

**Economic and Social Council***Provisional*

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Humanitarian affairs segment

Provisional summary record of the 36th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 17 July 2013 at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Osorio (Colombia)*then:* Mr. Khan (Vice-President) (Pakistan)**Contents**Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)*General discussion (continued)**Decision on draft resolution E/2013/L.20*

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance *(continued)*

General discussion (continued)

Ms. Kairamo (Observer for Finland) said that her country supported the statement made on behalf of the European Union. She stressed the importance of innovation and new technologies in providing emergency humanitarian aid because they improve the responsiveness and transparency of operations. Her country encouraged humanitarian actors to continue the implementation of the Transformative Agenda by improving coordination within the system and promoting partnerships. The international community must help crisis-affected countries to better assume their responsibility and bolster their peoples' resilience, in accordance with the fundamental principles of the provision of humanitarian aid, while promoting cooperation between an increasingly wide range of actors.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan) said that his country associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Pakistan welcomed the support provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the framework of their joint activities in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. He urged the international community to invest in disaster prevention and the promotion of resilience. Following the severe natural disasters it had suffered in recent years, Pakistan had adopted, in 2010, a set of legal and institutional measures based on prevention, intervention, rehabilitation and reconstruction. It also adopted a 10-year action plan on disaster management, which focuses on resource mobilization and early warning.

Mr. Lyngroth (Observer for Norway), noting that access to humanitarian assistance remained a pressing problem for victims of conflict, as did the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, stressed that those issues absolutely must be taken into account in the planning of humanitarian operations. Greater flexibility is needed, too, in funding mechanisms, to meet urgent needs and accelerate post-conflict rehabilitation. Moreover, the international community needs to look into the humanitarian consequences of a possible nuclear explosion, as a conference organized by Finland in March 2013 has shown that no State would really be able to respond to a humanitarian emergency of such magnitude.

Mr. Khan (Vice-President) took the Chair.

Ms. Issa (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Syrian Government has cooperated with all agencies engaged in humanitarian operations in implementing the assistance plan for refugees and victims of conflict in the country. It is supporting 85 per cent of the refugees within Libya and has done much to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by armed terrorist groups. The Syrian Arab Republic denies the statements made by the representative of Australia that the Syrian Government is preventing the delivery of aid: the difficulties in this area are due to the destruction caused by terrorist groups. It is likewise unacceptable for Turkey to accuse the Syrian Government of hindering the delivery of aid, since Turkey is facilitating terrorist groups' entry into Syria. To ensure the safety and protection of conflict victims, the unilateral sanctions imposed on Syria — which harm local populations — must be lifted, while funding for armed groups that perpetrate sabotage and other abuses must be ended. Finally, the

Syrian Arab Republic urges United Nations agencies to comply with the principles set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

Mr. Popov (Belarus) said his country supports the development of bilateral agreements to enhance the effectiveness of actions by the United Nations agencies charged with preventing and coping with natural disasters, but that it is important to keep humanitarian affairs free of political taint. Belarus supports OCHA efforts to mobilize financial resources and calls for diversification of funding sources, including the use of private funds.

Mr. Piantini (Dominican Republic) said that to improve humanitarian and relief operations, common standards must be developed to allow various relief agencies, civil or military, to work more effectively. The HOPEFOR initiative launched, by Qatar in 2010 with the support of the Dominican Republic and Turkey, aims to promote the establishment of a global network of civil and military professionals trained in emergency response. With its experience in the management of natural disasters, the Dominican Republic intends to create a regional centre of excellence for the Caribbean, which will be devoted to training and information exchange between experts. In November 2013, the country will host the third international conference on the HOPEFOR initiative, which will provide Governments, civil society and other stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss ways of improving aid coordination and effectiveness.

Mr. Song Shangzhe (China) said that his country subscribed to the statement made by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and was looking forward to learning more about the World Humanitarian Summit slated for 2015. China believes that humanitarian partnerships must be based on equality of the partners and the existence of mutual benefit, and that the international community should facilitate the transition between emergency relief and long-term assistance.

Mr. Hoscheit (Observer for Luxembourg), having associated himself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, said that innovation and new technologies must be harnessed to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. For that purpose, Luxembourg has implemented the emergency.lu project, operational since 2012, which is a satellite communication platform serving various humanitarian actors on the ground. Undertaken in partnership with the private sector, it also enjoys the cooperation of the World Food Programme (WFP) and has so far successfully deployed a number of terminals in South Sudan, Mali, Nepal and Venezuela. Luxembourg is convinced that new technologies can help to improve the transparency of humanitarian aid, while enabling beneficiaries' needs to be better assessed.

Mr. Caspi (Observer for Israel) said that preparation, prevention, public awareness and targeted information dissemination are essential if we want to effectively respond to the increasing number of crises and humanitarian emergencies. Under the direction of its national development agency, Israel has for several years been working to build capacity in a number of countries by providing training in emergency response to natural disasters and actively cooperating with relevant United Nations agencies. Finally, he stressed that aid should remain neutral and be guided by humanitarian and non-political considerations alone.

Mr. Salone (Brazil) said that his country subscribed to the statement made by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and that of the representative of Cuba, speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American

and Caribbean countries (CELAC). Brazil has taken a two-pronged approach to international humanitarian cooperation: first, it contributes to programmes providing emergency food aid; and secondly, it supports programmes aimed at addressing structural causes of vulnerability. Brazil has thus become the eighth largest donor to WFP food aid and has significantly increased its contribution to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which was US\$ 1 million in 2013, up from \$50,000 in 2008. To ensure food security for its people, Brazil has established a school feeding programme that also benefits local cooperatives and small producers. Because vulnerability is greater the more pronounced social inequalities become, it promotes programmes that focus on sustainable development of local communities. Finally, to achieve resilience, emergency actions must be coordinated with medium-term assistance and institutional barriers between humanitarian and development stakeholders must be removed.

Ms. González (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that major natural disasters of recent years had mainly taken place in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Convinced that the need to strengthen local resilience does not warrant interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, the Venezuelan delegation is concerned about the terminology used in paragraph 45 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/84-E/2013/77), which appears to suggest that States' consent is not an essential element, whereas such consent is expressly mentioned among the main principles of General Assembly resolution 46/182. The fact is that only 75 per cent of the operations under way in 25 countries include representatives of the Governments concerned. Regarding the expression "improving humanitarian action for all" used in the Secretary-General's report, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela noted that humanitarian action cannot be the same for all parties, as humanitarian crises do not have the same impact on all parties: the degree of vulnerability of the affected populations is not the same.

Ms. Bermudet (Colombia) said that her country had established a new system of disaster risk management, focusing on strengthening public and private institutional structure but also on the prevention and mitigation of risks. Colombia considers that the creation of the 2013-2014 Common Humanitarian Framework marks a turning point. The Framework gives the State primary responsibility for initiation, coordination and deployment of humanitarian assistance in its territory; this means the State must be involved from the earliest stages of the process, enabling local realities to be better taken into account.

Ms. Struijf (Netherlands) said that her country, which considers resilience one of the priority issues in humanitarian affairs, fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of Lithuania on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Amunugama (Observer for Sri Lanka) associated himself with the remarks of the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His delegation believes that the Secretary-General's proposals for more effective coordination of emergency assistance are timely, and he deems it necessary to relate immediate humanitarian needs to the longer-term needs of the affected population. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in humanitarian efforts must account for their use of the funds they receive. The 2015 World Humanitarian Summit should promote synergies between development partners and disaster preparedness stakeholders and build upon the hopes the latter repose in the Green Climate Fund. Indeed, adaptation to climate change will require much greater investments than have hitherto been made, particularly in developing countries.

Sri Lanka has unfortunately gained some experience of humanitarian disasters. It has developed a global information system, which was subsequently improved and deployed in other countries. It has also established a national coordinating committee for the management of natural disasters, supported by a strong international network, which now allows one hour evacuation of coastal areas 24/7. Sri Lanka is now integrating the issue of risk reduction into its planning and development policies, recognizing that rapid development could itself lead to greater risk of disaster. In conclusion, he hoped that draft resolution E/2013/L.20 would be adopted by consensus.

Ms. Ji (Republic of Korea) pointed out that the management of humanitarian operations is becoming more important in that humanitarian needs are increasing and the cluster approach is more widely adopted. The Republic of Korea paid tribute to resident coordinators for their central role and asked that they receive continuous training in their multiple tasks. In its view, the international humanitarian system ought to take greater account of the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups, all appropriate measures ought to be taken to guarantee the safety of humanitarian workers, and the mitigation of disaster risks should be among the main objectives adopted for post-2015. Finally, she briefly presented a rescue exercise conducted in May 2013 under the auspices of the Republic of Korea and Thailand.

Ms. Pictet-Althann (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Order of Malta fully supported the Secretary-General's recommendations to State and non-State actors regarding the unimpeded access of humanitarian workers to populations. The mitigation of disaster risk and the building of resilience are an integral part of the mission of the Order of Malta. It also has some experience in innovation and partnerships at the local, national and international levels. The Order welcomes the prospect of participation in the World Humanitarian Summit.

Mr. Cotte (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) noted that the majority of humanitarian efforts focus on life threatening emergencies, so that many more insidious situations, which can be described as silent disasters, have difficulty attracting necessary funds. The way investments are made needs review: crises themselves are not the only thing that needs to be addressed, but also the root causes of vulnerability to risk. However, measures to mitigate risks, to be successful, must meet three conditions: that they be supported by effective local and national legislation and by evaluation, early warning, awareness and education measures; that they be accepted by local communities and institutions, which must buy into them; and that they be conducted in a coordinated manner through partnerships at all levels. The Federation will work with UNDP soon, in that perspective, on the first comparative study of legislation on reducing disaster risk in force around the world. The Federation also recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to strengthen cooperation between the two bodies.

Mr. Endres (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said the theme of the 2013 debate was pertinent both to situations of large-scale displacement and to humanitarian activities outside of crisis situations. UNHCR work extends well beyond crises: its responsibility to refugees and stateless persons is for the long term; hence, UNHCR fully supports the Transformative Agenda. It is committed to making a contribution to reform efforts and to developing its partnerships with the United Nations.

Mr. Staehelin (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) regretted that access to populations in situations of armed conflict had been increasingly

difficult in recent years. In some cases, the very existence of an armed conflict, and so the concomitant rules of international law, is simply denied. The Geneva Conventions have nevertheless been ratified by all States, so there is a consensus on the need to guarantee access to impartial humanitarian actors. ICRC also wishes to draw attention to the problem, too overlooked, of insecurity and violence against health workers, as mentioned in its recently published report on health care in danger. ICRC welcomes the use of new technologies, which certainly can provide gains in efficiency, but they will never replace on-site presence and direct dialogue.

Mr. Sarmad (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) noted that at the end of 2012, conflicts had forced 45 million people out of their homes, while natural disasters had caused the displacement of 32.4 million people. Forced migrations are of such magnitude that no one organization can tackle the issue alone. IOM therefore works in close coordination with Governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The concept of responsibility to the affected populations must be at the heart of the humanitarian assistance process. Internal procedures and debates on categories of beneficiaries should not be obstacles, nor should it be forgotten that humanitarian assistance is for all those who need it. For the Transformative Agenda to bear fruit, we must institutionalize and integrate the activities of all organizations concerned, and implement the Agenda effectively. Humanitarian assistance efforts must be based on a common approach and should always be carried out on the basis of need, not mandates or procedures. The development of the Transformative Agenda led IOM to adopt an operational framework for migration crises that informs its collaboration with humanitarian partners. A new impetus must be given to the fight against insecurity for humanitarian workers and to maintenance of their access to the people, for IOM, like other organizations, is determined to continue its activities in the field. That determination must not, however, be construed as acceptance of a “price tag” for its action in complex environments.

Mr. Chikh (Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)) said that OIC had consolidated its international position in the framework of multilateral humanitarian cooperation and developed a network of partnerships with organizations engaged in humanitarian action. OIC obtains its human and financial resources mainly from Islamic organizations. However, it plans to establish a humanitarian emergency fund of US\$ 100 million annually, which will provide it with greater leeway and flexibility in carrying out its humanitarian mission. OIC approves the Secretary-General’s report and stands ready to participate in the Transformative Agenda and to make its contribution to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2015.

Mr. Brennan (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that since its inception, the Transformative Agenda had had WHO firm support; WHO wholeheartedly approved its priorities and had aligned its own internal procedures for managing emergencies with those of the Agenda. A large number of its NGO partners on the ground continue to believe that the Agenda is too prescriptive and centred on the United Nations. Nevertheless, we can rejoice in the existence of a plan for the dissemination and implementation of the Agenda, to which WHO is indeed already contributing. Based on its experience, WHO realizes the need to more clearly position the objective of better health management as the main collective responsibility of humanitarian workers. Faced with the growing disregard for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, WHO is seeking ways for the community to rein in and reverse this alarming trend. In 2012, the World Health Assembly adopted a common approach for WHO, the main elements whereof are included in the new emergency response framework.

Mr. Chaiban (United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)) said that UNICEF had not only increased its monitoring to be able to assess its performance against the objectives and identify obstacles, but was also taking advantage of new communication technologies to improve the monitoring and understanding of crisis situations. Thus, three new communication tools have been tested in Uganda. One is allowing new standards of transparency and accountability to be applied in programming; another is helping humanitarian aid workers in the field to quickly gather essential data from children separated from their parents and share it securely with employees responsible for helping children to find their families; the third is a support platform for local health workers. Efforts to build resilience have been made at the national level, while UNICEF has incorporated resilience building into its new strategic plan. UNICEF will shortly undertake a review of its humanitarian activities in the light of the Transformative Agenda.

Mr. Paulsen (World Vision International) said that his organization, an international NGO working in the interests of children, operates in nearly all countries facing complex emergencies mentioned in the Secretary-General’s report. It urges all parties to conflicts to ensure that children are protected against all forms of exploitation or abuse. World Vision welcomes and supports the action plan for the implementation of the Transformative Agenda. Like the Secretary-General, it believes member States and donors should make greater use of multi-year funding, and continues to lament NGOs’ lack of direct access to the Central Emergency Response Fund and the delay in making funds available in the field. As regards innovation, World Vision is committed to building partnerships and is seeking to expand the use of mobile applications to better monitor its activities and the funds it disburses.

Mr. Buhne (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that UNDP had contributed to the development of the Transformative Agenda and actively supported its implementation. The distinction between humanitarian and development activities is not always clear, but it is one that must be made in order to defend humanitarian values. It is also UNDP responsibility to see the longer term, so that long-term development needs can be met, promoting resilience.

Ms. Hamid (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) noted that in times of crisis, reproductive health services are often unavailable and young people are more vulnerable to HIV infection and sexual exploitation. She regretted that the important issue of reproductive health was not taken into account in the draft resolution for adoption.

Decision on draft resolution E/2013/L.20

The President called on the Council to take action on draft resolution E/2013/L.20, entitled “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency assistance of the United Nations”, submitted on the basis of informal consultations. He told the Council that the project had no programme budget implications.

Draft resolution E/2013/L.20 was adopted.

Ms. Amos (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) said there was a clear need to refocus humanitarian programmes on managing threatened crises, rather than simply reacting in crisis situations. Aid workers and development actors must contribute by working with each other more closely and consulting with Governments and local communities. There is also a need to promote a culture of innovation in the community of humanitarian

stakeholders as well as a broader exchange of ideas and better partnerships with the private sector. According to the mid-term review of the Consolidated Appeals Process, there are 20 appeals outstanding totalling \$12.9 billion, for which the level of coverage is 40 per cent. The main increase in funding requirements is related to the situation in Syria and neighbouring countries. She welcomed the fact that the resolution adopted by the Council contains new wording relating to protection and that member States unanimously condemn attacks against medical personnel, vehicles and infrastructure. The resolution reaffirms the importance of access to populations, recognizes the vital role of women in decision-making, focuses on the education of boys and girls in emergency situations, urges greater integration of innovations into humanitarian action, and highlights anticipation, information sharing and risk management for the purpose of reducing vulnerability.

The President announced that the humanitarian affairs segment was closed.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.