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GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDERS DRAFT RESOLUTIONS AIMED AT STRENGTHENING COORDINATION

OF UNITED NATIONS HUMANITARIAN, EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Texts on Enhancing International Efforts For Chernobyl Disaster Study, Assistance to Palestinian People Also Introduced

Recognizing the multitude of humanitarian crises that had occurred worldwide this year and the emergency responses they had sparked, the General Assembly considered a number of resolutions today, including one aimed at strengthening the coordination of United Nations assistance.

The representative of Sweden introduced the resolution on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, which would have the 193-Member body call upon the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other humanitarian actors to continue efforts improving the humanitarian response to natural and man-made disasters and to complex emergencies.

She pointed out that the text also included a new element on the component of response when addressing needs protection. The draft, as well, emphasized the protection of personnel to ensure the wounded and sick received treatment as soon as possible. Speaking for India and her country, she stressed that prevention was better than treatment, especially in light of recent events such as the Haiyan typhoon. More should be done to minimize the gap between relief and long-term development, a sentiment echoed by many delegates.

The representative of China underscored that partnerships and technological innovation could also increase the speed and effectiveness of such emergency responses. Indeed, delegates called for enhanced capacity-building and knowledge transfer which aimed at expanding resilience and emergency response. Several urged that the international community increase financial and technological knowledge and share best practices with developing countries to boost their capacity in disaster preparedness and resilience.

Also considered was a text on safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel, through which the Assembly would call on Member States to ensure the safe and unhindered access of those workers, so that they would be able to perform the task of assisting affected civilian populations.

The representative of Lithuania, speaking for the European Union, introduced the text, noting that for the first time, medical staff and facilities had been included in the categories of humanitarian personnel. She also recalled the tenth anniversary of the Baghdad bombing in which twenty humanitarian personnel

lost their lives.

Delegations recognized the invaluable support provided by humanitarian actors, as well as the need to protect their safety and security. However, the representative of the Russian Federation stressed that the international community needed to respect the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States when providing such assistance. Individual States' use of humanitarian crises to advance political goals was of great concern.

Also introduced by the representative of Lithuania was a resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, which, among others, urged all actors of the international community to provide economic and social assistance, and open their markets to exports of Palestinian products.

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, however, underscored that although the Palestinian national plan for reform and development had made gains with significant international assistance, those achievements had been threatened by Israeli practices which continued to obstruct access to land and economic development opportunities.

"The hurdle of goodwill is politicization," responded the Israeli representative, pointing out that there was a lack of focus on his country's worldwide humanitarian activities. Urging the international community to resist overlooking his country's efforts, he also asked the Palestinian authorities to promote an education of peace.

During the debate, which featured over 18 speakers, the Assembly also heard the introduction by Ukraine's representative of the draft resolution on the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The representative of Fiji, speaking for the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, introduced the draft resolution on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development.

Also speaking were representatives of Brunei Darussalam (on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)), Belarus, Syria, Mexico, Malaysia, Switzerland, Thailand, Pakistan and Australia.

A representative of the European Union Delegation also spoke.

The representatives of Syria and Israel spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

The General Assembly will continue its consideration of the agenda items at 10 a.m. Friday, 13 December.

Background

The General Assembly met today to consider its agenda item on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance, a report of the Secretary-General on safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (document [A/68/489](#)), and a related draft resolution (document [A/68/L.24](#)).

Also under consideration would be the Secretary-General's reports on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document [A/68/84](#)), the Central Emergency Response Fund (document [A/68/87](#)), and on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development (document [A/68/89](#)), as well as their corresponding draft resolutions (document [A/68/L.25](#) and document [A/68/L.27](#), respectively).

In addition, it would consider a report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian

people (document [A/68/76](#)), a related draft resolution (document A/68/L.22), special economic assistance to individual countries or regions, a report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (document [A/68/498](#)), and that report's related draft resolution (document A/68/L.21).

A report of the Secretary-General on assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence (document [A/68/497](#)) would also be addressed.

Introduction of Draft Texts

The representative of Ukraine introduced the draft resolution on optimizing the international effort to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (document A/68/L.21). The international community had learned important lessons from dealing with the human consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. The immense course of information had included reports by the Secretary-General, with the most recent, released last month, becoming an integral part of the draft resolution. As it transformed into a multi-dimensional issue, Chernobyl would be globally relevant as a vivid example of international team work. However, a new approach would be needed for future drafts of the resolution, including a more focused vision of cooperation after 2016, he said.

The representative of Lithuania, speaking on behalf the European Union, introduced the draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people (document A/68/L.22). Underscoring the importance of the work of the United Nations and its agencies in that work, the draft text also urged all actors of the international community to provide economic and social assistance, and open their markets to exports of Palestinian products on the most favourable terms. Further, humanitarian access to the Palestinian people was of utmost importance.

She then introduced the draft resolution on safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (document A/68/L.24). Recalling the tenth anniversary of the Baghdad bombing in which twenty humanitarian personnel lost their lives, as well as the more recent attacks and casualties, she called on the Assembly to further enhance the safety and security of such workers. Among other issues, the text also acknowledged the cooperation with host Governments which had the primary responsibility for the safety and security of humanitarians, as well as for an increased acceptance by the local population. As well, the draft addressed different categories of humanitarian personnel, including, for the first time, medical staff and facilities.

The representative of Sweden introduced a draft resolution on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document A/68/L.25). Included in the text was a new element on the component of response when addressing needs protection. The draft also emphasized the protection of personnel to ensure the wounded and sick received treatment as soon as possible. In addition, capacity-building was important, as was broadening the donor base. The draft text also recognized the Secretary-General's initiative to hold a World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016.

Delivering a statement on behalf of her country and India, she said the report had provided a solid overview of both disasters caused by natural hazards and those triggered by complex emergencies. Challenges remained, including the need to broaden partnerships and access populations affected by crises. In view of events such as the Haiyan typhoon, prevention was better than treatment and more should be done to minimize the gap between relief and long-term development.

Coordination made delivery of assistance more effective, she said, noting the value of the United Nations efforts in that regard. The number of people around the globe in need of humanitarian assistance was still on the rise and challenges still remained. However, she said, she was confident that collectively the world would be able to tackle those challenges through enhanced cooperation and by helping the United Nations become even more efficient in its actions.

The representative of Fiji, speaking for the Group of 77 developing countries and China, introduced

the draft resolution on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development (document A/68/L.27). While the text reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation in dealing with natural disasters, it also recognized that the affected State had the primary responsibility in organizing and implementing humanitarian assistance within its territory. As well, it recognized the clear relationship between emergency response, rehabilitation and development. Given that the Hyogo Framework for Action was coming to an end in 2015, the draft called upon relevant humanitarian and development players to accelerate its full implementation.

The text also contained new elements based on the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report, he pointed out, noting that a new paragraph addressed the issue of disaster risk management by encouraging all stakeholders to improve the identification, mapping and analysis of risks and vulnerabilities. Further, the resolution highlighted the importance of sharing expertise and tools to ensure that effective disaster management plans were in line with national priorities. In addition, the text strongly encouraged that disaster risk reduction and building resilience to disasters be incorporated in the post 2015 development agenda.

Statements

CLAUS SØRENSEN, Delegation of the European Union, said the international humanitarian system was under enormous pressure. Sustained efforts to increase efficiencies and improve adaption to new challenges were necessary. He called for continued implementation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Transformative Agenda, focusing on the key aspects of strong humanitarian leadership and strengthened coordination and accountability. In the field, strong humanitarian country teams led by experienced resident/humanitarian coordinators were needed to provide vision and guidance. In addition to making the current system work better, it was important to adapt it to a changing world. He expressed hope that the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, hosted by Turkey, would help make the humanitarian system more inclusive and accountable.

He said that the European Union would continue to support making resilience a shared goal of humanitarian and development assistance. Addressing the factors behind a crisis was crucial to curbing chronic situations of vulnerability. The strengthening of disaster resilience through disaster risk reduction, including preparedness, was the primary responsibility of national Governments, supported by international development and humanitarian partners. The United Nations and Governments needed to ensure that early recovery work after natural disasters started soon after a disaster occurred. Turning to humanitarian needs resulting from deadly conflict, he said Syria was the most dramatic humanitarian situation facing the world today. Access to populations in need, from Syria to Mali, was fundamental. He urged all parties to a conflict to grant rapid and unimpeded access to people and re-emphasized that any arbitrary denial of access to affected populations constituted a violation of international humanitarian law.

DATO PADUKA ABDUL GHAFAR ISMAIL (Brunei Darussalam), speaking for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), reported that one of the most significant developments, since the ratification of the Association's Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, had been the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management. The Centre played an important role in enhancing regional cooperation in disaster management and ensuring ASEAN's collective response to disasters in the region. Most recently, the Centre had played a crucial role in monitoring and providing information on the movement of Typhoon Haiyan.

Disaster risk reduction, he said, was an essential part of sustainable development, as it assured the preservation of development achievements. He emphasized the need to incorporate such efforts into the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. That could bring meaningful benefits to all levels of society, including youth, women and persons with disabilities. He also underlined the importance of ensuring coherence between the discussions on disaster risk reduction within the post-2015 Hyogo framework, sustainable development goals, and the post-2015 development agenda.

VALENTIN RYBAKOV (Belarus) said that, since 1991, his country's expenditures on activities to

overcome the impact of the Chernobyl accident had tallied nearly \$20 billion. Despite the significant progress in rehabilitating the affected areas, much work remained, and that disaster would be an issue over the long-term. The contribution of the international community, including the United Nations system, was much appreciated. The General Assembly's proclamation of the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016) and the United Nations Action Plan had demonstrated that solidarity. He emphasized that the thirtieth anniversary of Chernobyl would coincide with the completion of the Chernobyl Action Plan. Therefore, by 2016, the international community had to determine the character of subsequent international cooperation. His country, he said, wanted to explore a new conceptual framework and had initiated the hosting of a special event in 2014.

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said despite support from the international community, the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and the violation of international law and the United Nations Charter undermined those efforts. Illegal Israeli policies and practices were part of a systematic colonial policy. Even as the Palestinian national plan for reform and development had made gains with significant international assistance, those achievements had been threatened by Israeli practices that obstructed access to land and economic development opportunities, including the blockade of the Gaza Strip. Deepening poverty and food insecurity had resulted in serious socioeconomic consequences.

While international assistance to the Palestinian people was absolutely necessary to stem the deterioration of economic and social life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he stressed that reductions in assistance would directly and detrimentally affect the living conditions of the Palestinian people. The assistance would remain insufficient as long as violations by Israel persisted, he said, emphasizing that the only remedy was to put an end to Israeli occupation and its colonial settlement, and enable Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights.

LIU JIEYI (China), recalling the many recent humanitarian crises due to natural disaster, armed conflict and protracted crises, coupled with the effects of the financial and food crisis, underscored that developing countries had insufficient resources to address such challenges. The United Nations and the international community should strengthen coordination and support of humanitarian relief and improve aid effectiveness. However, in order to be effective, such assistance should follow the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of recipient countries and avoid politicization. As well, partnerships and technological innovation could increase the speed and effectiveness of emergency responses, he noted, calling on the international community to increase financial and technological knowledge and share best practices with developing countries to boost their capacity in disaster preparedness and resilience, among others.

DMITRY MAKSIMYCHEV (Russian Federation) expressed concern over the use of humanitarian crises by individual States or the international community to advance political goals. When addressing humanitarian issues in a conflict situation, neutrality should be maintained. Welcoming the Secretary-General's decision to convene the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, he said that only if sovereignty and territorial integrity of States were maintained, would the Summit be successful. He also recognized the leading role of Governments in initiating humanitarian assistance and the role of the international community to support such efforts. He called for increased cooperation between the United Nations and Governments in building the humanitarian capacity at national and local levels towards increasing early warning response systems. In conclusion, he welcomed the draft text on Chernobyl applauding the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

DAVID ROET (Israel) recalled the many recent tragedies and disasters that occurred in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Syria, among others. He noted that, because of the obligation by Jewish law to make the world a better place, Israel had always been at the forefront to respond when tragedy struck, including the earthquakes in Haiti, Senegal and India, and typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, to name a few. Strongly believing in the importance of innovation and technology, he also underscored the water purification system installed by Israel in the Philippines, under the overall belief that communities could heal through capacity-building and the delivery of vital infrastructure.

“The hurdle of goodwill is politicization,” he said, noting one delegation, which chose to focus on political accusation against Israel rather than on its many humanitarian efforts. His country had a genuine interest in the well-being of its neighbours, which was demonstrated through goods and infrastructure materials delivered by Israel into the Gaza Strip. Those efforts had been repaid with bombing and attacks, as well as a recently discovered tunnel built by Hamas. The tons of cement used to build the tunnel could have been used to build schools and hospitals. Turning to the peace talks with the Palestinians, he said that his country was committed to them, cognizant that both sides needed to make painful concessions. Urging the international community to resist overlooking Israel’s humanitarian efforts, he also asked the Palestinian authorities to promote an education of peace.

BASHAR JA’AFARI ([Syria](#)) said the crisis ravaging his country was due to flagrant attacks originating from outside its borders. Those armed groups were targeting humanitarian actors and aid, and destroying the means of subsistence for Syrians. Such groups could not play that role without support from some Member States, some of whom had proposed draft resolutions that made the Syrian Government an enemy. The Takfiri armed group financed by the Gulf States was beheading civilians in Homs and other areas, causing hundreds of deaths over the last week, he said, pointing to *The Independent* newspaper article from 8 December that reported Saudi Arabia was financing operations of mass killings.

Humanitarian assistance delivery had been prevented by those armed groups, he continued, leading to health threats, including a polio outbreak. Syria had been demonized in global public opinion, yet his Government had tried to carry out its responsibilities to its citizens, including providing humanitarian assistance to them and working with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. The Syrian Government had accepted the opening of three United Nations offices as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance with Libya, Jordan and Iraq. However, terrorist groups had been preventing aid delivered by land. He asked that States fuelling religious-based problems be held responsible. The humanitarian crisis would not be solved by criticizing the Syrian Government, but in ending the support of armed terrorist groups.

BRUNO FIGUEROA FISCHER ([Mexico](#)) said it was essential to continue discussions on assistance. The World Humanitarian Summit would be an opportunity to critically evaluate the system based on inclusive and transparent negotiations. Best practices and lesson learned should be shared. For its part, his region had taken part in intensive interregional cooperation. The humanitarian system must contribute to development at regional, national and local levels. Mexico had, among other things, worked on prevention and preparation efforts, including partnering with the private sector and the science community. Social and economic root causes should be examined pertaining to humanitarian disasters. Crises and emergency situations worldwide called for collaborative solutions.

RAJA REZA BIN RAJA ZAIB SHAH ([Malaysia](#)) said that, with uncertainties caused by climate change, environmental degradation, population growth and rapid unplanned urbanization, disasters around the world would be expected to increase. No country was immune from the impact of such global environmental changes. Building resilience over the long-term through development programming was the responsibility of individual Governments. His country encouraged all Member States to work closely with the private sector, national institutions, academicians and the non-governmental sector. Malaysia’s involvement in humanitarian and disaster relief assistance was based on a three-pronged approach, namely, Government-to-Government, partnerships with non-governmental organizations and people-to-people participation.

PAUL SEGER ([Switzerland](#)) said his country was gravely concerned at the number of people affected by humanitarian crises. Risk reduction management, protection and access were key issues to be examined. With disasters, prevention paid off. Political leadership and cooperation with those States affected were essential for prevention efforts. Humanitarian assistance and development must go hand in hand to make a lasting impact. The post-2015 development agenda was an opportunity to recognize and align the areas of assistance and development. As well, access to populations affected by armed conflicts must be unhindered and parties to the conflict must guarantee that access. He expressed concern about

the lives of humanitarian personnel and institutions, and said that the coming World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul should bring all actors together.

CHAYAPAN BAMRUNGPHONG (Thailand), associating his delegation with the Group of 77 and China, and ASEAN, said that given his country's location in the most disaster-prone region of the world, Thailand attached great importance to the prevention of and preparedness for disasters. Individual Governments were primarily responsible for disaster response. However, the capacity of each State varied considerably. Therefore, appropriate, adequate, timely and well-coordinated regional and international humanitarian response was essential. He emphasized that equitable, predictable and flexible funding for humanitarian assistance could help ensure timely and cost-effective humanitarian delivery. However, the significant decrease in humanitarian funding over the past two years was of great concern. Effective and efficient coordination between humanitarian and military actors in natural disaster preparedness and response should remain a priority.

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan) said while human losses had remained higher in developing countries, industrialized countries had suffered more in terms of economic losses, including Pakistan. The Philippines had suffered greatly from the Bopha and the Haiyan typhoon, leaving many dead and countless economic damages. Assistance had been provided to the Government, but the challenges were enormous and ongoing. Natural disasters were among the major obstacles to development, he said, underlining the need to make advance preparations and to better understand the effects of climate change. His country had experienced natural disasters. However, the mammoth task of recovery would have been impossible without international assistance. Some lessons learned from that experience included the need to establish trust among donors, actors and States affected by disasters. In addition, safety and security must be ensured. In that regard, he appreciated innovative efforts, including the new assessment tools that had been developed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

PHILIPPA KING (Australia), underscoring that the number of people affected by disasters was growing, said her country would stand by the Philippines as it dealt with the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan. With more than half the people of the Central African Republic in need of humanitarian assistance, she welcomed efforts to address those needs as well. Given that last year, 4 million Syrians had needed assistance, and today more than 9 million needed humanitarian help, she said the recent Security Council presidential statement on the situation was a step forward in helping those people get the assistance they needed. Access must always be granted. Vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, must also be included in plans for humanitarian assistance. Disaster risk reduction was key to economic resilience. She said she hoped partnerships with all actors would be central to the World Humanitarian Summit in order to better meet the needs for future crises.

Right of Reply

In exercise of the right of reply, a representative of Syria said, in response to Israel's statement, that Israel was an occupying Power. The United Nations had adopted dozens of resolutions every year condemning those practices. Israel's representative should educate himself about the crimes his country had committed. Further, Israel had provided no assistance to Syrians except to armed terrorist groups operating in the Syrian Golan. Israel should end its occupation of Arab lands before claiming to be shocked over some current situations and crises in the world.

Responding to his counterpart, a representative of Israel said the Syrian delegation must face basic truths, including that the Syrian Government was directly responsible for the deaths of more than 100,000 Syrians, had used chemical weapons against Syrians and had ordered the killings, torture and rapes of their own citizens.

Syria's representative said Israel had shed "crocodile tears" regarding the Syrian people by pretending it was concerned over the current crisis in Syria. The Syrian Golan had been occupied by Israel since 1967. She said her country had the right to liberate the Golan, reminding the Israel delegate that there was international determination to put an end to tensions in the region and to the occupations.

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