



General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

86th plenary meeting
Thursday, 15 December 2011, 10 a.m.
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Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser. (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.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/66/345)

Draft resolutions (A/66/L.26 and A/66/L.29)

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

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/66/81, A/66/332, A/66/339 and A/66/357)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.28)

(b) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/80)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.27)

(c) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/331)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Jilani (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which brings together the States parties to the Geneva Conventions, the 187 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), was convened in Geneva at the end of November with the overall objective of strengthening international humanitarian law and humanitarian action. The deliberations of the International Conference focused on four main themes: strengthening legal protections under international humanitarian law for victims of armed conflict, strengthening disaster law, strengthening local humanitarian action, and addressing barriers to health care.

The International Conference concluded with the adoption of a number of resolutions, including on the topics of health care in dangerous situations, migration, international disaster law, health care inequalities, national society and volunteer development, a four-year action plan on international humanitarian law, and strengthening legal protections for victims of armed conflict. I will take the opportunity of today's debate to focus on two issues addressed at the International Conference.

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Strengthening local humanitarian action lies at the heart of the mandate of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The need for independent and strong operational partners at the local level is critical to reaching all vulnerable people and address their needs.

The national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, recognized by all Governments as auxiliaries to their national authorities in the humanitarian field, are best placed and equipped to provide effective humanitarian assistance at the local level, particularly in politically sensitive and complex situations. They work also within the framework of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and adhere to its fundamental principles, which represent the best way not only to gain access to people in need, but also to win their trust and confidence.

That unique strength has been translated into concrete action by the staff and volunteers of the national societies in areas where very few organizations have access to people in need, as witnessed recently in situations in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

The International Conference provided the opportunity for States and national societies to discuss and exchange views on how to implement the resolution to effectively develop, manage and extend productive partnerships that contribute to strengthening national societies and their volunteer base in order to deliver assistance and services according to their mission and mandate.

We recognize that our national societies are at various stages of development and that each has particular strengths and faces distinctive challenges. There remains the need for external support to maximize their operational and institutional capacities, as auxiliaries to the public authorities.

Therefore, the Conference called for strengthened efforts on the part of Governments to support development of their national societies and their volunteer base, while respecting and preserving their mandate and independence. That includes ensuring that adequate and comprehensive Red Cross Red Crescent legislation is in place to protect the mandate of the national society.

The second issue of relevance to our debate today is the Red Cross Red Crescent commitment to disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response

and recovery. The IFRC continues to build on the success of its work on the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance, known as the IDRL Guidelines. The Guidelines can help both to anticipate and to solve common regulatory problems in international operations, thus helping to accelerate the entry of relief and ensure oversight and control by domestic authorities.

It is very clear that because of the increasing scale and complexity of disasters, Governments need a balanced and well-prepared legal system as envisaged by the IDRL Guidelines if international assistance is to be managed effectively. The report presented at the Conference on that topic recognized some encouraging examples of implementation at the regional and national levels. In that context, the Conference addressed three aspects of disaster law: the legal preparedness for international disaster response; legislating enhanced disaster risk reduction, particularly at the community level; and addressing regulatory barriers related to meeting the emergency and transitional shelter needs of people affected by natural disasters. The primary focus is on domestic law, policy and procedure, and particularly on how States, with support from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, can proactively move to address common regulatory problems and gaps.

The resolution adopted in that context welcomed the efforts of the IFRC, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to develop a model act on disaster law to assist interested States in incorporating the recommendations of the IDRL Guidelines into their national legal frameworks, and invited further consultation with States and other stakeholders on using the model act as a reference tool.

Another initiative jointly organized by the Swiss Government, OCHA, the IFRC and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies highlighted the fact that one of today's key challenges in bridging national and international assistance is insufficient mutual understanding, dialogue and knowledge-sharing among affected States and the international community. That has led to gaps in trust and confidence and failed coordination efforts that have ultimately hindered our ability to work together effectively.

Continuing to develop and foster long-term relationships, working towards a culture of respect and understanding for the positions and values of others, and critically examining one's own systems and ways of working are necessary lessons to be learned in that regard.

Finally, we will continue to work with our partners to encourage such dialogue and to implement recommendations and lessons learned. We will continue to work towards enhanced coordination among other humanitarian actors, including the United Nations, other international organizations and civil society, while ensuring respect for our fundamental principles.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call on the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross. **Mr. Füllemann** (International Committee of the Red Cross) (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomes the opportunity to address the General Assembly on the important subject of humanitarian coordination. The past year has been particularly eventful, highlighting the growing complexity of the humanitarian environment in which the ICRC works. Protracted conflicts and crises coexist with outbreaks of violence and natural disasters, regularly testing the ability of humanitarian organizations to anticipate, act and coordinate their efforts.

In such an unpredictable environment, the ICRC has repeatedly managed to mobilize its resources to continue providing timely assistance and protecting those in need. We have therefore been able to carry out or scale up operations in armed conflict and other situations of violence, such as those in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Yemen, Syria and Somalia, to cite just a few of our main challenges in the current year.

The principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence observed by the ICRC underpin its ability to act. They constitute the framework for its interaction with other entities. The diverse situations of humanitarian concern encompass natural disasters, armed conflicts and other situations of violence as well as increased vulnerability and displacement resulting from global challenges such as urban concentration, major economic inequality, fluctuating food prices, environmental degradation and rising crime in some parts of the world.

The scope of use of the "humanitarian" label has expanded, ranging from emergency relief to disaster preparedness, early recovery, capacity-building, judicial action and institutional reconstruction, with greater stress placed on the causes and structural consequences of crises.

Actors are manifold. Alongside organizations engaged in relief and assistance, there are others whose *raison d'être* is not strictly humanitarian action, but whose action can, in some cases, have a significant impact. We are referring here to private actors acting on their own initiative or under a contract and to the deployment of military or civil defence means. As for the use of such assets, compliance under internationally agreed guidelines and the principle of last resort is paramount.

In that environment and based on its experience and mandate, the ICRC would like to point out two fundamental aspects of its approach. The first is that the ability to act is not given — it must be built and depends on many factors. Experience has shown that the ICRC's access and ability to act rely on its constant and strict observance of the aforementioned guiding principles, as well as on knowledge of the realities on the ground, direct access to affected populations and local partnerships.

The second aspect lies in tirelessly reaffirming that the responsibility for protecting the civilian population from serious violations of international humanitarian law lies primarily with the States in question, as well as any other parties to armed conflict. Hence, the ICRC calls for the rules prescribing protection of civilians to be respected by all parties to armed conflict, basing this call on strictly humanitarian grounds and on international humanitarian law.

When armed conflicts and other situations of violence break out, humanitarian action endeavours to protect the physical integrity and dignity of those affected. The recipients of humanitarian action are the men, women and children who are placed in a vulnerable situation and who have every right to expect a swift response, free of any political agenda. For the ICRC, therefore, the objectives of humanitarian action in situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence must be kept distinct from any objectives of a military, political or judicial nature. Similarly, such action should not be conditional on the link with longer-term objectives of good governance or

institutional reconstruction, however legitimate and desirable those may be.

Regarding the relation between humanitarian action and development, the ICRC confronts that challenge in most of its operations and activities. More often than not it needs to mix the two approaches to adequately address the needs of people and communities affected in the same country. This depends not only on humanitarian needs, but also on existing capacities and resilience that we seek to identify and support rather than substitute.

The ICRC largely shares the ambition to make better and more efficient the work carried out by all international, regional, national and local stakeholders. It sees it as part of a holistic, comprehensive approach, with the threefold objective of tackling poverty, fostering development and achieving political stability. However, although humanitarian action should naturally aspire to accommodate and facilitate wider efforts aimed at reducing vulnerability and promoting lasting development, such a broad perspective is not always feasible. The reality is that it depends on circumstances, needs and capacities.

The ICRC's humanitarian work is strictly and exclusively humanitarian and civilian in nature. It is founded on the principles of humanity and impartiality — that is, without discrimination and according to the most urgent needs. The ICRC relies on its neutrality and independence in order to gain access to affected populations and achieve its objectives of assistance and protection. Independence means that, while the ICRC develops a regular dialogue with relevant authorities, it formulates and implements its policies and activities independently of Governments' policies and actions. By being neutral, the ICRC, focusing on its exclusively humanitarian mission, deliberately abstains from any action or declaration that could be interpreted as taking sides for one party or another. Concerning those principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence, the ICRC calls for close attention to be paid to the operational use of these principles and the need for clarity about whether the reality matches the discourse.

The ICRC always acts in complete transparency with the State in question, building a relationship of trust through dialogue with States and taking a purely humanitarian approach based on the principles set out earlier in my statement. To accomplish its mission and humanitarian objectives, the ICRC also engages with

non-State actors that have de facto influence on the territories where communities in need live. That is essential not only to gaining acceptance for the ICRC's presence and activities, but also to ensuring access to the people affected.

The ICRC acts on an analysis of needs based on assessments combining direct observations from its staff and partners and information collected from the affected people. In all stages of the action, it seeks to consult and involve the populations themselves and the authorities in charge. Among other concerns, humanitarian actors have a duty to avoid jeopardizing a lasting improvement of the situation or bringing about any other negative effects. In other words, the ICRC embraces the principle of "do no harm".

The ICRC strives to respond to emergencies and is also focused on the prevention of violations of international humanitarian law, disaster preparedness and early recovery. The decision to take action is always determined by an evaluation of the ICRC's capacity to make a significant contribution, in the form of either emergency relief or of longer-term initiatives, by adapting its know-how to the specific local situation.

The ICRC is also committed to promoting humanitarian endeavours more generally. That is the purpose of the campaign launched recently to raise awareness of health care in danger. Recent crises have once again illustrated the extent to which violence disrupts health care precisely when it is needed most. Combatants and civilians die of injuries that they ought to survive because they are prevented from receiving the timely medical assistance to which they have a right.

Lastly, the ICRC places partnerships at the heart of its practices, as demonstrated by its support for many governmental structures and services, such as hospitals, and by the joint operations it carries out in cooperation with components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. That has been the case with the close partnerships forged, for example, for crucially important operations in the course of the past year in Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Colombia and Afghanistan, with the national societies in each of those countries. Close partnerships are the key to successfully reaching people in need. They are also a vehicle for sustained capacity-building aimed not only at governmental structures and personnel, but also at the national societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in the countries in which the ICRC operates.

The ICRC upholds the principle of cooperating with all operational actors in a spirit of complementary mandates and action aimed solely at meeting humanitarian needs. The ICRC's approach to coordination is pragmatic, reality-based and action-oriented. For the ICRC, coordination is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. Coordination as practised by the ICRC is based on an analysis of the organizations present on the ground. Coordination should enable the ICRC and other organizations to better meet their responsibilities. Coordination for the ICRC is meant to be tailored to the context, taking different forms depending on whether the ICRC is among the few actors able to respond in a given emergency or if it operates in a broader context in a complementary manner with multiple organizations.

The principles underpinning the ICRC's involvement in humanitarian coordination are as follows. Victims' needs should be met by those organizations best placed to do so in operational terms. Coordination with partners from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, first and foremost with the national societies of affected countries, is a priority. In all situations, the ICRC takes care to ensure that it balances commitment to the coordination process with preserving the independence of its decision-making. Ultimately, the ICRC promotes coordination that fully acknowledges the role of the authorities concerned, in keeping with the spirit of international humanitarian law and resolution 46/182.

It is on that basis that the ICRC has participated in the discussions and work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for the past 20 years. It is also on that basis that the ICRC field teams interact with existing coordination mechanisms, including those of the United Nations.

The increasing number of actors involved makes it ever harder to guarantee the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and to pursue coordination efforts that maintain the quality of the assistance provided. The challenge here is to avoid any confusion that would ultimately harm the people who we have a duty to help. The current complexity means that only effective coordination can mould the diversity of approaches into a suitable response. It is by respecting the principles of humanitarian action and holding dialogue with all those concerned that the best response to urgent needs can be found and a sustained improvement in the welfare of the affected populations can be achieved.

In conclusion, in an increasingly complex and highly unpredictable environment, the ICRC will continue to develop its capacity to pursue strictly and exclusively humanitarian assistance and protection-based action. Its efforts will also focus on the speed and quality of its operational response, the promotion of suitable laws and regulations through its monitoring of international humanitarian law, and its commitment, together with other actors, to improving interaction and coordination mechanisms, insofar as the ICRC's independence will allow.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I now call on the observer for the International Organization for Migration.

Mrs. Klein Solomon: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) thanks the Secretary-General most sincerely for preparing the thoughtful reports associated with this debate.

Humanitarian actors, as has been said, are working in more places and perhaps in more difficult conditions than ever before, including the provision of assistance to displaced persons in West Africa following post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire, addressing widespread drought in the Horn of Africa, aiding large-scale population movements in South Sudan, and responding to mass flooding in parts of Asia and Central America — all while responding to the needs of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing violence in Libya this year alone. We are grappling with a series of complex emergencies, often simultaneously.

That is why we welcome the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/66/81). Effective coordination among partners is essential when working in complex environments, and the IOM is committed to working with our partners at the local, national and international levels. However, as has just been said by my colleague from the International Committee of the Red Cross, coordination cannot be the end but it must be simply a means for our activities to best serve those in need.

We would like to reflect on this occasion on three of the Secretary-General's reports. First, we welcome the Secretary-General's thematic report on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development (A/66/339). As the report highlights, with more natural disasters

there are more people on the move. Natural disasters are by their nature unpredictable and require national authorities, local communities and humanitarian partners to work together to strengthen resilience and preparedness.

The IOM calls for greater cohesiveness between humanitarian and development actors in this regard. Donors will need to look at their structures in order to fund preparedness programmes that build true local capacities for effective disaster response. Additionally, to bridge that famous gap, agencies need to better link our humanitarian and development activities for better outcomes for affected communities.

Secondly, the IOM shares the conclusions of the report (A/66/357) on the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). We, too, believe that the CERF provides quick, predictable funds that allow humanitarian agencies to reach out immediately to those in need — not after surveys are undertaken or policy papers drafted, but when lives are hanging in the balance. The CERF reinforces the ability of agencies to work together to provide faster, more effective services to affected populations. It has also encouraged us to enter into joint operations, including with partners such as non-governmental organizations, Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and other national partners. IOM continues to be committed to and is actively working towards further strengthening the CERF. This afternoon, our Director General will address the CERF High-Level Conference, and I hope all representatives will be there.

Thirdly, we are concerned by the Secretary-General's report on the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel (A/66/345) and its observation regarding the erosion of respect for humanitarian operations. In this regard, we urge States to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel, to respect the neutrality of all humanitarian staff and to facilitate their work in a manner consistent with the values of the United Nations.

In closing, let me reiterate IOM's commitment to those who are most vulnerable. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening partnerships and coordination among States, humanitarian partners and local communities.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker on agenda items 70 and 71.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/66/L.26, A/66/L.27, A/66/L.28 and A/66/L.29.

The Assembly will first take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.26, entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.26, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Honduras, India, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Serbia and Timor-Leste.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.26?

Draft resolution A/66/L.26 was adopted (resolution 66/117).

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.27, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.27, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Japan, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, New Zealand, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino and Serbia.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.27?

Draft resolution A/66/L.27 was adopted (resolution 66/118).

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.28, entitled "Strengthening of the

coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.28, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Belize, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Croatia, Haiti, Honduras, India, Japan, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia, South Africa, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Timor-Leste.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.28?

Draft resolution A/66/L.28 was adopted (resolution 66/119).

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.29, entitled “Strengthening humanitarian assistance, emergency relief and rehabilitation in response to the severe drought in the Horn of Africa region”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.29, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Croatia, Eritrea, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Jamaica, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Peru, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste and the United States of America.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.29?

Draft resolution A/66/L.29 was adopted (resolution 66/120).

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): One representative has asked to speak in explanation of vote on the resolutions just adopted. I remind her that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Furman (Israel): Israel joined the consensus on resolution 66/118, “Assistance to the Palestinian people”. Ensuring that assistance reaches the Palestinian people is an important issue for Israel and for our region. Israel has demonstrated its commitment to that cause with more than mere words. We continue to take concrete actions on the ground. In the West Bank, Israel has worked closely with the Palestinian Authority to grow the area’s economy and improve security. Even as terrorists continue to use the Gaza Strip as a launching ground for constant attacks against Israeli civilians, we have taken bold steps to expand commercial activity and to advance international development in the area.

The results of those actions speak for themselves. The West Bank’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 8 per cent in 2010 and by 4 per cent during the first half of 2011. In Gaza, the GDP has increased more than 30 per cent compared to last year and the unemployment rate is the lowest on record in more than a decade.

Although Israel joined the consensus today to support the broader principle of assistance and development for the Palestinian people, we hold serious reservations about certain aspects of the resolution. The truth is that the text before us is far from impartial or comprehensive. It paints an incomplete and distorted picture. Key obstacles that stand in the way of bringing peace and prosperity to all in our region, particularly the Palestinian people, are conveniently omitted. For instance, there is no mention in the resolution of the destructive role that Hamas and other terrorist groups play in Gaza, in clear violation of international law. When Hamas is not attacking Israeli civilians it is repressing the Palestinian people that it brutally rules or facilitating the firing of rockets at the humanitarian checkpoints through which goods enter Gaza.

Such a neglect of basic facts is nothing new for the General Assembly when it comes to addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, over the past several weeks this body has again rubber-stamped a whole series of one-sided resolutions that are irrelevant at best and damaging at worst. Instead of encouraging the Palestinian leadership to return immediately to direct negotiations, some in the Assembly are encouraging

it to pursue the destructive path of unilateralism. The international community must make clear that that road is a dead end. Only through bilateral negotiations can we achieve the vision of two States for two peoples.

Although Israel joined the consensus today, it is clear that the ultimate path to peace, security and prosperity for Palestinians and Israelis lies not in resolutions of the General Assembly but in solutions worked out at the negotiating table.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly has heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Ms. Murillo (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica attaches great importance to the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance and believes that the resolution just adopted on the issue is a useful tool for expediting an effective United Nations response to various humanitarian emergencies, be they complex emergencies or natural disasters, and the delivery of help to affected populations. We agree in general with the statement on humanitarian and disaster relief delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China by its Chair.

Nevertheless, in the matter of resolution 66/119, “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”, the Costa Rican delegation wishes to make a few remarks.

We appreciate the work of John Mosoti of Kenya in coordinating the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 along with the Group’s acting Chair, Marcelo Cesa of Argentina. They sought consensus within the Group at all times and in an open, constructive way. We differ, however, with the Group’s ultimate position in the negotiations in two respects, which we believe to be significant.

First, Costa Rica regrets that the final text did not include a proposed reference to the importance of identifying concerns relative to the protection of populations, which had been included in a previous

draft. In our country’s view, the duty of States to protect affected civilian populations is not only an immutable principle, but also of extreme humanitarian importance. As pointed out in the Secretary-General’s report (A/66/81), the protection of civilians remains an important concern and one of the greatest humanitarian challenges, especially in complex emergencies.

Secondly, as our country has stated on other occasions, Costa Rica considers the issue of safe, timely and unhindered access by humanitarian personnel and assistance to be extremely important. We therefore regret that we did not include the adjective “timely” in paragraph 33. Timely access is an absolute necessity if humanitarian assistance is to be delivered effectively and must be accorded its proper importance. Instead, the text avoids mentioning the term for fear that the concept could be abused. Separating this issue from its real-life consequences is counterproductive to a clear understanding of the matter and an obstacle to its practical application.

Our delegation is aware of the complex political sensitivities that arise with these issues, but our primary concern should be to protect the victims of humanitarian emergencies and to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers who selflessly come to their aid, on the basis of the principles of international law, including international humanitarian law, and national laws, and in strict accordance with internationally accepted humanitarian principles, which are included in the annex to resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 and in resolution 58/114 of 17 December 2003. We believe that we must not allow political considerations to outweigh the lives and well-being of populations in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. We reiterate our willingness to continue exchanging ideas on this issue, in quest of a better understanding of the need to incorporate these elements.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-items (a) to (c) of agenda item 70 and agenda item 71.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.