of Malta is deeply disturbed by the trend of politically or criminally motivated targeting of humanitarian workers, which is most evident in Somalia, the Sudan and Haiti. Tragically, several volunteers and doctors of the Order have lost their lives in these types of directed, malicious attacks. The Order agrees that steps must be taken at the highest level, as well as on the ground, to prevent such incidents from occurring and, when that fails, to punish those responsible.

Allow me to affirm that the Order of Malta will continue in its historic mission to help the sick, the needy and the most disadvantaged in society. Through our national associations and our worldwide relief agency, Malteser International, we respond daily to the challenges that humanitarian work presents, and we

will continue to closely follow the leadership and initiatives of the United Nations and its agencies.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 70 and its sub-items (a) and (b), as well as agenda item 71.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/64/L.19* and A/64/L.31 to A/64/L.33.

The Assembly shall turn first to draft resolution A/64/L.19*, entitled "Humanitarian assistance, emergency relief and rehabilitation for El Salvador as a result of the devastating effects of Hurricane Ida".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/64/L.19*, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Australia, Barbados, Belarus, Cambodia, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Gabon, Georgia, Greece, Grenada, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Monaco, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovenia, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and Uruguay.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.19*?

Draft resolution A/64/L.19 was adopted (resolution 64/74).*

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/64/L.31 is entitled "Participation of volunteers, 'White Helmets', in the activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/64/L.31, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Albania, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Canada, China, Croatia, Cuba, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Grenada, Haiti, India, Italy, Mexico, Monaco, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Slovenia, Togo and Turkey.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.31?

Draft resolution A/64/L.31 was adopted (resolution 64/75).

The Acting President: We shall now move on to draft resolution A/64/L.32, entitled "Strengthening of

the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

I give the floor to the representative of Sweden, on a point of order.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): I wish to make the following oral technical correction to the twelfth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/64/L.32. The reference to "protection of civilian persons in time of war" should be given initial capital letters.

The Acting President: The Secretariat has taken note of that correction.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since it was introduced, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Albania, Armenia, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Gabon, Grenada, Israel, Kazakhstan, the Federated States of Micronesia, Montenegro, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Thailand and Zambia.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.32, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/64/L.32, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 64/76).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/64/L.33 is entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since its introduction, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Albania, Armenia, Brazil, Colombia, Grenada, Mali, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Korea, Senegal and Trinidad and Tobago.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.33?

Draft resolution A/64/L.33 was adopted (resolution 64/77).

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Lucas, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, for undertaking the task of coordinating consultations and negotiations on the resolutions adopted under agenda item 70.

I call on the representative of Colombia on a point of order.

Mr. Suárez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to recall that we had informed the Secretariat that the Group of 77 and China wishes to keep this agenda item open, since consultations continue on a draft resolution on international cooperation in humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters and the provision of development aid. We hope to submit this draft resolution in a few days, and need therefore to keep this item open so that the Assembly can take action on it. We would be grateful, therefore, if that item could be kept open for that purpose.

The Acting President: I now call on those representatives who wish to explain their positions on the resolutions just adopted.

Mr. Ali (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to explain its vote on resolution 64/77, on safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel. We participated in the consultations leading to the unanimous adoption of this resolution.

We would like to register in the record of this meeting our reservations regarding the twentieth preambular paragraph of this resolution. The fact that we supported this resolution does not mean that we recognize the International Criminal Court. My delegation would like to emphasize that the provisions regarding the Court relate, in part, to the Rome Statute. Under the provisions and norms of international law, only countries that are parties to the Statute are subject to the rules of the Court.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): I am taking the floor to explain Pakistan's vote on resolution 64/77, entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel". We had informed the Secretariat that we wanted to make an explanation of position before the vote. However, I believe, owing to some confusion, we could not do so. Therefore, since the agenda item is still open, we are making our explanation of position after the consensus adoption.

The Government of Pakistan allotted an adequately sized piece of land to the United Nations in Islamabad about nine years ago. In our discussions with Secretariat officials, we have been emphasizing

the need to consolidate the different United Nations offices currently scattered all over Islamabad in one secure location.

We have been given to understand that the United Nations Task Force on Common Premises has yet to allocate resources for this purpose. It goes without saying that security considerations should not be secondary to procedural and financial considerations.

The adoption of this resolution emphasizes the need for a pro-active role to be played by both Governments and the United Nations itself in ensuring the safety, security and protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. We would like to place on record the fact that the Government of Pakistan is taking all possible measures in this regard and expects the concerned agencies of the United Nations to expedite the matter.

Mr. Al-Musawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation is pleased to make a statement on behalf of the Arab Group on the resolution entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (resolution 64/76), which the General Assembly has just adopted. The resolution contains important humanitarian goals and enumerates the positive measures undertaken by the peoples of the world to deal with natural disasters and complex humanitarian emergencies that have catastrophic humanitarian effects.

We would like to thank the facilitator of the resolution, the representative of Sweden, for his strenuous efforts to meet the concerns of the Arab Group. We also welcome the new positive trends reflected in the resolution.

However, a very important topic highlighted by the Arab Group — namely, allowing the delivery of humanitarian assistance to peoples chafing under the yoke of foreign occupation — has not been agreed to. The objective of the Arab Group in presenting this demand is to address the humanitarian disaster and the grave deterioration in the living conditions of peoples of all walks of life that have resulted from the inhuman blockade imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people as well as the policy of collective punishment pursued by Israeli occupation authorities against the defenceless Palestinian people after its aggression at the end of 2008.

We will continue to pursue this request in all United Nations forums. We hope to cooperate with all Member States, particularly those of the European Union, which have always defended the importance of respecting human rights. Our delegations are only asking that the Charter's principles and purposes be fulfilled. This Organization must shoulder its responsibilities in terms of immediately halting these Israeli practices, which constitute blatant violations of international law and the principles of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention. Their deliberate obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the occupied Palestinian territories confirms our fears, which we have voiced over and over, regarding the application by some of double standards when it comes to human rights issues in various parts of the world.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to resolution 64/74, on behalf of the Government and people of El Salvador, I would like to thank the sponsors and all States members of the General Assembly for having ensured its adoption.

It is well known that the Central American region has been painfully exposed in recent years to a series of natural disasters that have caused us major difficulties, the negative of impact of which, in conjunction with the effects of climate change and the impact of the financial and economic crises, has given rise to serious concern about our region's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In this context, I would add that the human, economic, social and cultural consequences of Hurricane Ida in El Salvador have exacerbated the difficult situation of the most vulnerable populations, particularly women, children and older persons, as was emphasized at the time by the President of the Republic, Mr. Mauricio Funes Cartagena, when he evaluated the impact of that natural phenomenon. His assessment has been confirmed by the various humanitarian and development entities of the United Nations working on the ground. The national authorities and the United Nations team on the ground reported that El Salvador had suffered 199 deaths and that some 80 persons remained unaccounted for. Some 52 municipalities were affected, requiring humanitarian assistance for approximately 75,000 individuals.

We are confident that the international community will continue to provide its valuable support and to offer its generous cooperation to help in

the rehabilitation and reconstruction we will face in the coming months, complementing the efforts of the national Government to achieve sustainable development in the affected areas.

Lastly, we would like to reiterate our thanks for the solidarity and development support we have received in response to the urgent appeal by the United Nations. We invite those Member States that have not yet done so and that wish to do so to join in this shared effort.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-items (a) and (b) of agenda item 70 and of agenda item 71.

Agenda item 43 (continued)

Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin

Draft resolution (A/64/L.17/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 43 at the 47th plenary meeting, on 16 November.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/64/L.17/Rev.1. Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that the following countries have become co-sponsors of A/64/L.17/Rev.1 since its publication: Angola, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Cape Verde, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Grenada, Hungary, Kuwait, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Federated States of Micronesia, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Spain, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.17/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/64/L.17/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 64/78).

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Greece to make a statement on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Yeroulanos (Greece): This great Organization was built on the unique and powerful ideas that we should not inflict pain on one another for

any reason; that no child should go to bed hungry at night in any part of the world; that knowledge and health are rights and not privileges; and that we should keep ourselves in balance by keeping the environment in balance. We share these ideas as human beings, for we tend to each other far more than we harm each other, we celebrate each other's uniqueness far more than we seek to destroy it, and we exchange ideas and knowledge far more than we protect them.

To reach a common ground of understanding, this Organization conducts a dialogue — a global dialogue of cultures — with profound respect for the distinct identities that each culture brings to the table. It is to its credit that, in this dawn of a new century, we seem steadfast in our commitment to save ourselves from destruction, to finally deal with global problems globally and to create through our dialogue and cooperation a safe and more complete world far larger than the sum of its parts.

In our decision to protect our heritage, tangible or otherwise, we reach the pinnacle of this Organization's mission. In recognition of their commitment to this cause, I would like to congratulate and thank the departing Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Matsuura, for his good services, and to offer my warm wishes for productive and inspired accomplishments to the new Director-General, Mrs. Bokova.

Heritage is the source of our identity and hence the foundation of our global dialogue. In order to build a better and more complete world larger than the sum of its parts, we need strong parts, we need strong identities, and although we need to deal with our local problems globally, we cannot create a sustainable global culture unless we recognize and respect the power and uniqueness of our localities. Together in a dialogue of equals, we can enrich one another and together ensure a creative environment for the generations to come.

Identities torn apart by war, destruction, theft or pillage tend to be traumatized and, as such, find it hard to participate in a larger dialogue. They usually abstain, and when they do participate they tend to be far more protective than creative. Therefore, in protecting the heritage of peoples around the world, the Organization has made a commitment to keeping identities unique, complete, creative and engaged. The resolution we adopted unanimously today is a

testament to our commitment to working together towards that cause. I wish to express my Government's sincere appreciation to all the sponsors and Member States for their support.

But heritage needs more than protection. Often, heritage needs healing. Healing is the process of making something whole, making it again complete. In the same context that we seek to heal identities, we must also seek to heal great symbols of heritage, especially when those symbols are an integral part of our dialogue of cultures. A symbol that is so unique that it represents the values of several cultures becomes a global symbol meant to inspire the values it represents and to bring us together in understanding. Tearing it apart is immoral. Keeping its pieces apart is unethical.

In the Parthenon, several cultures, if not the world as a whole, recognize the symbol of humanism — the fundamental idea that people, if inspired to use self-restraint, are good, and that they can cooperate and create incredible things if they are free to think, speak, exercise their reason and, ultimately, govern themselves. Those ideas are the very essence on which the United Nations was founded. With its foundation in human nature, the Parthenon is a symbol so unique that it stands as a beacon, not only for the achievements we have managed, but ultimately for those we are about to create.

To us Greeks, the Parthenon is all those things and also part of who we are — a fundamental part of our heritage. We can only rejoice that several parts of the monument have been voluntarily returned or returned through loans from Heidelberg, Palermo and the Vatican. We look forward to cooperating with other museums and to finding ways of returning the Parthenon marbles that will enrich rather than deprive their magnificent collections.

We are firmly on the path of making our world a better place. We have done so by respecting and celebrating each other, by finding in each other that which is unique. The integrity of a monument, a masterpiece or a work of art should be a right as sacred as any right the Organization defends. For the integrity of a global symbol of heritage can be as important as heritage itself.

The Acting President: I now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Suárez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia attaches great importance to the subject at hand and co-sponsored the important resolution 64/78, as it has similar resolutions in the past.

Colombia notes that it interprets the language incorporated in paragraph 5 of the resolution in the context of the sovereign rights of each State to decide on the international instruments to which it will become party without affecting the rights of States over their national heritage, pursuant to international law.

We would like to draw attention to the work of the delegation of Greece in coordinating the resolution.

Ms. Phipps (United States of America): Having joined in the consensus adoption of resolution 64/78, the United State wishes to clarify its understanding that the recommendations referenced in its paragraph 2 are the recommendations of UNESCO-sponsored meetings, including the 2008 Extraordinary Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The recommendations referenced in paragraph 2 do not include the recommendations of the separate and distinct 2008 meeting on non-governmental experts, which was also held in Seoul and sponsored by the Government of the Republic of Korea.

The Acting President: There are no further speakers on my list. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 43?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 47 (continued)

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa

Draft resolution (A/64/L.28)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on agenda item 47 jointly with agenda item 63 and its sub-items (a) and (b) at the 22nd to 24th plenary meetings, on 20 and 21 October 2009.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Tanzania to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.28.

Mrs. Kafanabo (United Republic of Tanzania): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the African Group, the draft resolution entitled, "2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa", contained in document A/64/L.28.

Malaria is one of the biggest health challenges to Africa. An estimated 74 per cent of the population in Africa lives in areas that are malaria-endemic, and about 95 per cent of the global 2 to 3 million deaths attributed to malaria occur in Africa. Malaria is also a major killer of children in Africa, where 24 per cent of all deaths of children under five years old are from malaria and malaria-related illness.

Malaria is a major economic burden in Africa, where it accounts for 30 to 40 per cent of outpatient visits and 10 to 15 per cent of all disease admissions in hospitals, private clinics and health-care systems. Malaria accounts for as much as 40 per cent of health-care spending in endemic African countries and costs the continent \$12 billion a year. Consequently, malaria has slowed economic growth by up to 1.3 per cent per year through death and lost hours of economic productivity, as well as public funds and family income. Malaria is thus said to be a disease of poverty and a cause of poverty.

The statistics on malaria are a cause of concern to the international community and to Africa in particular. We recognize that malaria-related ill health and deaths throughout the world can be substantially reduced with political commitment and commensurate resources if the public is educated and sensitized about malaria and appropriate health services are made available, particularly in countries where the disease is endemic. Yet each year we allow nearly one million deaths to occur that could have been prevented with the universal application of existing tools.

This year's draft resolution has been updated from last year's resolution 63/234. While the draft resolution has retained last year's language, it has been technically updated and new developments have been recognized. The new elements include acknowledgement that progress has been made in parts of Africa in reversing malaria epidemics through political engagement and sustainable national malaria-control programmes; an emphasis on the importance of strengthening health systems to effectively support malaria control and elimination; and a welcome of the

launch, on 23 September 2009, of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance to provide political leadership at the highest level in the fight against malaria in Africa.

The new elements also welcome the United Against Malaria Campaign, which, ahead of the International Federation of Association Football World Cup event in South Africa, unites football stars and teams, Governments, non-governmental organizations, foundations and corporations in the fight against malaria; urge the international community, the United Nations and other stakeholders to participate in the funding and implementation of the Global Malaria Action Plan; and call for scaling up malaria prevention, control and treatment in order to meet the internationally agreed malaria goals.

The year 2010 marks the end of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria, and in this regard the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on progress towards achieving the internationally agreed targets for 2010 and an evaluation of the implementation of the first Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa, including recommendations for further actions.

The consultations on this draft resolution have been carried out in an open and transparent manner. We thank the delegations that have participated in the consultations for their constructive engagement, which has enabled consensus to be reached. We further thank all the delegations that have sponsored the draft resolution and ask others to join the sponsorship.

It is our expectation that, as in previous years, this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: Before proceeding to take action on draft resolution A/64/L.28, I should like to announce that since its introduction, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Latvia, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, Suriname, Thailand and Trinidad and Tobago.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.28?

Draft resolution A/64/L.28 was adopted (resolution 64/79).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 47?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 49 (continued)

Culture of peace

Draft resolutions (A/64/L.5 and A/64/L.15/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 49 at the 41st and 42nd plenary meetings, on 9 and 10 November 2009, and took action on draft resolutions A/64/L.13 and A/64/L.14 at the 42nd plenary meeting.

The Assembly will first take action on draft resolution A/64/L.5, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I would like to announce that since its introduction, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Antigua and Barbuda, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, China, Colombia, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, the Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, Oman, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan and Uganda.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.5?

Draft resolution A/64/L.5 was adopted (resolution 64/80)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/64/L.15/Rev.1, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace".

Before proceeding to take action on draft resolution A/64/L.15/Rev.1, I should like to announce that since its introduction, the following countries have become co-sponsors: Albania, the Bahamas, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea, Grenada, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Panama, the Sudan, Togo, Uruguay and Turkey.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.15/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/64/L.15/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 64/81).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the speakers who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolutions just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Schlyter (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) on resolution 64/81, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace".

The following countries align themselves with this statement: the candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; and Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

The European Union would like to extend its thanks to the delegations of the Philippines and Pakistan for the constructive spirit in which they led the consultation process on this resolution.

This year again, the EU has decided to join consensus on the resolution. We do so, however, with serious reservations regarding a number of elements in the resolution. The EU is convinced that intercultural dialogue can make a significant contribution to mutual understanding among persons with different cultural, religious and other identities, as well as deepen understanding, promote tolerance and improve overall relations at the local, national and international levels among individuals with different backgrounds.

The EU is, however, increasingly concerned about initiatives seeking to establish religion and religious values as cornerstones of the work of the United Nations. Interreligious dialogue is only one of the various dimensions of intercultural dialogue, and interreligious dialogue, including intrareligious

dialogue, takes place among individuals and religious organizations and leaders, and not among States or religions.

Religions or faiths can never be acting parties in dialogue. The United Nations system, as well as Member States, can possibly play facilitating roles, promoting the necessary conditions for that dialogue to take place, but should neither organize this dialogue nor endorse its outcome. Religion should consequently not be institutionalized in the framework of the United Nations. We are, in this regard, concerned by the phrasing of paragraphs 9 and 12 of this resolution and insist that these paragraphs cannot be read as giving States a mandate to influence the manner in which individuals relate to their faith or beliefs.

To engage in a successful dialogue, parties must be prepared to face contrasting views and even criticism. Recognizing the right to express an opinion and accepting differing opinions are also an essential part of dialogue. The EU is also convinced that a fruitful and genuine dialogue cannot be guided by Government authorities. It needs to be rooted in free and spontaneous participation in public debate reflecting a variety of opinions.

The EU is further concerned that individuals are categorized exclusively on the basis of their religion or faith. Religion or faith may indeed constitute part of the multiple identities of an individual, but it is important that the diversity of identities be reflected in the global dialogue efforts as a whole. The EU regrets that the sponsors of this initiative were unwilling to integrate all these basic foundations for a genuine dialogue in the text, and was only able to join consensus with the understanding that they are implied.

The EU was further disappointed that the resolution once again refers to the possibility of proclaiming a United Nations decade for interreligious and intercultural dialogue. As is made clear in the report of the Secretary-General on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/64/325), responses received from Member States have revealed a lack of broad and consensual support for the initiative. As just stated, the EU questions whether the United Nations as such should have a role to play in the field of interreligious dialogue. Moreover, the EU does not believe that such a decade would contribute significantly to genuine dialogue. In principle, the EU is opposed to the

proliferation of new international days, years or decades since, in many cases, their effectiveness has been low. We believe that it is more important to focus on implementing existing and concrete initiatives if their impact is to be seen on the ground.

To conclude, let me reiterate that the EU attaches great importance to the promotion of intercultural dialogue, in particular the work done by UNESCO, which is the lead United Nations agency in the promotion of intercultural dialogue, as well as other initiatives for enhancing dialogue and mutual understanding, such as the Alliance of Civilizations.

Ms. Phipps (United States of America): As in past years, the text of the resolution just adopted contains many worthwhile elements. It promotes respect among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds and affirms that mutual understanding and dialogue are crucial for achieving a true and lasting peace. We were pleased to join consensus on resolution 64/81, and we would like to thank the delegations of the Philippines and Pakistan, the main co-sponsors, for the flexibility shown during informal consultations.

The United States is committed to building a more peaceful world and encourages individuals from different religious and cultural communities to engage in practical action, such as interfaith service, to help foster respect and encourage reconciliation. We remain committed to expanding programmes that promote reconciliation among religious groups and actively partner with other Governments and with civil society actors around the world to forge new bonds among people of all religions and beliefs. In addition, we acknowledge that faith is a powerful and mobilizing force and that faith leaders play a critical role in alleviating the most pressing global challenges. We believe that interfaith efforts can be among the best protections against intolerance and hatred.

In promoting diversity and dialogue, we are guided by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which clearly states in Article 19 that

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

To that end, we do not believe that restricting peaceful expression of opinion or belief can build respect or tolerance. The United States believes unequivocally that the freedoms of religion and expression are precisely the antidote that is needed to combat intolerance. For these reasons, the resolution we have just adopted must not in any way be read to restrict peaceful expression of opinion or belief. The United States firmly believes in the right of all people to think and express themselves freely and peacefully.

United Nations resolutions, such as this one, must not be misused to justify imprisonment, torture and even death sentences for those that express views that are dissident or critical of the Government in power. Members of society must be able to engage in the open exchange of views without fear of recrimination if we are to develop the understanding and trust necessary to get along and live peaceably with one other.

Mr. Ahmed (Bangladesh): My delegation would like to thank all Member States for adopting resolution 64/80 on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, once again by consensus. Our special thanks go to the 118 Member States that sponsored the resolution this year and those that have sponsored the resolution in the past nine years. Our thanks go to UNESCO for successfully carrying out the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243). The adoption of the resolution is a testimonial to the collective resolve to make a world free of violence, especially for our future, the children of the world.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 49.

Agenda item 115

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Draft resolution (A/64/L.27)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.27.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of a interregional group of countries made up of Austria, Burkina Faso, Croatia, Pakistan and the Argentine Republic, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/64/L.27,

entitled "Institutionalization of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force".

Far from decreasing, the number of terrorist acts continues to increase in a great number of Member States. Countless civilian victims suffer every day from these horrifying acts of violence and barbarism that threaten international peace and security. These acts are contrary to human dignity and to peaceful and civilized coexistence. Terrorist acts also inhibit the full exercise of human rights and sustainable development in our societies. United Nations personnel are also, tragically, a target of this scourge.

Therefore, it is imperative not to falter in our efforts to combat terrorism with all the legitimacy, unity and strength offered by the multilateral system, in which the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), adopted by the General Assembly in 2006, is the central operational framework. The Strategy is a general agreement reached by consensus of the Assembly, and we must continue to strive together to implement it effectively. We must intensify our efforts and those of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force to implement the four pillars of the Strategy in an integrated manner.

The introduction of this draft resolution by a group of countries from every region represents a natural step in the political and legal process of institutionalizing the Task Force, whose central role is to ensure the coordination and coherence of the efforts of the United Nations system.

The draft resolution calls on the Secretary-General to establish a functional, adequate and rational structure for the effective implementation of the Strategy and the provisions of resolution 62/272. As is well known, existing staff and resources arrangements are temporary and come from extrabudgetary sources. The draft resolution proposes, in brief and straightforward language, to institutionalize the Task

Force and to provide the necessary resources in the regular budget of the Organization on a long-term basis and in a manner that is fully independent of a limited group of voluntary donors. This framework is essential in order to achieve sustained and effective coordination and coherence in the counter-terrorism efforts of the United Nations system.

The objective is to make the office of the Task Force a catalyst, providing leadership and clear added value in ensuring coordination and coherence in the implementation of the Strategy by States and in its interaction with international organizations and their respective programmes related to the Strategy. This approach also seeks to avoid confusion and the duplication of efforts with other technical organs and other entities of the system.

Over the past few weeks, our group of countries has carried out informal consultations with Member States from every region. We hope that these discussions will continue, in accordance with the Assembly's procedures, in the debates of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in the coming days.

The adoption of the Strategy by consensus in 2006 was a landmark event for our Organization. As the President of Assembly for that year stated, the Strategy represents a common commitment that we, the United Nations, will face terrorism head-on. We are fully confident that, with this draft resolution, we will take a firm step towards that noble and crucial objective.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We will hear the remaining speakers and take action on the draft resolution on Friday, 11 December, in the morning.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.