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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 20 July 2009, at 10 a.m.

President: Ms. Intelmann (Vice-President) (Estonia)

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

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In the absence of Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg), Ms. Intelmann (Republic of Estonia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (A/64/84-E/2009/87)

The President said that new global challenges, such as climate change, extreme poverty, and the food and financial crises, were giving rise to new humanitarian needs in non traditional contexts. The humanitarian affairs segment provided States with an opportunity to discuss, in conjunction with the international humanitarian community, how best to respond to traditional and emerging crises and to reiterate their strong commitment to upholding the neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian assistance. It was crucial in that regard that the Council should reach agreement on the resolution before it, which set out guidelines for humanitarian operations in the coming year.

Mr. Holmes (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that many of the adverse trends plaguing the humanitarian community in recent years were becoming more marked. Natural hazards in particular were increasing in severity, causing substantial loss of lives and livelihoods. While Asia was most affected in terms of disaster-related deaths, natural hazards also affected other parts of the world. In the Horn of Africa, for example, the humanitarian impact of conflict was exacerbated by drought, food crises and demographic pressure, making it harder for people to cope and resulting in severe levels of malnutrition. At the same time, long-standing and intractable conflicts in many parts of the world had taken an even heavier toll in 2009 than in previous years. The protection of civilians in such conflicts must continue to be a major concern for all, primarily for the governments involved.

Humanitarian assistance efforts continued to be hampered by restrictions on access and by violent attacks on humanitarian staff. Access to populations in need was not a challenge to national sovereignty but an expression of the sovereign responsibility of all governments to ensure the well-being of their citizens. Access to populations in need could be constrained by many factors; it was therefore all the more important

that countries should put in place in advance of any crisis the administrative and legislative arrangements needed to keep humanitarian aid from being delayed or hindered by unnecessary or unjustified bureaucratic measures.

He was particularly horrified by the rising number of attacks, ranging from hostility to murder, on humanitarian workers, who often came from the very communities they were trying to help. Such attacks were increasingly motivated by a perceived association between humanitarian workers and parties to a conflict or to political stabilization efforts. It was therefore vital to send a clear message that the main concern of humanitarian workers was to save lives and not to support political or military agendas. He urged Member States to condemn strongly such unacceptable attacks on humanitarian workers and to take steps to prosecute the perpetrators of violence against them. In that connection, practices such as incitement against humanitarian workers by local media should not be tolerated. There was a real need for a more open debate between Member States and those providing humanitarian assistance on how basic humanitarian principles could be better respected and upheld operationally.

Beyond the problem of the safety of humanitarian workers, the international humanitarian assistance community was facing new challenges arising from the combined effects of global mega-trends, including climate change, chronic poverty, the food crisis, water and energy scarcity, migration, population growth, urbanization and pandemics. Large-scale and cyclical humanitarian needs were emerging in areas in which humanitarian workers did not have extensive experience. Those trends, which had increased the overall vulnerability of the world's population, were challenging traditional notions of humanitarian assistance and would be shaping humanitarian assistance, and its coordination, in the future.

In response to those challenges, there was a need to adopt novel approaches to disaster risk reduction. They included: making more effective use of the new information and communications technologies; placing more emphasis on sustainable solutions through stronger partnerships with development actors; placing greater stress on action to prevent and mitigate disasters; providing for an international fire brigade to respond to emergencies; helping to build stronger

regional and national capacities; and pooling regional resources.

Despite the scale of the challenges, efforts to strengthen humanitarian relief efforts continued to show positive results. They included more equitable, predictable and accountable responses to crises of all kinds; implementation of the cluster approach in 24 out of 27 countries where the situation justified the presence of a Humanitarian Coordinator; strengthened cluster leadership through improved training and a more professional selection process; integration of actors within and outside the United Nations system in humanitarian country teams; and improved representation of the humanitarian community in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

An effective response to the growing humanitarian challenges presupposed a joint effort between governments and humanitarian organizations, as well as increased resources. In that connection, he urged donors to ensure that diverse, flexible and multi-year funding was not only maintained but increased. While there were many ways of funding humanitarian assistance, the multilateral appeals system had the advantage of guaranteeing that the contributions fitted into the strategic approach and prioritized projects concerned. The Central Emergency Response Fund, which, since its inception in 2006 had disbursed more than \$1.2 billion to assist humanitarian responses to rapid-onset and underfunded crises required more support and he urged all Member States to contribute to it.

Humanitarian assistance was a shared priority and responsibility and should never be politicized. It was to be hoped that the Council's debate on that topic would serve to strengthen the effectiveness and coordination of humanitarian work and to reinforce the international community's commitment to humanitarian principles.

Mr. Dahlgren (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union and of the Candidate Countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process, and potential candidates Albania, Serbia, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, said that an increasing range of humanitarian challenges, compounded by the global economic and financial crisis, called for a more predictable and effective response on the part of the international community. It should include: renewing the focus on disaster risk

reduction and strengthening local, national and regional response capacities; further enhancing the international humanitarian response system; and ensuring respect for and adherence to international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

Increased efforts in the areas of disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction were needed at all levels, including better coordination among international preparedness partners in keeping with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Disaster risk reduction went beyond humanitarian aid and should be integrated into policies and plans relating to development cooperation, since it was a way of decreasing poverty and vulnerability, safeguarding development and adapting to climate change, to the benefit of global stability and sustainability.

Cooperation to strengthen local, national and regional capacities in the areas of disaster preparedness and response was beneficial to all, and United Nations system agencies should work together to strengthen the response capacities of local authorities and NGOs. National resources, experience, knowledge and best practices should be shared, and mechanisms that drew on them and disseminated best practices must be given high priority. The capacity of national authorities and organizations to request and receive international assistance should be strengthened, as should the coordination of such assistance.

In order to meet humanitarian challenges, the response system needed to be flexible, efficient and predictable. The European Union welcomed the recent reform of the system and took note of the positive results produced by use of the cluster approach, which had proven valuable in providing humanitarian leadership, ensuring accountability with regard to national stakeholders and involving a greater range of actors. Further efforts were needed to strengthen United Nations leadership in the field and to empower the role of the humanitarian coordinator.

He welcomed the efforts to build a framework for common needs assessments which would contribute to an optimal allocation of resources and a more effective and targeted response. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) had a central role to play in that regard.

Adequate, predictable, equitable and timely funding was critical to an effective humanitarian

response. The external evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund had demonstrated the extent to which it contributed to international humanitarian action, and he urged Member States to continue supporting the Fund. He stressed the importance of early and multi-year commitments to humanitarian organizations, including through pooled funds, and of support for humanitarian agencies' individual emergency resource funds. Appropriate, flexible and predictable resourcing of NGOs remained crucial, and the EU supported their full involvement in humanitarian coordination frameworks.

The EU emphasizes the need to focus more on early recovery and a smooth transition from emergency to development. It encouraged OCHA, the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO), UNDP and other relevant agencies to strengthen their cooperation in that regard.

The EU was gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation where there had been further deterioration of long-standing conflicts or where new conflicts had erupted. Gaining safe, unimpeded and timely access to the victims of complex emergencies continued to be a challenge. The EU urged all parties to facilitate the rapid passage of humanitarian personnel and supplies to affected communities, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Actions on the ground to protect civilians in emergency situations, especially from sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, did not yet match the progress in words or the development of international standards. The comprehensive strategy for combating sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was one that could be replicated in similar situations in other countries, and the European Union was prepared to support the implementation of such strategies financially and politically.

The European Union was deeply concerned by the increase in deaths of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel as a result of deliberate attacks and urged States and all concerned to take the necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of such staff, including the avoidance of any incitement to violence against them.

The European Union reiterated the view that humanitarian aid should be provided by civilians and that military involvement should only be a last resort. Failure to respect the distinct roles of the different

actors could hamper civilian efforts in carrying out crucial, life-saving work. Adequate civil-military coordination was in any event essential, and the EU supported OCHA's role in that regard.

In order to face today's increasingly complex humanitarian challenges, there was a need to forge a more committed global partnership on international humanitarian assistance, involving on the one side United Nations Member States and relevant regional organizations and, on the other, United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian actors. The European Union remained firmly committed to such a global partnership.

Mr. Grinius (Canada), speaking on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, said that although national authorities bore the primary responsibility for meeting the needs of people on their territory affected by humanitarian crises, the international community had a role to play in supplementing their efforts. Humanitarian action must be neutral, impartial and independent, and be carried out for the sole purpose of preventing and alleviating human suffering. The cluster approach to the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance was achieving real results. Under the effective stewardship of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the humanitarian system had become more transparent, better coordinated and more rapid in its responses. He welcomed its regional outreach efforts as a means of raising awareness of humanitarian action and of the coordinating role and mandate of the United Nations.

Improvements were still needed in certain areas. He urged OCHA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to redouble their efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of resident and humanitarian coordinators. It was important for them to possess the appropriate skills and training, especially in negotiation, coordination and communication and in the protection of civilians. Secondly, the critical gap between humanitarian assistance and early recovery must be closed, and that required international actors to pursue common priorities relating to governance, essential services and economic revitalization while the emergency relief phase was being wound down. In that respect, he welcomed recent efforts to introduce a framework to sequence different types of needs assessments according to crisis phases. Third, greater attention must be given to disaster preparedness, contingency

planning and mitigation strategies. The sharing of information, lessons learned, best practices and commitment to disaster risk reduction were all crucial to saving lives and alleviating suffering. He welcomed the recent meeting of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, and emphasized the importance of implementing the key recommendations in the Hyogo Framework for Action. Access for humanitarian personnel to the populations at risk was vital, and he welcomed OCHA's efforts to improve the monitoring of constraints on access.

The Council's humanitarian segment ought to be a genuine dialogue on humanitarian challenges and key operational issues. Instead of looking for a negotiated outcome every year, the Council's time could be used to engage in a substantive expert-level discussion of matters of importance for humanitarian action.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) said that given the growing demand for humanitarian services, the international community must manifest its commitment to the guiding principles contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182. Any departure from those principles would risk politicizing humanitarian assistance and undermining its effective coordination. As the report of the Secretary-General pointed out, implementation of those principles was hampered by the increasing attacks on humanitarian workers and the involvement in humanitarian assistance of political, military and private-sector actors. A way out could be found by advocating the "protection by flag" principle, so increasing the confidence of local people in the United Nations. Military assets used in humanitarian operations should be independent, in accordance with the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief. In complex emergencies, guidance could be found in the reference paper of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on "Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies".

To ensure adequate and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance, it was necessary to rely on an assessment of objective needs and to secure access to those in need. He called upon United Nations organizations, the International Office for Migration (IOM), the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and all the non-governmental organizations involved, to cooperate closely and constructively with the Governments of recipient countries.

The growth of humanitarian needs sprang from the global food, financial and economic crises and from climate change, demographic growth, urbanization, terrorism and the shortage of energy resources and drinking water. He agreed with the Secretary-General's conclusion that humanitarian assistance could be required to meet chronic needs caused by cyclical crises of that kind. In the deliberations on global challenges and threats, the humanitarian response should accordingly be given greater weight. However, the independence of the normative framework must be maintained, with a clear focus on operational measures for the improved coordination of humanitarian assistance.

The United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) were key tools for mobilizing donor contributions. All other mechanisms for raising emergency funds should be agreed at the intergovernmental level and confirmed in a General Assembly resolution.

His country played an active part in international cooperation on disaster risk reduction, as a means of reducing vulnerability and achieving the goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Only the General Assembly had a mandate for managing the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. For that reason, a general discussion on the question should take place within the Second Committee of the General Assembly. There was a need to reconsider the "division of labour" between the Council and the General Assembly in the discussion of humanitarian issues, so as to avoid duplication of work without compromising their respective mandates.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia) said that the credibility and effectiveness of international humanitarian action rested on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Global demand for humanitarian assistance continued to rise, straining the resources available. The added humanitarian burden caused by the current and future effects of the global economic, financial, food and energy crises must be addressed. Recent conflict situations had highlighted the need to ensure the security not only of humanitarian personnel but also of facilities and supplies.

He recalled the importance of General Assembly resolution 46/182 in establishing the guiding principles

on humanitarian assistance. While there had been some erosion of respect for the principles, he did not believe it necessary to re-examine the normative framework for humanitarian assistance or the principles themselves. On the contrary, they should be respected by all actors and coordinated assistance delivery plans should be prepared to clearly define the roles of relevant actors. Such coordination would help eliminate the confusion that arose when military and private actors labelled their efforts as humanitarian in nature.

A number of fundamental issues relating to humanitarian assistance needed to be addressed. He wondered what the experience of United Nations integrated missions could contribute to resolving the problem of the blurring of humanitarian, political and security objectives. He asked if there was sufficient international cooperation to assist countries, especially developing countries, in the areas of preparedness and risk reduction for natural disasters. In that context he recalled that the 2009 Global Assessment on Disaster Risk Reduction had highlighted the developing countries' greater vulnerability.

He stressed the need to overcome barriers to consistent and predictable funding and also ensure greater coherence between earmarked and non-earmarked bilateral assistance and pooled funds, which played a role in reducing administrative and overhead costs. While the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) financial tracking system was a valuable tool, more data relating to non-earmarked bilateral assistance would be welcome. Lastly, further study of the role of regional organizations in providing humanitarian assistance, specifically the moment when the affected country had requested their assistance, was needed. That would provide an opportunity to increase coherence between the Organization's work at the international level, the regional organizations and the affected country.

Mr. Aguiar Patriota (Brazil) noted that despite the current financial crisis donors had not reduced the funding provided for humanitarian assistance. That financing must be maintained, in particular because the effects of the current crises would continue to be felt in the future, in the developing countries especially. He was encouraged by the focus in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/84-E/2009/87) on the current humanitarian trends and challenges, for example the inadequacy of the Organization's current humanitarian

mechanisms in emergency situations, and agreed that more priority should be given to addressing chronic needs.

The 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction had underscored that the developing countries, especially their poorest populations, were disproportionately affected by disasters. There must be increased investment by Member States in disaster preparedness and risk reduction and national and local capacity-building; that would greatly reduce response and recovery costs. Adequate funding, international cooperation, sharing of best practices and technology transfer were key elements of an effective response to emergencies. Member States should also work to strengthen the role of civil society, for example unions and community organizations, in preparedness and response efforts.

Humanitarian actors and other partners must coordinate their efforts, in particular with regard to long-term and sustainable solutions to humanitarian emergencies. More cooperation and even partnerships between humanitarian and development agencies would help prevent gaps between emergency relief and rehabilitation and reconstruction. He supported the call for innovative approaches, for example the World Food Programme (WFP) "Purchase for Progress" initiative and other local procurement initiatives, and the WFP twin-track approach to self sufficiency for populations in need.

Brazil's largest humanitarian effort had been to send 47,000 tons of food to Caribbean countries affected by hurricanes and tropical storms, in August and September 2008. The key to the effectiveness of that operation had been cooperation with the Government of Spain, which had provided logistical support, and with WFP, which had helped store and distribute the food. Brazil's food aid had included more than one ton of seeds to help the recovery of the affected communities. In that regard, he expressed concern at the trend towards intellectual property-type appropriations of seeds and hybrids or genetically modified seeds, which could have a negative effect on assistance sustainability. He stressed that once immediate life-saving needs were met, all actors must coordinate among themselves and with the host Government to ensure recovery and development.

He expressed concern at the continuing food security crisis, with more than 1 billion people

expected to be undernourished in 2009. States must improve and fully implement measures to address food security and renew their commitments in such areas as investment in agriculture, credit to small farmers and strengthened safety nets. Developed countries must transfer expertise and technology to the developing countries and dismantle trade-distorting illegal protectionist measures and subsidies that served as barriers to the exports of the developing countries. Furthermore, the economic and financial crises and increasing severity of weather-related phenomena had added to the suffering of populations already affected by humanitarian emergencies and increased the vulnerability of poor communities to external events.

He welcomed the increased engagement of regional and subregional organizations and the development of regional initiatives in coordinating humanitarian assistance because neighbours were better able to provide timely assistance, were more familiar with regional needs and could benefit from the strengthened bilateral ties arising out of coordination efforts. His Government was pursuing coordination efforts within Latin America and the Caribbean, more specifically with the MERCOSUR countries. He noted that at their first summit on integration and development, held in Brazil in December 2008, the Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean had expressed their commitment to strengthening regional humanitarian assistance initiatives relating to natural disasters and food security.

Mr. Frisch (Observer for Switzerland) stressed that all States must allow humanitarian personnel rapid and unimpeded access to conflict zones and recalled that States bore primary responsibility for providing protection and assistance to their populations. In that regard he noted that one year earlier his Government had launched an initiative to improve humanitarian access in armed conflicts by making practical tools available to international organizations and humanitarian actors on the ground, notably a handbook on the related normative framework for the national authorities. In that context he expressed concern at the deterioration of the security situation for humanitarian personnel, in particular local personnel, who were paying a high price for attacks against them.

With regard to the increasingly frequent crises triggered by natural phenomena and climate change and their ever greater humanitarian burden, which was

frequently ignored or underestimated, he said that his Government spent 10 per cent of its humanitarian aid on risk reduction activities. He expressed support for the environmental response activities of the joint United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Environment Unit, which his delegation currently chaired. He said that resources must be made available for both prevention and preparation as well as coordination mechanisms and commended OCHA for its efforts, which proved that coordination that included participation by partners on the ground improved disaster response.

Coordination of all actors in complex emergencies was vital, in particular in the context of peacekeeping missions. He underscored the specific nature of humanitarian action and the need to respect humanitarian efforts and the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. As the report of the Secretary-General pointed out, the international community must promote strategic and operational coherence and protect the ability of humanitarian personnel to carry out their mission in accordance with established principles. His delegation would continue to work to further those goals.

He looked forward to the adoption of a consensus humanitarian resolution, despite the growing difficulties encountered in recent years in reaching agreement on the question. Negotiations dragged on while the situation on the ground was deteriorating. The Council must continue to consider the issue of how to make those negotiations more effective.

Mr. Ali (Sudan) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/84-E/2009/87) and emphasized the need to increase the Organization's capacity to respond in a coordinated manner to the hundreds of millions of victims of natural disasters, armed conflict, climate change and the food, energy, economic and financial crises. He stressed that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference.

The Government of National Unity of Sudan had worked with the United Nations and NGOs to improve the coordination of humanitarian assistance on the ground. In December 2004 for example it had

introduced administrative reforms to facilitate humanitarian access in the Darfur region and renewed in March 2007 a fast-track system for exempting food assistance from border formalities and duties and prepared a manual for that process. A High Committee of representatives of his Government, the United Nations, donors, the African Union, the Arab Group of the African Union and others met monthly to review the humanitarian situation; in June it had discussed the situation in Darfur specifically. The Committee was chaired on a rotating basis by representatives of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan and the Resident Coordinator. That Committee had established a working group that met weekly to prepare reports on the humanitarian situation for the Committee.

He regretted that rebel groups in Darfur had carried out attacks on humanitarian personnel, reselling looted goods in neighbouring countries. His Government had trained armed guards to escort humanitarian aid convoys, leading to a drop in the number of incidents and improved delivery of humanitarian assistance. Many humanitarian organizations had availed themselves of the Government's protection.

His Government, in cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union, had established a committee of police and justice-sector officials to investigate gender violence and sexual exploitation and bring perpetrators, whether Government officials, NGO or United Nations staff, etc., to justice. In that regard he underscored his Government's opposition to any attempt by an outside organization to collect information or disseminate politically motivated lies.

He noted that in June 2009, in accordance with the Abuja Agreement, displaced persons had begun returning to hundreds of villages in Darfur. His Government had worked with international partners to facilitate their return, rebuild villages and ensure returnees a decent standard of living. He noted that food security was improving overall in Darfur and malnutrition levels were not excessive by international standards. The number of humanitarian organizations operating in Darfur had increased from 23 in 2003 to 258 in 2008; they had some 15,000 employees, 4,500 of them foreigners. His Government was committed to facilitating humanitarian access and political and social development in order to alleviate the suffering of its

citizens. It continued to negotiate with rebel groups trying to overthrow the Government by force and hoped that negotiations sponsored by the Government of Qatar would be successful.

His Government had elaborated a national strategy for dealing with natural disasters for the period 2007-2011, which included a framework for reconstruction and development efforts. In that context he said that food aid could have negative effects, for example by altering eating habits. National food production should therefore be strengthened, which would also increase capacity to deal with humanitarian crises. National capacity for humanitarian assistance must be strengthened, for example through training and technology transfer.

He reiterated his Government's commitment to the voluntary return of displaced persons and refugees in conflict and disaster-affected regions and to improved cooperation with international partners in such areas as: strengthening of national capacity and national organizations; gathering of statistics; natural disaster risk reduction; and increased responsibility for coordination. Humanitarian assistance, whether in natural disaster or conflict situations, should not however be used as an excuse for political destabilization or interference or the dissemination of misinformation. His Government would continue to cooperate with international partners that respected Sudan's laws and sovereignty and observed an appropriate code of conduct.

Mr. Bagchi (India) said that several million people had now been forced into poverty and degraded living conditions, which meant that humanitarian assistance and the humanitarian role of the United Nations were more important than ever. Humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the guiding principles set out in the Annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182. His country was deeply concerned at the increasing incidence of attacks on humanitarian personnel, and condemned such attacks in the strongest terms.

The capabilities of the United Nations in coordinating and delivering humanitarian assistance needed further strengthening, by increasing the capacity of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, improving the delivery of humanitarian services by United Nations funds and programmes, and increasing accountability to

stakeholders. As emphasized in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/84-E/2009/87), in planning how to deal with humanitarian emergencies it was also crucial to strengthen response capacity at the local, national and regional levels. He welcomed the efforts of the United Nations and its partners to improve coordination through the cluster approach. A humanitarian cluster must however function with the consent of the Government of the affected State, and under its leadership. He endorsed the proposal for an independent evaluation of the cluster approach.

India had contributed significantly to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) since its inception, and was committed to contributing US\$ 500,000 a year over the period 2009-2011. The disbursement of CERF funds had helped to accelerate responses to emergency situations and had had a positive impact on their management. However, CERF and other pooled funds of the United Nations had attracted only 8 per cent of global humanitarian assistance over the past year.

The report of the Secretary-General seemed to carry an assessment of the political situation in some affected member States, and that should perhaps have been avoided. He was also concerned that some suggestions in the report concerning humanitarian access were not wholly within the scope of the guiding principles.

Mr. Guillén Beker (Peru) said that national efforts in Peru to deal with natural disasters would not have had the same results without the generous and effective response of the international community. According to the report of the Secretary-General, there was a growing scientific consensus that the increased severity and frequency of hazard events, other than those caused by earthquakes and volcanoes, were over 90 per cent attributable to climate change. For some years, Peru's economy had suffered from major frosts in its mountainous zones. Climate change affected the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, and new kinds of emergencies were being created or aggravated by the food crisis, the scarcity of water and energy resources, extreme poverty, population growth, unplanned urbanization, pandemics and migration. He agreed with the emphasis in the report on preparedness and on strengthened coordination through partnership among all actors at the international, national and regional levels. The role of leading the coordination process must fall to States, which bore responsibility for protecting the victims by working jointly with other

international humanitarian actors. He drew attention, in that respect, to the significant role of resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators.

All parties engaged in humanitarian assistance must adhere to the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Early warning and response systems, and risk reduction systems for natural disasters, were valuable elements in the coordination process, as were cooperation among the parties and the exchange of lessons learned and good practice.

States had a responsibility to secure rapid, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian personnel and their equipment and supplies. Regrettably, however, the worst restrictions on their passage sprang from excessive bureaucratic procedures, which exacerbated the suffering of the victims. Moreover, United Nations and humanitarian personnel, including local personnel and volunteers, often faced threats or deliberate physical attacks, or were unlawfully arrested, detained or held hostage. States must take the necessary steps to prevent such attacks on the safety and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel. In responding to disasters, States and the international community must strive to promote and protect human rights, and especially those of vulnerable groups and women, children and elderly persons. He encouraged States to continue contributing to disaster and emergency response funds such as the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Mr. Puja (Indonesia) said that developing countries' resilience to natural and man made disasters depended on continued progress on the development front. The conjunction of the global economic downturn, climate change and armed conflict created a desperate need for more humanitarian assistance; those same challenges also impeded delivery to affected communities. His delegation wished to emphasize that humanitarian assistance should only be undertaken with the consent of the national authorities concerned, and in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence; unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel must be ensured; and cooperation between the United Nations system and all other stakeholders should be improved. Better coordination was also needed between humanitarian and development actors, including in follow-up to the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Indonesia had been implementing local action plans for disaster risk reduction since 2006 with the support of the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Based on its own experience of the 2004 tsunami, Indonesia was all too aware of the impact of disasters on development efforts. International humanitarian assistance, including disaster risk reduction, relief and development efforts, must remain high on the Council's agenda. National post-disaster recovery evaluations should be the primary source for accountability reports to donors.

Mr. Ayub (Pakistan) paid tribute to Zile Usman, a Pakistan national working for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who had lost his life on 16 July in a terrorist shooting in north-west Pakistan. Natural disasters caused by climate change were now affecting more people than complex emergencies caused by conflicts or internal strife, and their numbers were expected to increase. Funds for humanitarian assistance were at risk because of the financial and economic crisis, and insecurity in food and fuel had increased the vulnerability of the population in need. A concerted and effective response was needed, which made it necessary to improve the OCHA coordination mechanisms to avoid duplication of effort by humanitarian agencies. It was also necessary to avoid political expediency and the undue politicization of humanitarian relief work, to ensure sensitivity to specific situations and specific needs, to procure more local resources, both material and human, to build trust between donors, international humanitarian actors and affected States, to build capacity in the countries most likely to be affected by humanitarian emergencies, and to ensure accountability on the part of all humanitarian actors.

Following the devastating earthquake of 2005, floods in 2007-2008 and the recent displacement of people in the north-west of Pakistan as a result of the ongoing law enforcement operation against terrorists, his country had developed a mechanism for disaster preparedness and management at the national and provincial levels. To assist the displaced people, the Government had established a provincial emergency response unit at provincial level, as well as a relief and coordination mechanism at federal level. Cash grants were being provided to affected families, including subsidies for gas and electricity, and a policy had been

formulated for their safe return. The Government looked forward to the support of the United Nations and the international community in rehabilitating its displaced population. It was fully aware of its responsibility towards the displaced people, who were victims of terrorism. It was important to avoid the use of language which would give a false political colouring to the law enforcement measures conducted by the Government.

Mr. Shao Changfeng (China) said that the world faced unprecedented crises with multiple humanitarian challenges. The global economic crisis was eroding global development achievements and must not be allowed to lead to a decline in humanitarian funding and disaster relief. The sole purpose of international humanitarian assistance should be to save lives and reduce suffering, with strict adherence to the guiding principles. Strengthened cooperation and capacity-building were needed, as were improved relief, mitigation and preparedness efforts. Timely, effective and concerted action must be based on respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the recognition of national authorities' primary responsibility for relief coordination. Despite a strengthening of multilateral coordination in recent decades, support for capacity-building remained very limited. Moreover, existing humanitarian affairs mechanisms required strengthening, as did technology transfer to developing countries. China supported a greater coordinating role for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and hoped to see progress on that issue reflected in the Secretary General's report for 2010. It welcomed the success of the Central Emergency Response Fund in enhancing humanitarian assistance capacity. The United Nations should further intensify as well as broaden its fundraising efforts, and adopt a more scientific approach to assessing relief requests.

Despite being faced with its own heavy yearly burden of disaster prevention, reduction and relief, China also contributed to regional and international humanitarian relief efforts.

Ms. Eckey (Norway) said that the targeting of civilians, lack of respect for humanitarian law principles and the use of sexual violence as a method of warfare were just a few of the challenges faced by the humanitarian sector. There was an urgent need to work for enhanced respect for the law and for better protection of civilians in armed conflict. Most recent

conflicts involved States fighting against non-State actors, and could create incentives for both to act contrary to international humanitarian law and principles. Many direct attacks had taken place against civilian populations, causing indiscriminate and disproportionate civilian deaths and injuries, and military operations had been conducted without due regard to proportionality, or using indiscriminate means. Access to civilian populations was often denied to humanitarian actors. Norway intended to raise those issues to their proper place on the international agenda.

Climate change was exacerbating the uneven global distribution of risk and poverty, and the effects of poor urban governance, vulnerable livelihoods and ecosystem decline. Results were yet to be felt in reducing disaster risk through the Hyogo Framework for Action or through efforts for poverty reduction and climate change adaptation. As envisaged in the Secretary-General's report, the humanitarian system would have to focus more on chronic needs or cyclical crises in vulnerable areas, and not merely on humanitarian response. Humanitarian coordination must be improved, and global efforts to avoid dangerous climate change must go hand in hand with efforts at adaptation. Greater international recognition was needed of the important work done by the voluntary sector both in disaster risk reduction and in climate change adaptation. Partnerships in those areas between local communities, national authorities and international organizations must be strengthened.

Humanitarian assistance at the operational level, and the task of addressing climate change and natural disasters, must not be treated as separate challenges. Action in both areas must be based on a common respect for humanitarian law and on a concerted effort to improve the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. She supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Secretary-General in that respect.

Mr. Castro (El Salvador) agreed with the Secretary-General on the need to respect and apply the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance at the operational level, and on the need for improved coordination of assistance. Following a series of natural disasters, El Salvador had been working to improve its capacity to manage humanitarian assistance in accordance with those principles and with priority 5 of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Its authorities were conscious of their obligation to protect the most

vulnerable groups in the population. Humanitarian assistance must play a role in preventing the recurrence of vulnerability factors, and strive for the recovery and strengthening of productive activities in the affected areas. The civilian authorities, given their links with local communities, could ensure the sustainability of actions undertaken during emergency situations. That was also true of the armed forces, which possessed the organizational infrastructure and the resources needed to underpin civilian efforts.

The current economic, financial and food crises were increasing the need for humanitarian assistance, and the likelihood of a humanitarian crisis was especially grave in Central America. The Inter-American Development Bank had called for increased donor funding to avert such a crisis, and for member countries to emphasize social programmes and employment generation. New flows of external funding were needed to help offset the deficits in vulnerable Central American countries resulting from the international economic crisis. His Government for its part would continue its efforts to strengthen national humanitarian response capabilities with the aim of ensuring the well-being and safety of its population.

Monsignor Tomasi (Observer for the Holy See) said that natural and man-made disasters affected millions of persons each year, sparing no region. Chronic armed conflicts also devastated societies, with countless civilian victims. The response must be coherent and globalized. It must also be motivated by: solidarity; respect for the inherent dignity of all; recognition of the right of individuals, families and communities to humanitarian assistance and of care providers to unhindered access to those in need of basic social, physical and spiritual attention. More than 10 million people continued to live in refugee camps, with a further 26 million internally displaced by conflicts, insecurity and persecution. Victims of natural disasters and climate change were being confined in hundreds of detention centres and makeshift camps. Far from the media spotlight, such situations wreaked immeasurable physical, mental and spiritual pain, dismantling the social fabric, jeopardizing reconciliation and threatening the lives of thousands of innocent people.

Although as previous speakers had said, the primary responsibility for protecting the lives of civilians lay with national authorities, all parties were responsible for protecting the lives of civilians in areas

under their control. In natural disasters too, States must allow access to life saving measures without imposing political conditions or demanding impunity for human rights violations. The international community remained an indispensable partner, assisting national authorities and providing emergency access when requested. However, it was local organizations — often faith-based — that were often present on the ground before disaster struck. Those organizations were also more likely to remain long after the international community's attention had been redirected elsewhere. The contribution of civil society in situations of emergency must thus be fully recognized and facilitated.

The ability of humanitarian actors to respond to global need was impeded by multiple challenges, new and old. Many States continued to show generosity and solidarity despite the difficult times. Failure to do so would only lead to social and political instability, undermining efforts also to resolve the global economic crisis.

The Holy See remained committed to addressing the needs of all individuals affected by all types of crises and irrespective of ethnicity and religious creed. It reiterated its appeal to all parties to armed conflicts to respect international humanitarian law, in particular the applicable Geneva Conventions and their optional protocols, and to refrain from using sexual violence as a tool of warfare. Access must also be ensured to prisoners of war and other detainees, and their dignity respected.

Mr. Caputo (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that emergency humanitarian assistance necessitated collaboration with a broad range of humanitarian actors, typically in situations of population displacement and sudden population movements: areas of relevance to IOM. Humanitarian assistance was becoming increasingly complex owing to the combined impacts of the various crises. Coordination and cooperation were increasingly needed in order to identify gaps and protect vulnerable populations.

In a situation of global environmental stress, unprecedented numbers of people were seeing migration as an option. Climate change, migration and displacement were among the most pressing issues on the global agenda, and there was need for more multidisciplinary research on their interrelationship.

Gradual environmental changes, such as drought and desertification, displaced an even larger population in the long term, albeit internally. National development strategies could thus focus on how migration could be an adaptation strategy with positive contributions to development.

Given that developing countries were more vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation, the humanitarian community should collaborate closely with development actors. The Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change were not taking sufficient account of the humanitarian implications of climate change, a matter that should be addressed in Copenhagen.

Also of concern was the fact that innocent civilians — including internally displaced and other vulnerable groups — were often cut off from humanitarian aid owing to escalating violence, bombing, banditry and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. It was crucial in that context that governments and other parties involved in conflicts respected international humanitarian law and allowed safe and timely access to humanitarian personnel. IOM was committed to working with its partners to improve humanitarian response capacities.

Ms. Pictet-Althann (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Secretary-General's report (A/64/84-E/2009/87) provided a much-needed analysis of the ever-increasing complexities of present challenges, as well as a vision of a way forward. Faced with multiple humanitarian crises, the world had an urgent need for enhanced cooperation and increased participation of multiple humanitarian actors.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta aimed to respond promptly and effectively to humanitarian challenges on all continents. It was particularly keen to promote community resilience and disaster preparedness; in 2008, its relief agency Malteser International had continued projects in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, adhering strictly to the guiding principles. Her delegation shared the concerns expressed in the report regarding the increase in humanitarian personnel deaths, and impeded access to affected communities. It reiterated the appeal for joint action by all stakeholders to overcome such constraints in a timely manner.

Cooperation with local populations was essential in order to ensure effective deployment and rapid delivery of relief assets. In the wake of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, the coordination already in place with local and other actors had enabled Malteser International to provide efficient relief despite immense access problems. Coordination with non-traditional partners should be stepped up with a view to devising new strategies for aid provision to affected populations, including victims of gender-based violence. The Order was helping to improve community-based disaster preparedness and response capacities, including by reinforcing homes against earthquakes and cyclones, constructing emergency shelters and training village emergency teams. It was also exploring innovative methods of assisting vulnerable groups, including safety nets. The Order looked forward to continuing fruitful cooperation with the United Nations and its agencies. It also welcomed the improvements made to ReliefWeb, to which it had recourse on a daily basis. Member States and non-State actors should help ensure predictable support to humanitarian funding channels, otherwise the international community would not meet ever-growing needs or confront the multiple humanitarian challenges it was facing.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.